



Honoring Our First Responders

WHEREAS, UWUA members put their lives on the line every day with little public recognition regarding the danger of their work. Our members work under dangerous conditions to run, repair and maintain the water and energy infrastructure of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Utility workers are the unsung heroes of almost every natural or manmade disaster — from ice storms, hurricanes, and natural gas explosions to tornados and wild fires. We do it willingly, despite hazardous conditions and lack of recognition. UWUA members work in their local territories as well as across the country and Puerto Rico, as part of nationwide mutual assistance programs, working 16-hour days, seven days a week, often leaving their families and homes. We thank the thousands of union brothers and sisters who answer the call and respond to emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Utility workers are the first to respond to catastrophic events, working to make the scene safe enough for police, firefighters and EMTs to do their jobs. They then go on to repair and supply critical services during response and recovery operations; and

WHEREAS, Yet, we do not enjoy the same legal status as other first responders. Granting utility workers first responder status is a central public safety issue. It would remove the barriers for utility workers to reach the source of problems so they can rapidly turn off gas or restore power and water service. First responder status designation would, among other things, allow utility trucks to easily cross borders without the need for state-specific permits or redundant stops at highway weigh stations; and

WHEREAS, Our members sometimes make the ultimate sacrifice. We honor every UWUA member injured or killed in the line of duty. Our members' dedication will not be forgotten and we owe it to our deceased brothers and sisters to work toward preventing future tragedies; and

WHEREAS, on September 11, 2001, our nation was changed forever by the attacks that killed 2,977 people and injured over 6,000 others. UWUA members worked side-by-side with our union brothers and sisters in the police and fire departments, and building trades in the lengthy recovery efforts. Yet these heroes now face the possibility of not being treated or compensated for long-term illnesses stemming from ground zero operations; and

WHEREAS, in the years since 9/11, many more disasters, man-made and natural, have reaffirmed the importance and courage of utility workers. Increasingly extreme weather and failing infrastructure are causing ever-greater disasters to which utility workers must respond.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, It is time our elected leaders recognize that we are first responders. The UWUA and its affiliates will educate elected officials and advocate for laws and regulations granting utility workers first responders status; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The UWUA urges passage of Never Forget the Heroes: Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (S 546 / HR 1327); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The UWUA calls on our local union leaders and members to organize and participate in observance of the annual National Lineworker Appreciation Day; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Through UWUA-affiliated safety committees and training programs, we will continue to train the safest, most productive and highest skilled workers in the industry; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, The UWUA commends Platform Art, the Highline Hero Foundation, and the high school design competition winners Angel Mitchell, Maddie McDaniel, and Gabby Thomas for sponsoring and designing a statue in Lakeland, Florida honoring linemen. The Lineman sculpture, installed at the Lakeland Electric HQ on Lake Mirror, serves as a public, visual and permanent representation of their contributions to the electric industry, and for their important and dangerous work.