

WRENCH & WOOD

Wood, Pulp and Paper Workers News



2026

Volume 13, Number 4



Byggnads Congress Focuses on Building a Stronger and Safer Future for Workers

The Swedish trade union Byggnads recently held its congress in Malmö, Sweden, bringing together union leaders and representatives from across Europe, Ukraine, and the United States under the theme “For a Stronger and Safer Sweden.”

The congress focused on many issues that are familiar to working people and trade unionists around the world, including higher wages, safer workplaces, training, housing, shorter working hours, gender equality, and strengthening union membership.

Kim Soderstrom was elected President of Byggnads and reaffirmed the union’s commitment to fighting for better wages, safer workplaces, and a stronger construction industry. Linda-Li Kald was also elected as the first woman to serve as deputy president, marking an important step toward greater representation for women in the industry.

A major part of the Byggnad’s 2030 strategy will be growing union membership and increasing participation among young workers, women, and other underrepresented groups. By strengthening union presence at workplaces at the local, regional, and national levels, Byggnads aims to ensure workers have a stronger voice in shaping the future of their industry.

The congress also addressed the importance of combating workplace exploitation, ensuring fair competition, and requiring employers who use foreign labor to respect collective agreements. Mental health and improving working conditions were also important topics of discussion.

BWI General Secretary Ambet Yuson highlighted the importance of international trade union solidarity, emphasizing that unions must continue to defend workers’ rights, fight exploitation, and stand together across borders.

The Byggnads Congress is another reminder that the challenges facing workers are not limited to one country or one industry. When workers organize, stand together, and support one another, we have the power to build safer workplaces, stronger unions, and a better future for working families everywhere.

GS Facket Congress: “We are the Future”

The fourth congress of GS Facket, Sweden’s union representing workers in forestry, wood and graphic industries, brought together 169 delegates under the theme **“We Are the Future.”**

The congress focused on issues that are familiar to working people across our industries: organizing new members, strengthening local unions, engaging the next generation of workers, protecting collective bargaining, and addressing challenges created by an increasingly changing workforce.

BWI General Secretary Ambet Yuson recognized GS Facket’s contributions to the global labor movement, including its work on workers’ rights, migrant workers, forests and climate justice.

For the IAM Woodworkers Department, the message is one we know well: our future depends on strong, active unions, and members willing to stand together. As our industries continue to change, organizing, educating and empowering workers will remain essential to protecting good jobs and building stronger workplaces for generations to come.

The future of our industries is being shaped today—and **we are the future.**

BWI Launches Green Infrastructure Network

The Building and Wood Workers’ International (BWI) has launched a new Green Infrastructure Network (GIN) to ensure workers have a meaningful voice in the future of green infrastructure and climate-related development.

The network was launched during a conference held June 11-12, 2026, in Geneva. Green infrastructure is increasingly being viewed as a way to address environmental and climate challenges while creating more sustainable communities. However, many of these plans are being developed without enough input from the workers who will build, maintain, and support these projects.

BWI emphasized that workers’ skills, experience, and knowledge are essential to creating successful green infrastructure projects. The new network will provide an opportunity for unions to organize, educate, and advocate for workers while helping shape a Just Transition toward a greener economy.

The conference also highlighted workers facing challenges around the world, including subcontracting, inadequate health and safety protections, low wages, limited collective bargaining rights, and gaps in training and skill. At the same time, the transition to greener infrastructure has the potential to create millions of good jobs if workers are included in the process.

This is an important reminder that the future of our industries must include the people who do the work. As the world moves toward more sustainable construction and infrastructure, workers must have a seat at the table to ensure new opportunities mean good union jobs, safe workplaces, fair wages, and strong worker protections.



7th Annual Chillin' & Grillin' Virtual BBQ for Guide Dogs of America

The 7th Annual Chillin' & Grillin' Virtual BBQ was another incredible success! This year, we came together to support Guide Dogs of America-Tender Loving Canines and raised over \$18,000 for this amazing organization.

We were proud to have 18 sponsors, 18 cooks, and 4 judges participate in this year's event. Our cooks truly brought their A-game, putting an incredible amount of time, effort, and creativity into their dishes. The food looked absolutely amazing, making the judges' job especially difficult!

The weekend was filled with great food, friendly competition, plenty of fun, and an event greater purpose. Chillin' & Grillin' is always a wonderful opportunity to come together, connect with one another, and support a cause that makes a difference.

A huge thank you to our sponsors, cooks, judges, and everyone who donated and helped make this event possible. Your generosity and support made the 7th Annual Chillin' & Grillin' Virtual BBQ one to remember.

We're already looking forward to next year!



BWI Stands in Solidarity with Nepal and Tibet Following Devasting Flash Floods



The Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) is expressing solidarity with the people and working communities of Nepal and Tibet following devastating flash floods along the Nepal-Tibet border on August 26, 2026.

The floods caused tragic loss of life, displaced families and significant damage to homes, workplaces, roads and critical infrastructure. BWI is supporting calls for immediate rescue, relief and recovery efforts for affected communities.

The disaster also highlights the growing risks posed by climate change, including extreme weather, glacier instability and flooding. BWI is calling for stronger disaster preparedness, climate adaptation and resilient reconstruction.

BIO-CORNER

Israel Castro was born in Gurabo, Puerto Rico, and moved to the Chicago area as a child, where he was raised by his single mother. His journey eventually led him to Louisville, Kentucky, where he began working in the newspaper pressroom at the Courier Journal in 1998.

After becoming involve with the union, Castro served as a shop steward and steadily advanced through a variety of union leadership roles. He was elected President of District Council 3 in 2016 and became Secretary-Treasurer and Principal Officer in 2019. He also served as the Central Region Representative on the PPPWU General Board and as a trustee of The Members Retirement Plan.

In 2025, Brother Castro was named Director of Organizing before becoming International Secretary-Treasurer. Following the retirement of Steven Nobles, Castro became International President of PPPWU on January 1, 2026.

With the merger of the PPPWU into the IAM effective July 1, 2026, Castro now serves as President of IAM/PPPWU District P1.

Castro and his wife, Sarah, have two sons, Miguel and Isaiah. Their elder son, Miguel, graduated from Cornell University in 2022 and is currently attending law school at Michigan State University. Their younger son, Isaiah, attends Wayne State University, where he is majoring in computer science.



WOODWORKERS

ON-THE-JOB

Photo courtesy of Jason Williams, President-Local Lodge W130

Did You Know?

- Wood keeps storing carbon. Even after a tree is harvested, the wood used in furniture, homes, and other products continue to store carbon for decades or even centuries.
- The tallest tree on Earth is a coast redwood named Hyperion, standing at over 380 feet tall—that's taller than a 35-story building!
- The oldest wooden structure still standing is over 1,300 years old, proving that properly maintained wood can last for centuries.

Published by:

Woodworkers Department

9000 Machinists Place Upper Marlboro, MD

301-967-4555 ; fax 301-967-4763

www.goiam.org/index.php/headquarters/departments/woodworkers