LOCAL 873 VETERANS COMMITTEE
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER 1ST QUARTER 2026

Veteran Committee Executive Member's

Chairman	Vice Chairman	Secretary	Treasurer
Patrick Julian	Joel Bolen	David Sherron	Brandon Fulk

Chairman's Message

Brothers and Sisters,

As we move further into 2026, I want to thank each of you who continue to support the Veterans Committee and represent Local 873 with pride. What we're building isn't just a committee — it's a network of veterans who continue to serve, just in a different uniform.

This quarter reflects exactly what our mission stands for: advocacy, volunteerism, and brotherhood. From pushing for meaningful GI Bill reform at the national level to installing electrical systems at a place that honors our local veterans, we are showing that veterans in the IBEW don't just talk about service — we live it.

Thank you for staying engaged, stepping up when called upon, and helping us continue to grow.

Fraternally,
Patrick Julian Jr.
Chairman, Veterans Committee

Helmets to Hardhats – GI Bill Change Initiative

The Veterans Committee is actively supporting a national effort led by **Helmets to Hardhats** to improve how the GI Bill applies to registered apprenticeship programs.

As many of you know, the current GI Bill structure reduces housing allowance over time and can interrupt benefits if an apprentice is laid off through no fault of their own. This creates instability for veterans pursuing careers in the skilled trades compared to those enrolled in traditional college programs.

We are proud to report that this proposed change will be introduced to the **Senate Veterans Affairs Committee next week**, potentially on Wednesday or Thursday (03/04/26-03/05/26).

This is an important step toward creating a more equal and stable benefit structure for veterans in apprenticeship programs across the country.

Hoc Nos Defendemus Semper Fidelis Non Sibi Sed Patriae
Semper Paratus Aim High…Fly-Fight-Win Semper Supra

If you are a veteran who has been negatively impacted by the GI Bill structure during your apprenticeship, please reach out. Your voice matters.

Volunteer Project – Grissom Air Museum

We are excited to announce an upcoming volunteer electrical project at the **Grissom Air Museum**.

Our committee will be installing **all interior electrical systems** for a new building that will house the **B-58 Hustler Bomber** — a historic aircraft that operated nuclear missions out of Grissom Air Force Base.

This is a meaningful project that honors military history while allowing us to serve our community through our trade.

Work is tentatively scheduled to begin **next week, possibly the week after (TBD)**.

A volunteer schedule will be released soon — please be on the lookout.

If you are interested in volunteering:

- Contact Patrick Julian Jr. via phone or email
- Let us know which days you are available

Apprentices: Remember that volunteer hours on any Veteran Committee projects count toward your required apprenticeship volunteer hours.

Moving Forward

The Veterans Committee continues to focus on:

- Advocacy for veterans in apprenticeship programs
- Community service and meaningful volunteer projects
- Strengthening partnerships with veteran organizations
- Supporting our brothers and sisters inside Local 873

Thank you to everyone who continues to step up and represent our Local with pride.

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Merchandise

Local 873 Veteran Hats and Shirts: Available at the hall. These are sold at cost by the Hall.
Veteran Committee Coins and Hats: We still have some hats available; If you would like a hat, reach out to Patrick Julian or Joel Bolen. All proceeds go toward supporting committee activities and veteran outreach.

Washington Watch

VA Claims Backlog Drops Below 100,000

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced a major milestone: the backlog of benefits claims has fallen below 100,000 for the first time since 2020. This represents more than a **60% reduction in pending claims**, which means veterans are getting decisions faster and with fewer delays.

VA Rescinds Controversial Disability Ratings Rule

The VA was poised to implement a new rule that would have changed how disability ratings are determined — tying them to how well a veteran's condition responded to medication. After strong opposition from veteran groups and public comment, the rule is being **formally rescinded**, preserving the current rating process and easing concerns about cuts to compensation.

VA Assists Record Number of Formerly Homeless Veterans

In FY 2025, the VA helped nearly **52,000 formerly homeless veterans** transition into permanent housing. This accomplishment reflects expanded efforts to reduce veteran homelessness and connect veterans with stable living arrangements.

Staffing Shortages Continue to Impact VA Services

Recent reports show the Department of Veterans Affairs has experienced significant staffing losses across its facilities, including clinical and administrative roles. Staff reductions have heightened concerns about access to care and timely services — a developing situation being monitored by Congress and veterans' advocates.

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Senate Report Highlights VA Challenges

Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee leaders released a report detailing ongoing issues at the VA, including staffing shortages and policy changes impacting veteran care. The report is being discussed ahead of upcoming oversight hearings with the VA Secretary.

Important Dates

Vet Committee Meeting: March 18th 2026; 6PM Location TBD!

Phone Numbers/Emails

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Websites
IBEW 873: www.ibew873.com

Social Media
Facebook: IBEW 873 Veteran's Committee
We Now Have a Public and Private Page!

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