

## **MESSAGE FROM IBEW TO NV ENERGY: DON'T TREAD ON ME**



**Members of Local 1245** came to work on Sept. 30 with a message for NV Energy: "Don't Tread on Me."

The Revolutionary War slogan appears on a new IBEW sticker that members slapped on shirts, hats, windows, trucks—basically anything that didn't move and a few things that did.

The sticker features a snake wrapped protectively around the IBEW logo, a graphic warning that union members will defend the gains they've won through decades of collective bargaining.

"All the stuff that the guys fought and earned before us, they're trying to take it away," said NV Energy Troublemaker Bruce Warmuth and chair of Unit 3320 in North Lake Tahoe. We owe it to those guys to fight and try to keep what we got."

Warmuth displayed the "Don't Tread on Me" sticker when he came to work Sept. 30—and he wasn't alone. Nearly the entire workforce in both North Lake and South Lake slapped on the stickers in a show of solidarity with the union negotiating committee. In fact, stickers were popping up throughout NV Energy's entire northern territory on Sept. 30.

On-going contract bargaining has members concerned—and for good reason. NV Energy, among other targets, has drawn a bead on retiree medical benefits. On Sept. 29 the company upped the ante in negotiations by announcing its intention to cancel the union contract.

Local 1245 members are understandably concerned about the company's intentions, and have now begun to signal their own determination to protect the standard of living and rights on the job embedded in the labor agreement—rights they've earned through their service to the company.

"We're first on the line, first on the phones, the first customer contact," said CSR Working Foreman Michele Piechocinsky, asserting the value that Clerical members bring to the company's operations. "We are the first impression that people get of this company. We take pride in what we do and we want to be recognized for doing a good job in being the first contact."

The snake has been part of American political culture since before the Revolutionary War, first appearing in a political cartoon by Benjamin Franklin in 1754. The snake was cut into eight sections, representing individual colonies, and playing off a common superstition that



**Bruce Warmuth and Michael Ferry**

a snake cut into pieces could come back to life if you joined the sections together before sunset.

The suggestion, of course, was that individual pieces could be transformed into a formidable power through unity.

In 1774 Paul Revere added the snake to the masthead of the newspaper called The Massachusetts Spy.



**Casey Kelley and Jesse Justus**

By 1775, the snake symbol had spread far beyond the pages of newspapers. It was appearing on uniform buttons, on paper money, on banners and flags—anywhere that colonists saw an opportunity to declare their intention of defending themselves.

That same year, Congress authorized the mustering of five companies of Marines for the war of independence that was getting underway against Great Britain. Some of the Marines who enlisted in Philadelphia were carrying drums painted yellow, emblazoned with a fierce rattlesnake with 13 rattles, coiled and ready to strike, and sporting the motto: "Don't Tread on Me."

An anonymous letter to the Philadelphia Journal in late 1775 offered this observation on the snake symbol:

"She never begins an attack, nor, when once engaged, ever surrenders: She is therefore an emblem of magnanimity and true courage. ... she never wounds 'till she has generously given notice, even to her enemy, and cautioned him against the danger of treading on her."

It is now believed that the "anonymous" author was Ben Franklin himself.

Members at NV Energy who need a copy of the sticker can contact Mike Grimm at 775-720-8021.



**Michele Piechocinsky**



**Smiley Stahl**



**Joel Kuntz**

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***Don't Tread On Us***