



# The Edison Planning United Newsletter

12-6-19

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## Why We Need a Union

by Ernesto Chavez, Planner 2

For the last 13 years, I've been a planner out of Metro West. In that time, I've seen many changes in Planning - a few have been good, the majority have been bad. The company has consistently taken away benefits and pay from planners and designers. I'm writing this letter to help shed some light on why I think Planning should unionize. I'm proud of the work I do and feel that unionizing will protect the integrity of our profession.

I first joined a union right out of high school when I began working for a local phone company. We were represented by CWA, the Communication Workers of America. Being a part of the union was automatic as soon as I was hired, and yes, I had to pay union dues. It was a small price to pay for the benefits and protection I received.

On top of our normal raises, we would receive a 3% cost of living raise every year, plus our annual bonus. We could utilize a union representative if unfair practices were implemented.

annual contract. The goal was to have a union representative in annual processes were implemented. They would represent us and work for us while also instituting testing to ensure that the most qualified employee could earn a desired position

The union protected EVERYONE: both the hard workers and those that didn't work hard. Unions can't pick and choose who deserves help, they represent everyone in the bargaining unit equally and without prejudice.

While not all employees work at the same quality and speed, my question is, why is this a reason not to unionize? If an employee's performance is impacting the group, then management needs to step in and address it. That's what they get paid for. As unionized designers and planners, we would have the right to discuss this issue with management to ensure fair work assignments and proper training is available for the entire group.

I left the phone company in 1998. After working for a few other companies, I landed a job with Edison. I started in customer service and was there for 4 years. I was able to transfer to a groundman position in Metro West, where I was a member of IBEW 47. I was there for a year when an opportunity opened up to get into Planning on a D.O. in 2006. I was eventually made permanent and I am now a P2.

Since 2010, SCE has been slowly taking away wages and benefits from Planning. Who's to say this won't continue? There is nothing currently in place to protect us from unfair practices. Edison can do whatever they want, whenever they want. As long as we are unrepresented there's nothing we can do about it. Here are some examples:

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When I started in Planning, planner 1s were allowed to be on duty. We were upgraded to FS pay, at double-time, which was about \$100 an hour. The callout process was manual. By the time a duty call was completed, you could log 4-5 hours of overtime for 1 call which was a pretty good incentive to come in. Around 2011, P1s were taken off of duty, while rural districts still allowed P1's on duty for several more years. Now, only P2s are allowed on the duty and callouts are automated which has resulted in far less pay.

P2s who take a callout get overtime, but when a P2 is assigned to be on duty, they have to be available at all hours to respond and get paid nothing for it. For the entire time we are responsible for duty, we have to put our lives on hold and can't plan anything with family or friends - just in case we get a call. We don't get paid for being on stand-by. The crews, in contrast, get to decide if they want to come in. If they do, they earn DOUBLE-TIME from the moment they accept the call to the time they finish their job and report back to the yard. Edison didn't give this to them. They negotiated this into their contract. Why shouldn't we do the same?

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Edison loves to force overtime on its employees. ESC estimators (planners) at PG&E voted

down forced overtime, in favor of employees being able to spend time with their families and taking overtime voluntarily. This made PG&E hire more estimators to help with their increased work loads. How many service centers are drowning in work, and don't have enough workers to keep up, all because Edison won't hire accordingly?

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I was promoted to P2 in 2011. The position paid Op-Min. Not long after I became a P2, Edison held a meeting to advise us that Op-Min was being phased out and that starting in 2013, all new P2s would receive largely reduced salaries. I was "red-circled" - my pay was capped out, so I didn't receive a raise until 2018. That's 5 years with no increase in pay. I'm currently paid \$55 an hour. How many planners make this now? How long will it take planners to reach this hourly amount when management decides how much you should get paid?

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There are no productivity metrics to objectively show a planner's real worth. Edison just recently increased the wages for planners and almost doubled the bonus percentage for P2's, all to try to avoid unionization. The P1 bonus percentage remained unchanged. Is this fair?

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How hard has it been for planners or designers to try to move to a service center that's closer to home when a position opens up nearby? We all know that if someone in that office wants the position, the chances are almost zero that anyone outside of that service center will be able to get in. For a P1 position, they'll award it to a designer who wants to promote, for a P2, they'll award it to a P1 that wants to promote. The current transfer/promotion process feels completely corrupt.

The promotion process for ESC members at PG&E has candidates test for a desired position to ensure fairness. It's not based on seniority or who you know, just who is best for the job.

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Unionizing has its pros and cons. A union is only as strong as its members. Right now, we have no voice, no power, and we should no longer be afraid to speak up. Unionizing will protect long term employees and new hires, alike. It protects our wages, benefits and our rights. I hope that we can all make our decision based on these facts, and know that as members of ESC Local 20, Edison will have to negotiate with us in good faith and will no longer be able to take things away from us by force ever again.

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**[Sign the ESC Local 20 Authorization Card!](#)**

**Already signed? Ask your coworkers to sign today!**

**<https://www.joinlocal20.org/edison/edison-authorization-card/>**

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We want each and every Planner and Designer to be informed. If you need help talking with your coworkers or want to join the organizing effort, please contact your ESC organizer:

Desert and Rurals: Jerome Christensen [jchristensen@ifpte20.org](mailto:jchristensen@ifpte20.org)

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