

Philadelphia IBEW union executive found guilty of embezzling hundreds of thousands in union dues

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On Thursday December 7, 2023, the former business manager of the politically connected International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 98 in Philadelphia, John “Johnny Doc” Dougherty, was found guilty on more than 60 counts for the felonious embezzlement of union assets, falsifying documents and engaging in various forms of fraud.

Dougherty will be sentenced on March 20, 2024, and will almost certainly be ordered to pay restitution to Local 98. Dougherty faces at least 20 years in prison for his first conviction, with more sentencing to come.

The union executive, along with the former Philadelphia City Council member Bobby Henon, were found guilty of bribery charges in 2021. Dougherty spent tens of thousands in union dues in order to bribe Henon, a former official at the IBEW local. Dougherty faces a third trial in spring 2024 on federal extortion charges.

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 98 was officially chartered in 1900, and has about 4,700 members. It is headquartered in Philadelphia and its website states that it is the most financially successful IBEW local in the US, Canada and Puerto Rico.

The local became deeply involved in Philadelphia Democratic Party politics under Dougherty, who was instrumental and crucial in the election of Democratic officials, including the serving mayor Jim Kenney and incoming mayor Cherelle Parker. Under Dougherty, Local 98 poured hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations, totaling up to \$1,071,381 in 2023, to the Democratic Party.

In the embezzlement trial, 11 jurors found Dougherty and his “trusted lieutenant” Local 98’s former

president Brian Burrows, guilty on a majority of charges brought against them.

Dougherty was found guilty of personal spending over the years which he charged to a union card. He and Burrows misspent more than \$600,000 from the union fund on everything from mundane everyday items to expensive birthday parties to renovations, construction and home repairs for family and friends.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* published an article on December 8 describing each count in detail. By themselves and in sum they demonstrate the staggering level of corruption endemic among the ranks of the US trade union bureaucracy.

The gangster mentality of the union bureaucracy was illustrated in a recent story published by the *Inquirer*. In a 2020 meeting, recorded by a federal informant, Dougherty is heard threatening to “run over” and “put under the water” any officials suspected of disloyalty in the investigation.

Among the larger amounts stolen by Dougherty was \$26,316 in construction and repair work done in May 2016 at his Pennsport home. He was also convicted for failure to report renovations and repairs to homes belonging to himself, his sister, his father, and his Union Pub bar, to the tune of about \$78,151 on his 2012-2015 tax returns. Dougherty also took out over \$137,547 for “personal use” during the same years.

Just one year ago, Local 98’s political director, Marita Crawford, pleaded guilty along with other union officials, Michael Neill, Brian Fiocca and Niko Rodriguez, for stealing dues money for personal use. They were all close associates of Dougherty.

The scandal in Local 98 highlights the endemic corruption present in the US union apparatus, “labor

leaders” whom members of the fraternity of phony left organizations insist workers bow before. The public officials on whom Dougherty showered gifts paid for with stolen dues money, were a “who’s who” of local Philadelphia Democratic Party politics.

The scandal in Philadelphia follows the corruption scandal in the UAW, which saw a dozen former officials jailed, included two UAW presidents. Among other exposures, the years-long federal investigation revealed the funneling of bribes by Fiat Chrysler into the pockets of UAW officials for management-friendly sellout contracts.

The latest scandal further testifies to the fact that these so called unions are not workers organizations but profit-driven entities hostile to the workers they misrepresent. The national IBEW sits atop assets of \$87,067,134, according to data from 2023.

The personal corruption of the union apparatus goes hand in hand with the daily betrayal of workers. The IBEW played an important role in blocking a strike by railroad workers last year and helping the Biden administration impose a management-dictated contract.



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