

“Politics” is not always attractive; many like to complain about it, but few want to jump in and impact the political world.

Andres Ojeda Junior is a third year apprentice with Laborers Local 751, Kankakee, Illinois. In the February 2, 2010 Illinois primary, Andres was elected a Democratic precinct committee person for Momence. At the next organizational meeting, precinct committee people from the surrounding areas elected him their district director, covering northeastern Kankakee County. This was all new and quite an honor for an apprentice dipping his toes in political waters. Andres might be the first Hispanic elected to such an office in the county.



Andres’ father is a 20-year-member of Laborers Local 751; he also has three uncles in the local. His father came to the Kankakee area many years ago and worked on a sod farm before becoming a union Laborer. Andres father taught him that “in order to have something, you have to work as hard as you can and slowly you will progress to where you need to be.”

Andres worked as trucker and on farms before joining the Laborers apprenticeship. When Local 751 business manager Mike Smith approached him about running for a precinct slot, Andres said, “If you don’t stand up, who are you going to have to represent yourself? If you don’t do it, nobody else will.”

Since joining the local, Andres, besides working on the job, has faithfully attended his apprentice classes and has supported the local on picket lines and other union activities. Andres and his wife have a son who was born shortly before he began his apprenticeship.

The Iraq War and the money’s influence in politics are two things that led him to put his name on the ballot. “With the Republicans I started seeing changes I didn’t want, money being spent wrong and a war that shouldn’t have been. Why are you going to fight when the gentleman who provoked all this is not even there?”

A regular voter since he turned 18, his initial political involvement was voting in presidential election years. As he became more active, he saw the influence of local politics, too.

In speaking to his fellow union and community members, Andres emphasizes the importance of voting. “Many races are close, you can win in a race by a couple of votes. We are out there to get people to voice their opinion; everyone complains about taxes and issues but then no one bothers to vote.”

Andres praised his business manager, Mike Smith, saying, “no one works as hard.”

The admiration is mutual. Smith noted that Andres is “an apprentice that makes our union proud. He’s a hard worker, he’s willing to get involved and he’s a down to earth family man who is going to go far.”

