IAFF Magnificent 7th District
Executive Leadership Series

Application for Class II

Testimonials from ELS Class I

As you review the ELS Class II processes, requirements and application, you will find the course is a serious commitment. As things worth doing are also hard, the course will challenge you on many levels. And, as things that are hard are wont to be, the ELS is deeply rewarding.

Below are testimonials from a few of the ELS Class I graduates so you can get a sense of the value they found in the experience.

The 7th District Executive Leadership class didn’t only help me become a better union leader, it helped me become a better community leader, husband and father. The lessons I learned in ELS transcended my union work into every aspect of my life. From mediation to arbitration, I found that I wasn’t alone in the issues I faced in my local, community or my family.

The friends I made in class, and throughout the 7th District, are friends I’ll have for life. Besides the education learned in the ELS, the networking contacts made are worth the time and effort. I can pick up the phone and find help for any issue I may have.

I can truly say, ELS was one of the best choices I’ve made in my life. It’s an opportunity that shouldn’t be missed.

~ Tim Parker, Lewiston Idaho Local 1773, ELS Class I Valedictorian

The Executive Leadership Series Class I was nothing short of amazing. I knew after the first class (a week-long class on mediation) that the class would have a profound impact on my union life, my firefighter life, and my personal life.

In a little over a year, our group learned how to organize, advanced negotiation, political action, mediation, arbitration, LEADERSHIP, the ins and outs of every position in our state organizations, how to put on an event...the list goes on. Not only did we learn this information for one state, but for all four states in our Magnificent 7th.

I firmly believe we have been trained to be effective in any state, for any situation and to operate at the highest level – as our members deserve. This class helped several of us with promotions and taught us how to listen and pay attention to the details, a trait our families enjoy tremendously.

The class will require your time, will require a substantial financial commitment and will take you away from home; however, in one year’s time you will learn to be a better trade unionist, better person and most importantly you will gain 16 family members and forge lifelong friendships. Good luck and enjoy your adventure.

~ Chris Mortensen, President, IAFF Local 1433
In my mind, the Executive leadership Series (ELS) is a must for anyone who wants to serve the members of this union as well as all working families in the United States and Canada. I have been an active leader in many levels of this organization for over two decades and felt like I have a good handle on what it is we do. For the most part I did – within my own state. The vision we have for this IAFF and the 7th District breaks down the walls of “your local” and “your state” and teaches you to expand the good work we do to help all wage earners do better for themselves and their families.

I have used the knowledge I received in all areas of my life.

~ Jeffrey P. Wainwright, WSCFF 2nd District Representative

I began ELS Class 1 without knowing anybody in the group. I had experience as a local secretary and had attended WSCFF conferences but was not “plugged in” to the larger WSCFF or IAFF organization. In essence, I was a spectator.

From the first day of ELS Class 1, I realized this was not your average group of people and this was not your average union class. Ricky introduced us to the “restorative circle” right off the bat. I think we all nervously chuckled at the idea, but it was the perfect ice breaker and ended up being the thing I looked forward to each time we met. It was our chance to remove all distractions, shed the armor, and truly express ourselves. These events, where we stood together in a circle and shared our emotions and life events with each other, are where we created a deeper bond of brotherhood.

I graduated ELS Class 1 with much more information, knowledge and experience than when I started, but the greatest thing I got from ELS Class 1 was 15 brothers I can count on at any time for anything. We shared many laughs, a few tears and a few beers... and we all came away better people.

~ Matt Ready, Local 1461 Secretary

My concern going into the class was that I was not ready, or rather, not experienced enough to sit with this group. It became clear early on that several other members had the same feeling. Certainly, some members had more experience than others, and it only added to the course.

I soon found I had plenty to offer the group as well. The class is challenging, and you will get out of your comfort zone on more than one occasion. As a group you will overcome hurdles that life will inevitably throw your way, a wedding, a funeral, a loss of a member, and yet the work continues because people are counting on you.

With that said, this was one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had. This group has grown close and I we have built a life-long connection. The work experience and succession planning are the goals, the relationships are needed to accomplish those goals.

Each time you leave home for a class you are giving something up – time with family, time serving your local and time for yourself. And, much like going to the station, you are giving time with one family to spend time with another. I strongly believe that this is what we became during Class 1, and I’m excited to see how Class 2 rises to the challenge!

Justin Mack, Anchorage Firefighters Local 1264, 907-947-1082
My experience with the ELS series was unlike any other class or conference I've ever attended. I entered this series with an expectation that I would be just adding some additional "union knowledge" to my skill set. DVP Walsh quickly blew that expectation out of the water.

From the very beginning, I was challenged to learn how to really listen during mediation training, but moreover to become vulnerable amongst my peers during the restorative circle. It is here where I realized that I was being thrust into a place of uncomfortable growth for the next year of my life.

I was challenged to learn new skills surrounded by talented peers from around the 7th District, while internally we knew we all were in this same uncomfortable setting. And as the Brotherhood does best, we immediately came together as a group, much like new recruits in training academy. We struggled, we joked, we challenged each other, we failed, and we forged an unspoken bond of support that we'd lift each other up, support each other, listen, and of course be there when we needed anything.

When you are led by one of the most prominent and passionate leaders in labor surrounded by peers with their own excellent skill sets, you not only learn new material, you learn from your fellow classmates. I just wanted to keep up with the group, really.... or hopefully contribute as much as they all did.

In the end, all of us from ELS-1 will tell you that there was not one single session on "Leadership," yet we all graduated better leaders than when we started. We also graduated knowing that our own family had just gotten a little bigger.

~ Paul Stueve, Local 726

ELS Class 1 brought together a group of individuals from three different states, with varying experience and from very different backgrounds. Due to the imagination and skill to put this class together by DVP Walsh, we walked away a band of brothers. We finished as one, with each of us making the others stronger.

The course work is tough – learning state labor laws; writing ULPs; learning how to be a mediator; presenting arbitrations – this work was intense. Our class made all of it fun, taking time out of the busy schedule to build comradeship.

This is a program I would recommend for any leader. Whether you want to be a local leader, state leader or the next DVP, this class is for you.

~ Tim Hoover, WSCFF 3rd District Representative

I highly recommend the 7th District's Executive Leadership Series. It covers a multitude of classes and experiences that will help you grow as a leader. The bonds you create with your classmates will last a lifetime and you will gain a group of leaders to collaborate with. The ELS is a great investment of your time.

~ Greg Womack, Division Chief of Operations, Boise Fire Department