



Getting to know the IATSE

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) is a labor union representing over 150,000 behind-the-scenes workers in the entertainment industry, including live theatre, motion picture and television production, trade shows and exhibitions, television broadcasting, and concerts.

IATSE members are employed by staging, lighting, and sound companies, media production companies, and venues utilized by political campaigns for rallies and events.

From camera, sound, grip, lighting, wardrobe, and hair & make up crews on campaign commercials to the stagehands and live event technicians behind-the-scenes at campaign rallies and debates - among these and others - the IATSE represents the highly-skilled workforce behind candidates' campaigns.

Our ask

- Support labor rights and working families in the entertainment industry by ensuring the workers at your live events and on your media productions receive health care and retirement contributions, and the area standard wages.
- **Should your campaign hire outside vendors to produce political commercials and/or large staged events - work within the jurisdiction of the IATSE - we ask that you commit to using labor under a union contract.**

Running a fully pro-worker campaign

A candidate, committee, or organization (particularly those that purport to be pro-worker) would never use non-union print shops to produce campaign materials or book non-union hotels, where available, for travel or receptions. **Campaigns must strengthen that same reflex when producing a campaign commercial or live event.**

Every year, we see far too many candidates and organizations that support labor rights, but unwittingly contract with non-union vendors - most often due to misinformation. Many do not know that both campaign commercial and live event production is traditionally covered by a represented workforce.

There are dozens of media and live event production companies - union and non-union - servicing campaigns throughout the country that are hired to produce both campaign commercials and large staged events.

In our view, campaigns must hold themselves accountable by utilizing union labor in every aspect in order to claim the pro-worker mantle.

Importance of using a represented workforce

- IATSE agreements cover the finest technicians nationally - workers who are treated properly as employees under the law, paid area standard wages, and provided health and retirement benefits.
- Companies that do similar work but whose workforce is not under a union agreement often do not maintain area standards, provide worker benefits, or pay required payroll taxes.
- Non-union crews may lack the expertise, safety training, and certifications necessary to ensure productions are safe for candidates and campaign staff.
- Further, non-union commercial and live event production crews risk being misclassified as independent contractors rather than employees, which can in some cases run afoul of state and federal laws and cause unwanted legal exposure.



How to avoid anti-union behavior

Campaign commercials & advertising content

- If contracting a media consulting firm or production company to shoot a campaign commercial, ensure they are signatory to one of the most current IATSE Commercial Production Agreements (CPAs).
 - ❖ Production of the live action elements of all commercials and advertising content for broadcast, cable, and the internet is within the scope and covered by the CPAs.
 - ❖ The CPAs provide minimum scale wage rates and standard commercial industry working conditions as well as continuity of health and retirement benefits.
- If a media consultant subcontracts out the production of content, ensure that company is a CPA signatory.

Live events

- If contracting a live event production company for a large, staged event, ensure they are a signatory employer of the IATSE or its affiliated local unions.
- If the production company subcontracts out the staging, lighting, and/or sound for the event to other vendors, please use your managerial discretion and seek to ensure those entities are also IATSE signatories – or at a minimum that all crew are working the event under a union contract.

National campaigns & committees

- National campaigns, organizations, or campaign committees that plan on hosting numerous large events across the country may wish to contact the IATSE. Some entities have historically signed IATSE National Agreements to ensure they have the finest union workforce at all events throughout the country with consistent area standards and quality.
- We encourage campaign committees and entities that provide candidates with suggested firms for this type of work to ensure all such recommended vendors are current IATSE signatories.

Contact POLLEG@IATSE.NET for more information on IATSE signatory companies available to perform this work throughout the country, or with any questions.

Common challenges and misconceptions

- Some companies – including IATSE signatory companies – bidding on campaign work are asked to bid on short notice against non-union companies that treat their employees in stark contrast to the candidate's or campaign's values and platform.
- Safety standards, certifications, area standard wages, and worker benefits required by IATSE signatory companies might be sacrificed in the low bid environment that exists in campaign work. Low bid is often the determining factor to stretch campaign dollars, but not necessarily the best outcome for working people.
- Work done outside the protections of a union contract typically provides wages but does not contribute to workers' collectively bargained health and retirement plans. A signed agreement is necessary to ensure that the workforce receives much-needed health and retirement benefit contributions.
- Companies sometimes believe that IATSE signatories must only hire union members and they will not be able to fulfill that obligation in rural or geographic areas with low union membership without violating the agreement, hindering their ability to work in these areas. This is a common falsehood, which otherwise might keep well-meaning companies from signing labor agreements. Signatories are not barred from accessing workers so long as the area standards are honored.
- Campaigns or companies may have established working relationships with crew working in IATSE-jurisdictionally covered positions who are not union members. This issue should not present an obstacle to signing an agreement that would benefit all of the hard-working personnel that would benefit from a union agreement.