

GENERAL PRESIDENT JAMES A. WILLIAMS

A Closing Message

A Call to Action

[Standing ovation.]

[Chanting from the crowd.]

Sit down. All right.

I want my business managers, every single one of them, everybody—come up here and be with me, please. All right. Thank you.

What a great week for our ONE UNION and our one industries.

This week, we hired from District Council 15, the Host Committee, our out-of-work members, to work this convention, and they did a great job.

(Applause.)

Gavin McDonald, Gary Meyers, the office staff, Freddie, Kurt, Timmy, my board—thank you. Thank you for preparing for this week and doing such a great job.

You know, we may not agree on all and every issue. I'm sure you don't agree with everything I say, but it makes me proud to lead a union where the dissenting voice can be heard without retribution.

(Applause.)

I definitely can win you over on the debate: It's to make you and us better. It's not because we want unanimous. It's not for any other reason than to educate.

More than one person mentioned to me at the receptions that they came to this convention expecting some harsh realities to come raining down from the stage. Yet, what they heard instead was a message of hope and opportunity. That made me a happy man, because, although we do live in what Ken called in his speech "a scary reality," I do want each and every one of you to take



Change

Makes Us Stronger

home with you the feelings of hope and opportunity we've seen this week.

In my last *Journal* article, the title was "This, Too, Shall Pass"—and these times will pass. And, when the days turn around for all of us, not just some of the fortunate ones in this room like me, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades will be ready for it because of your actions. I've seen that this week.

FTI: (We have) increased capacity to train more trainers; a curriculum that has been updated, refined, modernized, to keep us at the head of our industries; an expanded staff to better suit the current needs and—more importantly—the future needs of our trainers in North America; and new grants to update local facilities, as was mentioned to me in my contractors' meeting.

LMCI: The current programs and classes in place make our members (into) leaders on the job sites and give our employers the competitive edge. New programs and personnel are coming down the line. That capacity to make more of what I just said happen because of your actions, the LMCI, and my partner, Ed Smith. We're going to have technical assistance reps for all our trades—the experts, the best of the best—working on specific trades, from trade shows to industrial painter to drywall to glass to floor covering. All of our industries will be covered over the next five years.

[Applause.]

That's the plan. We're going to work the plan, and the plan will work.

Government Affairs: The Army of Black and Gold once again made a name for itself in this last election. We are leaders in fundraising, activism, and making our way as candidates in public offices around the United States and Canada. Although we're good, a resolution that was passed here can make us better. Take it home. Do it [political action] on a local level—with our lobbying efforts approaching full swing on the local level, there won't be a city councilman, mayor, Congress member, a parliament, a senator, prime minister, or a president that hasn't shaken the hand of a man or a woman representing the IUPAT, hearing what we have to say when it comes to working families.

Talk to your vice presidents about getting a lobbyist in your state. We will work a deal. We will put in a lobbyist to do what they're doing in Albany in New York, what Terry, Chuck, and Greg are doing in Illinois. We can do it.

Pension: Our Pension Fund made it through some of the worst times in history, and your trustees are there to make sure we make it to the better times, every single one of them.

Job Corps and PATCH: (These services) are making huge differences in the lives of our youth and our communities.

You know, in the last five years, we've had some excitement, some heartache, some stress, a lot of stress for me, some victories and defeats. We have had some change over the last five years, but I'm honored to report to you that change has made us stronger. And we will continue to grow stronger for years to come, with your help.

I want to thank you for everything you've done this week. Far and above, too much praise (has been) given to me, because there is no "I" and there is no "me" in a team. It's about "we" and "us." I want to thank the delegates, both rank-and-file and full-time. I want to thank my contractors. I want to thank the association heads of all the various industries. And I want to thank my family for giving me the time and the space over the last 41 years to do something I truly love.

You know I wasn't going to make it in the NBA! [Laughter.] But I get paid to do something that I love. There's nothing better in the world than waking up every morning and going to work and doing what you love to do.

It reminds me of a call I got from a member about 60 or 70 days ago. I called him back, I think it was around 6:30 in the morning. I was on my way to work. And he says, "I can't believe you called me back." I said, "Why did you call me then? I mean, don't call me if you don't want a call back, because you're going to get one." He said, "You know what time it is?" I said, "I'm not just getting in. I'm just going out. What's your question?" He said, "Well, I can't believe you called me." I said, "Stop it now, because I got a whole bunch more calls to make."

We are approachable, and we do return calls.

On the way out to lunch, I met a guy who became an activist and became a delegate and was elected here, and he told me he did it (based) on a letter he wrote to me. He wrote me a letter, and I told him to get involved. I said, "Go to your meetings, volunteer, volunteer to help your business agent, your organizer, your officers, and your business manager." And he came up to me, as I scooted by. He said, "Can I talk to you?" I said, "Yeah. What's up?" He said, "Thank you for answering my letter." Don't write me a letter, if you don't want an answer.

I've got the finest staff in the world. I have the best team in the world. And nobody can beat us, because we are the best damn union in the labor movement!

Thank you. Thank you. The 30th General Convention is adjourned.