



Prevailing Wage-Job Classifications

June 2024

BCAP member companies consist of both union and non-union employees, and we respect the use of prevailing wage rates for projects funded with public tax dollars. As such, we do not oppose the use of prevailing wage, as it has an important role to play in our economy, but we believe the wage rates should be appropriate to the work being done, and not applied through a broad, catch-all classification.

Current Capital Projects Fund (CPF) guidelines mandate the application of the prevailing wage on broadband deployment projects for contract labor work. The same will apply to grant funding through the Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program.

Instead of appropriate classifications for cable splicer or teledata lineman, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry insists broadband companies use the “electric lineman” classification and at rates 30% to 40% higher than even current telecommunications workers under union contracts. In doing so, they are ignoring the practices of both the federal government and dozens of other states by refusing to establish job classifications for workers installing rural broadband.

The use of appropriate classifications is important, and appropriate classifications for appropriate work scope makes sense. The work of an electric lineman is far different than a telecommunications line worker and a cable/fiber splicer. Workers within the broadband space are trained in various precautions and safe practices relevant to their work with teledata cables and are not trained to work with and are prohibited from working with electric cable. We firmly believe that prevailing wage classifications should match the work, as they do in states such as New York, Indiana, Connecticut and Maryland, and by the U.S. Department of Labor.

We are aware that prevailing wage rates for electric linemen are high, averaging around \$90 per hour, and will only increase. These rates, on average and anecdotally, amount to half to two-thirds of the electric lineman rate.

As stewards of public dollars, we believe that specificity of job classifications in the telecommunication space will, as in other states, allow public funds to go as far as possible. We fear that if these dollars are not applied well, the federal dollars and the effort will be wasted. Funding from both CPF and BEAD presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deploy broadband to unserved and underserved portions of our geographically diverse state.

Although we all represent different portions of the telecommunications space, the industry as a whole shares the goal of serving as many people as possible. To do otherwise would not only be a waste of taxpayer dollars but an opportunity lost. Our citizens deserve better.