

Thanks to TVA leadership, workers

Your Turn

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Guest columnists

We are seven unions representing Tennessee Valley Authority's boilermakers, plant operators, electricians, linemen, laborers, machinists, heavy equipment operators, pipefitters, material handlers and truck drivers. These are thousands of TVA employees who operate and maintain TVA's plants and transmission lines. These are the people who literally keep the lights on for millions of us who live and work in the Tennessee Valley.

Thank you, TVA trades and labor employees. Despite the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, you keep coming to work. You continue doing your job, utilizing your skills to ensure that everyone – the hospitals, the homes, the businesses – everyone in the community has electrical services needed to care for those impacted by this virus.

You continue to perform vital work as our schools and businesses work to reopen, just as you were working prior to the coronavirus. Trades and labor craft workers have provided service to TVA for the past 80 years, and the people of the Tennessee Valley know you will continue to provide these vital services needed in our communities. We thank you for your service.

TVA leadership makes a difference

We also want to thank TVA leadership. You have shown that you truly care about our craft employees. This spring, when we first learned about COVID-19, you acted with us to quickly minimize risks to our members, our families and our communities. You reduced the number of employees reporting to work, helping to protect those who must be onsite at the generating plants and transmission facilities. When our members needed it, TVA provided additional safety measures – additional personal protective equipment, temperature checks, masks, and other necessary protocols to limit the spread of the virus

and protect our people.

We know that the utility industry, along with many other industries, had to adjust to these unprecedented times. We appreciate your efforts to keep everyone safe while our craft union members work to power the valley.

From its inception, TVA and our craft unions have established a very effective partnership. TVA's first chairman, David Lilienthal said, "We are not simply, not anti-labor – we are a pro-labor policy organization."

An effective partnership in a time of change

What Lilienthal said more than 80 years ago is true today. In fact, the Trades and Labor Council for Annual Employees of TVA and the Teamsters are working together with TVA now more effectively than ever. Our partnership with TVA through the Code of Excellence benefits the employees we represent. We recognize that the industry is changing as technology changes and we intend to move forward together. For example, as TVA has made difficult decisions to close several of its coal plants, we have worked together, labor and management, to find jobs elsewhere in the company for our members. TVA provided training when needed to qualify our members for their new positions. We have worked together with TVA to help our members work closer to their homes, to help their families and our communities.

Change in industry is sometimes difficult. But we understand the business need for TVA to keep rates low and operate as efficiently as possible. This is how TVA best fulfills its mission to serve the people.

We want TVA to continue to be successful. That's what's best for our members, and that's what's best for the people of the Tennessee Valley. We support TVA's mission to serve the people of the Valley, the TVA Board of Directors' and the efforts from TVA leadership to fulfill this mission collectively.

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