



fortunate to be able to work for 17 years in IBEW Local 3. And then in 2007, I went up to work at the Central Labor Council as the Assistant to the Executive Director, who at the time was Ed Ott, when we had an executive director model. And then, as you know, back 10 years ago, they changed the model and they went to a full-time model for an elected full-time president. And that was when I began as president.

You know, it's really very important, the lived experience as a worker, working out in the field. I worked swing and night shift for over 14 years.

Q: Get electrocuted much?


VA: No, fortunately. But there's a lot that you learn about working people and about life, I think, by actually getting out there and working over the years. I used to work nights. And I was fascinated by the amount of working people in this city that work after hours when everybody else goes home and goes to sleep. I used to see them, you know, working in buildings, cleaning buildings, people on a night shift. Maybe when a shift ends at 11 o'clock at night, going home. And some people coming into work. And I think we take it for granted in America how many people are out there just 24 hours a day working. People that are making our cities, making our towns, making our states in this country work. They do it in unbelievable and extraordinary circumstances at times.

So working all those years with people out in the field, getting to work with some of the most skilled and professional workers in Local 3 of IBEW, but also seeing and interacting with the general workforce, particularly at night – that was something that always stayed with me.

Q: IBEW Local 3 is famous for being very politically engaged. That must have been a whole education right there.

VA: Well, yeah, they understood the value of being engaged as a workforce, as unions. They understood our role of helping the less fortunate. It was taught in my day and still is today through their current business manager, Chris Erikson. He does a terrific job at making sure Local 3 continues to help the less fortunate, stay engaged in our community, support elected officials, support communities and working class people, and making sure that we are doing our part as a union. And then, more broadly, as a labor movement in the city of New York. And that's what we've tried to do over the past, I would say 10 years, at the CLC.

Q: So you came in in 2011 and the very neN (k)-26.9'-30.1 (y)61.5 (, s)-6214.7 -6.8 (pl0(n)-10.3 (d.7 (u)-18.2 (l6 (u)-28.8 ()-7.4 (t135 ('))11.1 (sv)17.6 (e t)-301 Tf-0)-331.8 (e) (p)-9 (o)-1.7 (r)-1.7 (m)-33.5 (m)4.-1.8 (e.1 (y)r \$8 (e68 (e4.1 (d539.5 (o)3.323.1 (a)13.2 (y)-10 ()))-23.2 o, mord tor, m.1.5 (d)-207-0.00 -(1)8TD TcSo (a)-11.5 (w5.2 (1)8h)-1.8 (e)4.2 (k)h7 (t i)-6 (e)-0w (n)-1en 32 (y 1)51.1.8 (e c)-1.2 (i)9.91 (e)-8.1 (a)roahe CLC.



inequality and economic insecurity that we've seen grow over the past several decades. We've worked through those issues. There might be some other areas, which at times, there's some conflicts between different parties. But I know a lot of these folks for many, many, many years, and I'm optimistic, because I see a culture of people wanting to sit down and try to work through and have the city grow.

We want to see the city economy grow. We want to see it come back now, of course, from the pandemic, but we also want to see it grow in a way that the prosperity is broad based. We want to see our city economy be a diverse economy. We want to make sure that we have sufficient revenues to support budgets that reflect our values as a city. But we need to make sure that we have sustainable economic growth as well, in order to support those priorities as well.

We often forget it's not only just another city; it's arguably, I will say, the most important city in the world. It absolutely is. But, you know, there's an ecosystem, which makes our city work in a partnership between the various sectors of the labor movement, academia, government, business and industry. We all kind of work together to achieve, at times when it's working well, this growing and thriving economy. The numbers were pretty staggering. As I said, we reached 4.6 million workers in the city. We had 70 million tourists a year. A growing, thriving, booming travel and tourism industry, entertainment sector, hospitality sector, building sector. So many things going right, everybody kind of working together.

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