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Fall 2020

# USW@Work

A Publication of the United Steelworkers

A Powerful Voice for Workers



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**"RECOVERING FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND ENSURING SHARED PROSPERITY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME WILL TAKE BOLD ACTION AND A SUSTAINED COMMITMENT. JOE BIDEN'S PLAN FOR REVITALIZING AMERICAN MANUFACTURING DEMONSTRATES BOTH."** INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS M. CONWAY

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Members of Local 4889 in Philadelphia dedicated themselves to improving one of the most troubled neighborhoods in their hometown.

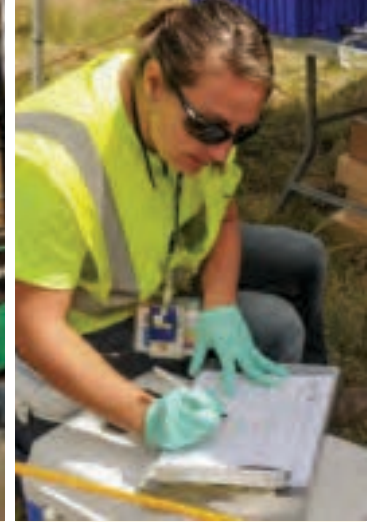
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## Health Care is Worth the Fight

As a retired member of Local 5668 in Ravenswood, W.Va., I know how important health care coverage is for our seniors, especially at a time like this when a global pandemic is threatening the health of thousands of retired Americans every single day.

That is why I was so proud to see the article in the most recent issue of *USW@Work* about the union's victory at the Constellium plant in Ravenswood, where the company wanted to unilaterally gut the retiree health care plan.

The truth is, without a union there to fight that battle, the company might have gotten away with it. And the fact that the union kept fighting even when the odds seemed impossible makes me proud to call myself a Steelworker. That's what Steelworkers do – we fight for what is right. And that's why we need unions like the USW in every workplace.

Knowing that we have the thousands of members of the USW and the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) in our corner all across the country makes us that much stronger when we're facing off against the bosses who want to cut our health care, or politicians who want to gut Medicare and Medicaid, leaving people like me without the benefits they earned over so many years of hard work.

Thank you to all of the retired Steelworkers who keep fighting the good fight even after they retire. If you're a retired Steelworker and you aren't a member of SOAR, you should join today and help us keep up the fight.

*Lesley Shockey*  
President, SOAR Chapter 23-16  
Sandyville, W.Va.

## Keep the Heat on Lawmakers

The 2020 election is fast approaching, and predictably, an incredibly divisive election cycle is sucking the air out of the room. It's natural that the presidential race would dominate the news cycle as well as our attention.

The president sets the country's tone and agenda for the next 4-8 years, which can have ramifications for decades. Most importantly for union members, the president appoints the members of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). All union members have to decide for themselves – in any election – which candidate they truly believe will guide the NLRB in the direction that will broaden the rights of working people.

It is imperative that we not let the drama of the presidential race distract us from the vital House and Senate races that are also taking place, and we cannot lose sight of our common goals as union members. Many of the challenges workers face are currently in stark relief, thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, and there are multiple pieces of legislation before Congress to address those challenges.

We must use our strength to ensure passage of the HEROES Act, rather than the inferior HEALS Act. After the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act passed both houses of Congress, we mobilized through our Rapid Response network

to address the imperfections in that legislation, and because of our efforts, six states introduced bills to close loopholes in the federal version. It passed in Colorado already, and with each state that joins, thousands more working people will be able to count on paid sick leave if they're quarantined due to COVID-19. The peace of mind that brings is invaluable, and it's only the beginning of what we can obtain if we stay active and innovative.

This is in addition to our ongoing struggles to protect and strengthen our right to organize (PRO Act), and to protect our pensions (partially by removing the GROW Act from the aforementioned HEROES Act). We have a lot on our plate, but that is precisely why we can't let our guard down or allow our focus to shift from the substantive to the sensational.

The election is now only weeks away. No matter who wins, we have battles to fight that existed before 2020, and they'll exist beyond. We must keep the heat on our representatives, regardless of their party affiliation, their disposition toward unions, or whether they are incoming, outgoing, or entrenched. A sympathetic occupant in the White House would be a major advantage, but it is in Congress that we have our best opportunity to make headway. Our presence must be felt before, during, and after this election. We cannot afford to take a break. Unless we maintain this pressure and continue to make our voices heard, we will fall short, and there's too much at stake to allow that to happen. We have the influence; we need to use it. As President Jimmy Carter once said, "Working together, with our common faith, we cannot fail."

*Noah Cope*  
Recording Secretary, Local-21005  
Plymouth, Mich.

## Take a Look at Both Parties

I feel I must respond to the letter in the Summer issue, "Union Members Should Vote Biden."


The writer states that he has "never" voted for a Republican and never will. I say that is a narrow-minded view of politics and what is good for this country as a whole.

The writer is certainly entitled to his views and voting preferences, but to say that he never will vote Republican means that he doesn't really care about the goodness, honesty or ability of the candidate, just that he is a Democrat.

*Russ McCoy*  
Local 1014, retired  
La Porte, Ind.

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USW active and retired members and their families are invited to "speak out." Letters should be short and to the point. We reserve the right to edit for length.



# 'YOU GIVE 110 PERCENT'

*USW Glassmakers  
at Owens-Illinois  
Dedicate Themselves  
to Quality Products*

*Editor's Note: USW@Work visited the Owens-Illinois glass factory prior to the outbreak of COVID-19. The members there are now following numerous additional safety protocols beyond those seen in these photos.*

Photos by  
Steve Dietz

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Susana Espino

As they spend their days making glass bottles and jars for beer, wine, soft drinks and other foods and beverages, the members of Local 137M in California can spot the slightest imperfections in their products with just a quick touch or glance.

That commitment to meticulous quality control is a hallmark of the work force at Owens-Illinois (O-I), and also one of the factors that set USW glassmakers and their products apart from those that come out of non-union glass plants.

“Putting out a good product means having pride in what you do,” said Local 137M President Tahinna Aguayo. “When you are out there doing a specific job, you carry it out to a T, because you want to ensure that your customers get nothing but quality in their hands.”

The customers who purchase O-I products have been on the receiving end of that quality for nearly 10 decades. The plant marked its 90th year in 2019 and shows no signs of stopping.

“It’s a sense of pride that you have in the job that you do,” Aguayo said. “You go out there and you make sure that you give 110 percent. And on top of that, you try to transfer that energy to your co-workers as well.”

The longevity the plant and its workers have enjoyed in southern California is due in large part to the union spreading that contagious energy and dedication through the work force, members say.

“This job is everything to me,” said Local 137M member Anita Villagran.

The plant, southeast of downtown Los Angeles, is one of 13 O-I glass facilities employing a combined 3,300 USW members in the United States. The USW also represents members at two O-I factories in Canada.

Each facility has three collective bargaining agreements; one for production and maintenance, one covering the automatic machine department, and one for mold makers.

Those agreements provide stability, safety and economic security for union members and their families.

“The union provides a lot for our families,” said Local 137M member Jesus Bautista. “It gives us job security.”

Aguayo said that in the early days of the COVID-19 pandem-

ic this spring, the fight for safety was a challenge for the local, but that union activism as well as state- and county-level safety mandates helped to push the company to do the right thing.

## Thousands of Glass Workers

Overall, the USW represents about 25,000 workers in the glass industry, including hundreds of mold makers and thousands of others who produce containers, tableware, fiberglass, flat glass, sheet glass, auto glass, tubing and other materials.

The USW’s GMP Council coordinates bargaining for nearly 10,000 members at container companies like O-I, as well as Ardagh Glass, Anchor Glass, Gallo Glass, Longhorn Glass, Gerresheimer and Arkansas Glass.

The fact that Local 137M members have thousands of union siblings across the North American glass industry standing with them helps in their fight for fair wages and benefits, especially in a relatively high-cost-of-living area like California.

“The workers at the O-I plant are a perfect example of how labor and management can work together to ensure long-term success,” said GMP Council Chair Bruce R. Smith. “The plant hasn’t survived for 91 years by accident. It has survived and thrived because the workers share a commitment to hard work, fairness and solidarity, day in and day out.”

The USW’s membership in the glass industry grew as a result of the 2018 merger with the Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers International (GMP), which Smith served as president prior to the merger. The members of Local 137M were a part of GMP.

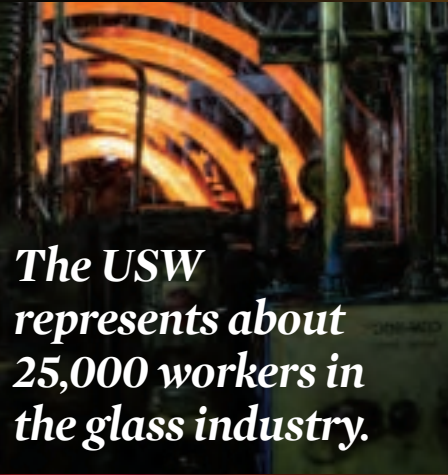
“It’s a big plus to have the union behind us,” Bautista said. “Every day when you come to work, you know you have a good-paying job. The wages are great; the insurance is good.”

Those obvious benefits of union membership help to reduce turnover and build continuity, both for the union and the company, Aguayo said.

“They get good people in here, because at the end of the day, they stay,” she said. “These are really good-paying union jobs.”



David Pina



**The USW  
represents about  
25,000 workers in  
the glass industry.**



Jaime Ortiz



### 'A Little Family to Me'

Villagran, who has spent much of her career at the O-I plant, is one of those dedicated workers. Her brother and two daughters also work at the factory.

"This is what I have been doing for 41 years. I love it," she said. "This is like a little family to me. This is my second home."

Aguayo said that the 250 USW members at the plant strive to build on that family atmosphere. She said the local and the company have worked hard in recent years to create a collaborative relationship that allows the two sides to focus on putting out quality products while making sure that both the workers

and the company can prosper.

"We've worked really hard," Aguayo said. "We've built a strong management-labor relationship. We have a very close working relationship."

The fact that both the company and the union are dedicated to quality control has helped the two sides find other areas on which they have common ground, said plant manager Doug Pittman.

"It's a very important relationship. I like to think of it as a partnership," he said. "We share in our success, and we share in the challenges."

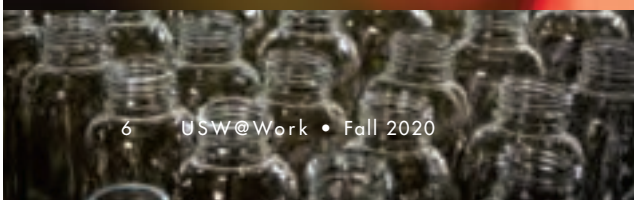
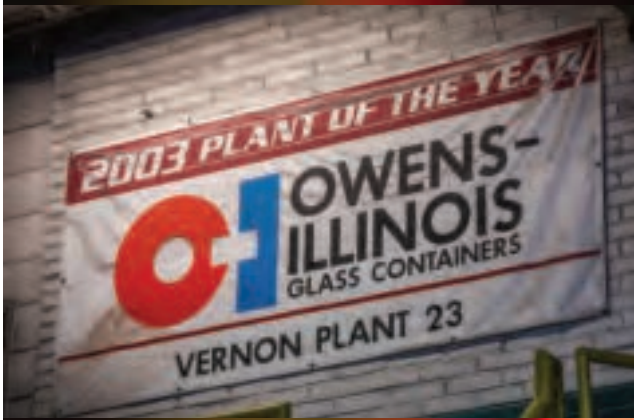
### Fighting for Fair Trade

Some of those challenges have included working in an industry that

consistently faces pressure from cheaply made, unfairly traded overseas competition. That pressure has come largely from Chinese manufacturers, which have illegally dumped cheap glass containers and other products in the United States in an attempt to undercut manufacturers like O-I and others.

"This union fights for fair trade on so many fronts," said District 12 Director Gaylan Prescott. "It goes far beyond steel and aluminum. We need a level playing field in every industry – paper, rubber and plastics, glass. These jobs are worth the fight."

The basic glassmaking process has been the same for thousands of years – workers heat raw materials such as



Jesus Perez



Anita Villagran



“*The union provides a lot for our families. It gives us job security.*”



Michael Paul



Annie Villagran



Jesus Bautista



Jesus Barrios

sand, limestone and soda ash combined with recycled glass to create a molten liquid, then form that liquid into shapes using molds. While USW members at O-I still employ those methods, it is their attention to detail and commitment to excellence that make their products second to none.

Each piece passes through a series of inspections to make sure it meets the

company’s rigorous standards. Although cameras scan the containers for defects and machines test their strength, workers also manually and visually inspect the products to ensure quality.

Containers that don’t meet O-I standards are recycled as “cullet” and added to a future batch. The rest are shipped to beverage and food companies, filled up and sent to store shelves, restaurants

and other consumers.

Because their products ultimately end up directly in the hands of consumers, the workers at O-I take special care to ensure that they are free from imperfections.

“At the end of the day,” Aguayo said, “it is management and union working together to get this product out there.”

# HEALTH AND SAFETY IS FRONT AND CENTER

*Coronavirus Pandemic Reveals Vital Importance of Union HSE Committees*

As the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges for workers in every sector of the economy, it also exposed a very simple but important fact: Without unions to collectively fight for health and safety protections, most American workers have been forced to confront those challenges on their own.

Even for USW members like Tyona Wolk, president of Local 9600, health and safety issues have been a struggle in recent months, but having the union as a foundation has made the difference.

“We have been able to step up and fill a void with this pandemic, making sure that the employer looks out for employee safety where they weren’t going to initially,” Wolk said. “They know that we’re watching and we have people on the floor who are reporting to us, and we bring our concerns to them.”

Wolk’s local represents about 800 members who work at Oroville Hospital and nearby clinics north of Sacramento, Calif. The workers there are covered by four collective bargaining agreements that include

nearly every job in the facilities aside from registered nursing.

“It’s been a struggle, and it’s still a struggle,” Wolk said. “We’re still fighting to be able to get fresh personal protective equipment (PPE).”

Wolk said USW health and safety activists fought to get high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters in areas where COVID-19 and possible COVID-19 patients were staying, made sure the filters were adequately maintained, and fought to make sure that management took other important steps to protect workers and their patients.

## The Union Difference

Without the strength of the USW and its commitment to health and safety activism at every local, that fight would have been nearly impossible, said Wolk, who previously worked at a non-union health care facility.

“We literally had no voice,” she said. “I clearly remember us feeling incredibly timid in every aspect of our jobs.”

A strong voice on health and safety issues is essential, particularly in health care

settings, said International Vice President Fred Redmond, who oversees bargaining for the USW’s health care workers.

**“IT’S BEEN A STRUGGLE, AND IT’S STILL A STRUGGLE.**

**WE’RE STILL FIGHTING TO BE ABLE TO GET FRESH PPE.”**

Tyona Wolk, Local 9600

“The issues of health and safety have never been more important,” Redmond said. “And they are never more important than for our front-line health care workers, who every day put themselves in harm’s way to care for others. They need us to care for them as well as they do for us.”

Raising health and safety concerns is perhaps the most important function of a union, especially at the local level, said Paul Shaffer, president of Local 4-0005 in Ticonderoga, N.Y.

“Without us confronting managers and holding them to doing the right thing, it would have been all over,” Shaffer said of his local’s response to the virus.

Without persistent union activism, the company’s response would have been a patchwork of incomplete and ineffective measures, leaving workers and their families far more vulnerable to illness, he said.

“We’ve been trying to stay out in front of it,” Shaffer said, explaining that he and other local leaders worked with the company to create two pandemic teams – a pre-outbreak and post-outbreak group – before the virus gained a foothold in their upstate New York town. “We’ve been pretty lucky as far as cases go here.”

## Planning Ahead

Local Local 4-0005 Vice President and Safety Facilitator Jason Vargo is part of the facility’s pre-out-



break team. He and his team members meet three times a week for about an hour each time to discuss developments and make plans in case COVID-19 begins to spread at the facility, which is home to about 600 USW members, as well as contractors and members of management.

The group discusses issues from PPE distribution to workplace sanitation to how to keep masks from fogging up workers' glasses.

"You name it, we've faced it together," Vargo said.

Vargo said that in some cases, workers are forced into close quarters together, and that the reality of life in a paper mill doesn't always fit neatly with protocols handed down by bureaucrats. That's where local safety leaders become essential in making sure those important concepts can translate into the reality of life on the job.

"The golden rule is to socially distance. When that can't happen, then that's when PPE really comes into play," he said. "You cannot make these decisions from an office. You need to be with the guys on the floor. You have to make safety so it works."

### An Equal Partner

Calvin Croftcheck, the USW's safety coordinator for U.S. Steel, helps the union fight for safe workplaces for about 16,000 members at the steel giant's facilities across the country.

While a significant part of his job is to prevent industrial incidents from injuring workers, Croftcheck said his experience in dealing with past outbreaks, including the MRSA scare of 2009, has proven valuable as he works to fight the spread of COVID-19.

"Our members depend on us to keep them safe," Croftcheck said. "Not only that,

but we have to keep our folks from bringing this home to their families and hurting them."

Croftcheck, a union member since 1976 whose home local is Local 1557 in Clairton, Pa., said that union membership allows workers to be an equal part of safety discussions with their employers, which facilitates progress.

"We've become partners with the company," he said. "It's worked out OK. We've had some fights, but we're partners in this."

### Federal Response

The most frustrating aspect of fighting the pandemic, union safety leaders say, has been the muddled and inconsistent response from leaders in Washington, D.C., including President Donald Trump.

"He's sending very mixed messages to people," Croftcheck said, pointing out that the president has called the virus a "hoax," refused to wear a mask in public, and failed to support national safety mandates, such as an emergency standard from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Wolk agreed that a more coordinated national response would have helped union and non-union workers in their efforts to fight the disease.

"If we had true leaders in the White House," she said, "we would have saved thousands of lives."

Still, Croftcheck said that the fact that COVID-19 doesn't discriminate between union and non-union workers has made it easier to confront management on health and safety issues, which has helped protect workers across all industries.

"This isn't a union issue. It's not a company issue," he said. "It's a human issue."



Leeann Foster,  
International  
Vice President

Pontus Georgsson,  
Swedish Union  
Pappers President

## Global PAPER WORKERS CONFRONT COVID-19

The USW led a group of about 80 union leaders from pulp and paper unions in 20 countries in an online meeting this summer to discuss their response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

International Vice President Leeann Foster, who oversees bargaining in the USW's paper sector, served as co-chair of the meeting with Pontus Georgsson, president of Swedish union Pappers. The event was coordinated through the global union coalition IndustriALL.

Foster and Georgsson opened the meeting by stating their determination to work together to face the pandemic, agreeing that global solidarity is now more important than ever.

"There is so much strength and expertise in this group," Foster said. "We have risen to the challenge of COVID and gone beyond. We must reinvent ourselves in the crisis."

Even before the pandemic, safety was a priority in the paper sector, which can be one of the most dangerous for USW members and all workers.

Workers across the globe must recommit themselves to safety and health and not allow employers to use the pandemic as an excuse to bust unions, said IndustriALL pulp and paper sector director Tom Grinter.

"Unions must have a seat at the table at every level," Grinter said.

On the contrary, rather than an excuse for union busting, the pandemic is a reason to organize. Workers should be bringing new, young workers into the labor movement to ensure that they, too, have protections, Georgsson said.

"We see increasing attacks on workers' and human rights and we have to push back," said IndustriALL assistant general secretary Kemal Özkan. "International solidarity is crucial and together we are strong enough to defend those in need."

# BIDEN'S plan to REBUILD AMERICA

After nearly four years of Donald Trump's inaction on a promised overhaul of the nation's crumbling infrastructure, former Vice President Joe Biden outlined an ambitious, detailed plan that would put millions of Americans back to work, jump-start the stagnant economy and help to revitalize U.S. manufacturing.

"I do not buy for one second that the vitality of American manufacturing is a thing of the past," Biden said. "This will be a mobilization of R&D and procurement investments in ways not seen since World War II."

Biden unveiled his \$2 trillion "Build Back Better" infrastructure and economic recovery plan this summer.

"Recovering from the COVID-19 crisis and ensuring shared prosperity for generations to come will take bold action and a sustained commitment," said International President Thomas M. Conway. "Joe Biden's plan for revitalizing American manufacturing demonstrates both."

## **Biden's proposals will make sure that our future is built in America by American workers.**

### **The plan calls for:**

- *Strong "Buy American" provisions, with a commitment to invest \$400 billion in American-made products and services.*
- *A \$300 billion investment into researching and developing new industrial technology, a plan that is projected to create 5 million new jobs.*
- *Aggressive trade enforcement actions against countries that unfairly undercut American manufacturing, including practices like currency manipulation, dumping and illegal subsidies.*
- *A massive expansion of worker training and education programs for manufacturing and innovation jobs in communities across the country, with a focus on communities of color.*
- *Stricter domestic content rules and better enforcement of false labeling to ensure that "Made in America" means what it says.*

- *Billions in investments to help American manufacturing sites, especially small businesses, retool their operations through tax incentives, low-cost loans and other funding streams.*

"These provisions will put our country on stronger economic footing and bolster our national security," said Secretary-Treasurer John Shinn. "As the pandemic has made clear, our country must be able to supply its own needs."

### **'Made in America'**

Dan Boone, president of Local 979 at ArcelorMittal's Cleveland steel mill, said Biden's "Buy American" provisions will help Steelworkers like those at his workplace regain solid footing after years of facing unfair competition from China and other nations that flout trade laws.

"We've been through some hard times and we've been through some very good times," said Boone. "The idea of Made in America means a lot to us. We think that all of the steel we use should be made in America."

Biden is proposing to pay for his plan in part by restoring the corporate tax rate to 28 percent, after Republican cuts in 2017 reduced it to 21 percent. Those tax cuts, which came with promises of swift job growth, actually resulted in slower growth over the ensuing two years than the nation saw in the final two years of the Obama administration, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

"The days of Amazon paying nothing in federal income tax will be over," Biden said.

When the government spends tax dollars, Biden said, it should do so in a way that supports American jobs.

Ohio AFL-CIO President and USW member Tim Burga said Biden's economic plan puts the interests of workers, rather than corporations and Wall Street, at the forefront.

"We've lacked a cohesive, national manufacturing plan for a long time," Burga said. "Joe Biden's plan is exactly what we need."



## Creating Good Jobs

Biden's procurement plan will spur U.S. manufacturers to create good American jobs across all of the USW's core industries. The plan to invest in new highways, bridges, schools, electrical grids, communications networks and other public assets will increase the nation's demand for products including steel, aluminum, cement, rubber, plastics and other USW-made materials.

Each new job in those industries will in turn support the creation of even more jobs in the direct supply chain, in the service sector or elsewhere. Statistics from the nonpartisan Economic Policy Institute show that manufacturing jobs create a ripple effect – every 100 jobs in durable manufacturing support nearly 700 additional jobs.

Biden's administration will follow through where Trump failed on infrastructure, said John Williams of Local 6787 at ArcelorMittal in Burns Harbor, Ind.

"Trump hasn't provided Americans with what he promised," Williams said. "The country needs a fast, broad, robust infrastructure bill. The Biden package would be huge for the steel industry and our sister and brother industries in aluminum, rubber and others."

The Biden plan will also ensure that the nation won't face a manufacturing deficit like the one the U.S. confronted at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when Americans saw a shortage of critical supplies such as ventilators, hospital beds, personal protective equipment, sanitizer and other products.

Biden's plan includes provisions to make advance purchases of critical medical supplies and pharmaceuticals to ensure sufficient stockpiles for use in a future crisis.

## Biden is 'Battle Tested'

Besides having a detailed plan to rebuild the economy, the former vice president has the experience to know what it takes, because he has done it before.

In 2009, when President Barack Obama took office, nearly 12 million Americans were unemployed and the stock market had lost more than 50

percent of its value. The new president put Biden in charge of overseeing the recovery effort from what, at the time, was the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Biden took the reins of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a complex \$800 billion program that involved 100,000 projects and 28 individual agencies, and he demanded transparency and accountability.

It was an effort that even critics acknowledged was efficient, effective and scandal-free.

"He did a good job running the Recovery Act," said political organizer Jeff Hauser, who spent three years working for the AFL-CIO and has been a frequent critic of Biden's Wall Street ties. "He was very focused on avoiding scandals, and he succeeded."

Biden's experience as vice president makes him the right candidate at the right time, said Jared Bernstein, a senior fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

"He would be the most battle-tested president to come into office that we've ever had in this regard," said Bernstein, a former economic adviser to the Obama administration. "Biden would bring a unique experience to the office."

## Strengthening Unions

Biden's massive recovery plan isn't just to invest in manufacturing jobs, but to make sure they are good jobs. His proposal includes policies to make it easier for workers to organize unions and to hold employers accountable when they interfere with organizing efforts.

That means the plan isn't just good news for American workers, it's also good news for the members of the USW and other unions, said International Vice President David McCall.

"The Biden plan won't just jump-start American manufacturing, it will be a shot in the arm for the labor movement," said McCall. "It will create thousands of good-paying union jobs for American workers all along the supply chain."



U.S.  
**Election Day is  
Tuesday, Nov. 3,  
2020.**

**ELECTION  
2020**

## Voter Information

Find your registration status, register to vote and get information about mailed ballots and early voting, as well as more information about the USW's endorsement process and our chosen candidates by visiting [USWVoices.org](https://www.usw.org/USWVoices.org).

## Work the Polls

Having workers to staff polling places has never been more vital. Each state has individual deadlines and requirements, but if you are interested in serving as a poll worker, visit [PowerThePolls.org/USW](https://www.usw.org/PowerThePolls.org) to learn more.

**STEELWORKERS FOR  
BIDEN  
HARRIS**



# BIDEN'S Pro-Union RECORD

*The Democratic Nominee  
Will Empower Workers  
to Organize*

**F**ormer Vice President Joe Biden, the son of a working-class family from northeastern Pennsylvania's coal country, has supported the interests of working Americans throughout his career, and the Democratic presidential nominee has detailed plans to continue that support after he wins the White House.

"If I'm your president, you will never have a more union-friendly president," said Biden. "We're not bending or bowing any more. We are going to take this country back, and unions are going to be the ones to do it."

In 2008, before leaving the U.S. Senate to serve alongside former President Barack Obama, Biden was known as "middle-class Joe" for good reason – he received a rating of 93 percent from the AFL-CIO for his voting record on labor issues. By contrast, Trump's vice president, Mike Pence, received a lifetime rating of just 4 percent during his 12 years in Congress.

"The difference is as clear as it's ever been: Joe Biden has a long history of standing up for workers, and Donald Trump and his administration have a long history of attacking them," said International President Thomas M. Conway.

Biden, when he was a Delaware senator, was an original co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act, legisla-

tion that would have removed countless roadblocks that workers face when forming unions. He has vowed to name officials to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and his Cabinet who will protect workers' rights. He will sign legislation like the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which will make it easier for workers to organize and punish employers who illegally stand in their way.

"It's so important for American workers to belong to unions, so that they have someone to fight for them and stand with them," Biden said. "Americans deserve a government that works for them, not against them."

Biden's platform acknowledges decades of income inequality and stagnant wages and calls for a rebirth of the labor movement.

As president, Biden will protect pensions by signing the Butch Lewis Act, stand up for our most vulnerable workers by raising the minimum wage, and invest billions in infrastructure improvements that provide good, union jobs.

## **In addition, the Biden administration will:**

- *Penalize employers that bargain in bad faith.*
- *Support federal legislation to ban harmful right-to-work (for less) laws.*
- *Ensure that workers can exercise their right to strike without retaliation.*
- *Protect public sector employees and their right to join unions.*
- *Expand the eligibility of workers to collect overtime pay.*
- *Provide resources to the Department of Labor to target wage theft, misclassification of employees and other violations of workers' rights that cost Americans millions of dollars a year in lost wages and benefits.*
- *Withhold federal funds from companies that engage in union-busting activities.*
- *Support federal efforts to ensure equal pay.*
- *Create a Cabinet-level group to fo-*

*cus on promoting union organizing.*

- *Extend collective bargaining rights to independent contractors, and ensure that workers are able to bargain with the employer that truly holds the power over their working conditions, including franchises.*
- *Expand the rights of farm workers and domestic workers.*
- *Increase funding and enforcement efforts of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to ensure all workers have safe and healthy workplaces.*

## **A Rebirth of Labor**

Unlike President Trump, Vice President Biden has proudly marched side-by-side with USW members. He has stood up for private- and public-sector workers throughout his life and will continue to do so as president.

Biden's extensive plans for labor reform will usher in a rebirth of a strong American working class. On the campaign trail, Biden cites statistics showing that the decline in union membership over the past 40 years mirrored a massive increase in the share of U.S. income going to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. He is committed to reversing that trend.

"This is no accident," Biden said, pointing out that employers attack labor rights for a very simple reason: to keep a greater share of the fruits of that labor for themselves.

As the COVID pandemic continues to expose the longstanding fissures in the U.S. economy, workers in all sectors, including essential workers at companies like Trader Joe's, Whole Foods and FedEx, are seeking the protection of unions.

To be successful, they will need a president and NLRB who are on their side.

"The fact is, when workers do well, everybody does well," Biden said.



# TRUMP'S Anti-Union RECORD

*The President  
Fought Workers  
Every Step of the Way*

The 2016 presidential election had far-reaching and long-lasting consequences, perhaps none more damaging than President Trump's determination to undermine workers' rights at every turn.

From his appointments to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to judges and Labor Department officials, the president has fought workers and unions harder than any administration in modern American history.

The NLRB, an agency that receives little media attention but has significant power over workers, is now dominated with anti-union Trump appointees who have relentlessly sought to curtail the rights of workers.

"The NLRB operates largely under the radar, but its decisions go directly to the heart of what we do – wages, benefits, working conditions, even our ability to form a union and sit at the bargaining table in the first place – all of it depends on who serves on that board," said International President Thomas M. Conway.

For Justin Willis of Local 7-507 in northern Illinois, the 2020 election represents a crossroads for working people – making it truly, as he said, "the most important election of our lifetimes."

"They're trying to turn back the clock, to take back everything we have built for the past 60 or 70 years in terms of workers' rights," Willis said. "If we

allow this administration another four years, we will be back in the 1920s in terms of workers' rights."

## President Shapes Board

Congress established the NLRB in 1935 as part of the New Deal, and the board is tasked with overseeing union elections and investigating and prosecuting labor rights violations.

The president appoints and the senate confirms board members to five-year terms, with one member's term expiring each year. While the NLRB is technically an independent agency, that power gives the president enormous influence over its policies and decisions, and President Trump has used it to dismantle workers' rights. Some of the rules the agency overturned have existed for a half-century or more.

## Here are just a few examples of what the Trump board has done:

- *Sought to dramatically lengthen the timetable for union elections and limit access to workers, giving employers major advantages when seeking to bust organizing drives.*
- *Made it easier for employers to decertify existing unions.*
- *Made it more difficult for contract employees and workers at franchise businesses to join unions.*
- *Allowed companies to implement policy changes without bargaining.*

"It goes to the old adage – an injury to one is an injury to all," said John Williams of Local 6787 at the ArcelorMittal plant in Burns Harbor, Ind. "What is won at the bargaining table can be taken away with a ruling or a piece of legislation. That's why it's so important for working people to support a Biden-Harris ticket over a Trump-Pence ticket."

## Trump's administration has taken other actions to hurt working Americans:

- *Eliminated workplace safety standards and reduced enforcement by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, including opposing an emergency federal safety standard to keep workers safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.*
- *Supported a federal right-to-work*

*(for less) law, which would put workers on the defensive across the United States and result in lower wages and weaker benefits.*

- *Opposed legislation to help workers and retirees, such as the Butch Lewis pension reform bill and the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act.*
- *Issued executive orders intended to restrict unions at federal agencies.*
- *Sought to defund or eliminate the Chemical Safety Board.*

## History of Fighting Workers

Trump openly opposed unions long before he became president. He and his business associates were hostile to workers during his decades as a real estate developer and business mogul, said JoJo Burgess of Local 14693 in Pennsylvania.

"The current occupant of the Oval Office has been nothing but anti-worker," Burgess said, pointing out that the vast majority of the products sold under Trump's name over the years have been manufactured overseas, as have many of the materials used in the buildings that bear his name.

Besides his NLRB appointments, Trump named a notorious anti-union crusader, Peter Robb, as the organization's general counsel. Robb has worked for a series of union-busting law firms and, in 1981, was instrumental in President Ronald Reagan's firing of striking air traffic controllers in one of the most notorious labor decisions in U.S. history. Today, Robb leads the NLRB's field offices and directs many of its rule-making attacks on workers.

## Trump's Relentless Attack

Even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic downturn, Trump's hand-picked henchmen stepped up their attacks on workers.

This spring, the board sought to eliminate what has been known as the "blocking charge policy," under which union election results can be delayed if an employer engages in illegal coercion or other unfair labor practices.

"Donald Trump's caustic hostility to collective bargaining has manifested itself in the most anti-worker NLRB in America's history," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. "We must oppose him at every turn."



## TRUMP'S BROKEN PROMISES ON TRADE

PRESIDENT'S OVERALL RECORD A FAILURE, EVEN WITH STEEL, ALUMINUM TARIFFS

Despite the much-needed Section 232 tariffs that helped to level the playing field for American steel and aluminum workers, President Donald Trump's overall record on trade has proven to be a failure for workers and manufacturers, leading to job losses, plant closures, stagnant wages and a larger trade deficit than the one he inherited.

During his 2016 campaign, candidate Trump adopted a number of the USW's long-held positions on trade, arguing that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was a failure, that China's rogue behavior was unfairly destroying American industry and that major reforms were needed in U.S. trade policy to save blue-collar jobs and vital factories.

While those positions were not wrong, as president, Trump failed to follow through on most of them with real policy changes or results, and workers are suffering as a result. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked eco-

nomnic havoc around the world, it was clear that Trump had failed to deliver on almost all of his trade-related promises, with the exception of the Section 232 tariffs.

### Trade Deficit Soars

Perhaps the clearest evidence of Trump's failure has been the continued growth of the U.S. trade deficit, which is the difference between the goods and services Americans purchase from other countries vs. those it sells to them. Trump, as a candidate, promised voters that they would see that number drop "like you've never seen before."

Instead, the gap has only continued to grow. In 2018, Trump's first full year in office, the trade deficit ballooned to \$621 billion – its highest level since 2008, according to figures from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

In the first half of 2020, the trade deficit was 6.5 percent higher than it had been during the same period in 2016, the final year of President Barack

Obama's administration.

"The fact that Trump's trade deficit is larger than the same period in the last year of the Obama administration shines a big fat spotlight on Trump's failure to 'eliminate' the trade deficit, which he promised endlessly as a candidate in 2016," said Lori Wallach, director of Global Trade Watch, a nonprofit organization that monitors global trade data.

Even when China is removed from the data, U.S. trade deficit numbers are still grim. In the first half of 2020, the goods trade deficit with the rest of the world increased by \$3 billion over the same period a year earlier.

### Promises of New NAFTA

Another of Trump's campaign pledges, intended to woo blue-collar workers away from Democrats, was to renegotiate the failed NAFTA, to get, as he said, "a better deal for workers."

In reality, what Trump was able to achieve with the new NAFTA was more business as usual. It took an interven-

tion by unions including the USW, as well as Democrats in Congress, prior to the deal's implementation to ensure that the agreement included real labor reforms, environmental protections and other policies vital to discouraging the offshoring of more American jobs.

Rather than putting workers at the center of his effort to renegotiate NAFTA, Trump chose instead to seek the advice of Wall Street, corporate CEOs and business lobbyists. That resulted in a deal, known as the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), that failed to secure enforceable labor reforms, particularly in Mexico, one of the most crucial components to protecting workers in all three countries.

Thanks to months of work by U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio and other Democrats in Congress, the deal Trump negotiated was amended to include those labor provisions.

"That amounts to the strongest-ever labor enforcement in a U.S. trade deal," Brown said of the USMCA. "If corporations are forced to pay workers a living wage and treat them with dignity, no matter where those workers are located, then we take away the incentive for them to move jobs abroad."

Even with the additional protections, the USMCA is far from perfect. Much work remains to ensure that the new provisions are strictly enforced and that the agreement doesn't result in more lost jobs and shuttered factories.

International President Thomas M. Conway said he hoped that the deal was just the beginning of a new era of worker-friendly trade deals.

"As we look forward to future trade pacts with other countries, we will seek even stronger rules to protect workers and communities from offshoring, pollution, unfair trade policies and violations of labor rights," Conway said.

In order to achieve those goals, however, U.S. workers will need stronger leadership on trade than they've seen from President Trump.

## Taking on China

Another campaign promise – declaring China a currency manipulator – has also gone largely unfulfilled.

The Chinese government artificially

devalues its currency, the yuan, which makes Chinese imports cheaper for Americans to buy. The tactic is useful in reducing the effectiveness of enforcement efforts like the Section 232 tariffs and other duties. For years, the practice has harmed U.S. industries and killed jobs.

In 2016, Trump promised to call China out for that behavior "on Day One." In reality, it took more than two-and-a-half years, until August 2019, before Trump's Treasury secretary applied the label, and the administration lifted it less than six months later, despite intense criticism from Congress.

## USW VOICES

Check out the USW's video series to hear Steelworkers tell their stories about how Trump's broken promises have hurt them. Visit [www.uswvoices.org/broken-promises](http://www.uswvoices.org/broken-promises).



Not only has Trump's administration failed to rein in China's cheating, it has actively delivered U.S. taxpayer money to Chinese companies. A review of loans delivered under the Paycheck Protection Program, created to keep small businesses from shuttering due to COVID-19, revealed more than 125 loans to Chinese-backed companies totaling more than \$400 million.

"President Trump would rather cave to [Chinese] President Xi than stay tough on China," said U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer of New York. "When it comes to the president's stance on China, Americans are getting a lot of show and very little results."

Perhaps no one in America has gotten a closer look at Trump's failures than the workers in the U.S. auto industry, particularly USW members at Goodyear's now-shuttered Gadsden, Ala., tire factory, and carmakers at the former General Motors (GM) factory in Lordstown, Ohio.

"The Gadsden closure happened as imported tires from around the globe flooded the U.S. market," Conway said.

For generations, union members made tires in Gadsden and cars in Lordstown. At one time, the Ohio factory

produced millions of cars and provided good jobs to more than 4,500 workers. GM shuttered and sold the property last year as it continued to shift much of its vehicle production to Mexico.

Soon after his election, Trump visited the area and promised to save jobs at the factory. "Don't sell your house," the president said.

"He told everybody it's all coming back," said former Lordstown worker Trish Amato. "He lied."

While the Gadsden and Lordstown factories were among the most glaring examples, workers elsewhere have also suffered as a result of Trump's failure to stem the tide of offshoring.

About 1,500 USW members at U.S. Steel's Great Lakes Works near Detroit are facing an uncertain future after their sprawling plant was indefinitely idled. Those workers are far from alone. Overall in Michigan, the number of jobs lost as a result of unfair trade has doubled during Trump's term, according to data from the U.S.

Department of Labor.

According to a report from the Trade Justice Education Fund, Michigan saw a 211 percent increase in trade-related job losses from 2017 through 2019 compared to the three prior years.

"Michigan is hemorrhaging jobs to offshoring week after week, with devastating effects on our working families, our communities and our economy," the report's authors concluded.

The path forward, Conway said, is to create a new national agenda that prioritizes the fight for fair trade on every front, to make much-needed investments in infrastructure with strong "Buy American" provisions, and to modernize American manufacturing facilities to create thousands of good jobs at home.

"The bottom line is that for decades, workers have been waiting for real action to fix our broken system," said International Vice President Roxanne Brown, who oversees the USW's legislative and political efforts in Washington, D.C. "Donald Trump got elected by promising to fix that system, but he hasn't followed through. We need more than talk – we need true leadership on every possible front to ensure a level playing field for workers and truly rebuild American manufacturing."

# TRADE WATCH

**U**SW International Vice President Roxanne Brown told members of Congress in August that they and other leaders must develop a cohesive plan for the future of American manufacturing in order to create good jobs, reduce the trade deficit and protect national security.

Brown delivered that message via video testimony before the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee's Subcommittee on Trade. The hearing was titled "Trade, Manufacturing, and Critical Supply Chains: Lessons from COVID-19."

In her testimony, Brown argued that the nation's political leaders consistently spend time and resources to come to the aid of the nation's farmers, and that they must make the same kind of effort to help those companies and workers who produce and distribute essential goods.

"Every five years, more or less, Congress debates, amends and adjusts programs for our nation's farmers, who represent roughly 5.4 percent of the country's economic output," Brown told the lawmakers. "Manufacturing is double that output, but Congress has not strategically allocated its time and resources to focus on the needs of American manufacturing."

The Subcommittee on Trade, chaired by Rep. Earl Blumenauer of Oregon, oversees topics such as imports and exports, customs, tariffs, international trade agreements and supply chains.

## Americans Want a Plan

"There is rising demand for an industrial or manufacturing plan for this country, and the time for such a plan is well overdue," Brown told the group.

Joining Brown to speak before the committee were Erica Fuchs, Carnegie Mellon University professor of engineering and public policy; Prashant Yadav, senior fellow at the Center for Global Development; Kim Glas, president and CEO of the National Council of Textile Organizations; and Thomas Duesterberg, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a conservative political think tank.

"Our union has long known that without a strong, globally competitive manufacturing base, our members and communities are less secure, less resilient, and are at an increased threat to future health and economic crisis," Brown said.

As he opened the hearing, Chairman Blumenauer acknowledged that the COVID-19 crisis revealed massive shortcomings in the nation's manufacturing supply chain and reiterated the need for Congress to take a new approach.

"I was horrified to see medical facilities across our country, including hospitals and nursing homes, struggle to secure personal protective equipment and lifesaving medical devices, like ventilators," Blumenauer said. "COVID-19 has served as a very painful example of a long-existing problem."



## BROWN URGES CONGRESS TO FOCUS ON MANUFACTURING

That problem, Brown said, extends much more deeply, into all USW-represented industries, including steel, aluminum, paper, rubber, chemicals and oil.

"We face a deficit in manufacturing that could undermine our national security and lead to additional shortages of vital goods," she said.

## Jobs Support Communities

The need to create a national policy goes beyond the need for materials for national defense and military equipment, Brown said. Good manufacturing jobs promote strong communities, as those jobs support employment for millions more, while providing a solid tax base for schools and other public services.

"Manufacturing workers earn 13 percent more in hourly compensation than comparable workers in the rest of the private sector," Brown said.

In addition, the nation's manufacturing sector supports the development of new technologies and innovations, she explained.

"By increasing the tie between federal investment into research and develop-

ment and manufacturing," Brown said, "we will increase demand for scientists and engineers."

In her testimony, Carnegie Mellon's Fuchs argued that offshoring of jobs to low-wage countries not only hurts workers, but makes companies less likely to pursue groundbreaking research.

"When firms move manufacturing overseas to developing countries, such as China, Singapore, Malaysia, and otherwise, it can become unprofitable for those firms to pursue innovative new products and technologies," she said.

## Pharmaceutical Supplies

Besides the clear lessons of COVID-19, Brown said, another glaring example of the nation's supply chain crisis is in the pharmaceutical industry.

Last year, the United States imported \$128 billion in pharmaceuticals. According to the Food and Drug Administration, only 28 percent of active pharmaceutical ingredient manufacturing facilities are located in the United States, and Chinese companies supply more than 90 percent of U.S. antibiotics.

Steelworkers know all too well how the drive for lower prices can send good pharmaceutical jobs overseas.

"USW Local 10-729, which represents workers at Avantor Materials, saw the company purchase plants in India and Poland," Brown said. "The company slowly and incrementally moved products manufactured and/or packaged at the Phillipsburg, N.J., site overseas."

Whether it's much-needed drugs and other medical supplies, or steel, aluminum and other vital resources, the U.S. industrial supply chain urgently needs the support of U.S. lawmakers, Brown said.

The nation is desperate for a unified manufacturing policy, which includes a commitment to fighting unfair trade and overcapacity, a massive overhaul of U.S. infrastructure, investment in new technologies and upgrades at industrial sites, worker retraining, Buy American legislation, and strong protections for workers' rights, she said.

The keys are "containing overcapacity, increasing our commitment to American workers, improving effective trade enforcement and increasing our R&D commitments," Brown said. "The USW stands ready to lead the way."





## WORKERS BLAST

# GOODYEAR®

## BOYCOTT

**U**SW members in Ohio and across the United States were quick to denounce President Donald Trump in August after the president called for a boycott of Goodyear tires.

“All I can say is, Mr. President, you bit off more than you could chew this time,” said Goodyear retiree Gerald Smith. “You’re attacking my livelihood, the livelihood of all retired people at Goodyear who have worked so hard for so long. You’re attacking us.”

The controversy began with a single, ill-conceived message that the president shared on the morning of Aug. 19.

“Don’t buy GOODYEAR TIRES – They announced a BAN ON MAGA HATS. Get better tires for far less!” the president tweeted to his 85 million followers.

The response from critics was instantaneous. Local 2L members and other USW leaders and allies, including U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, blasted Trump and pointed out the many problematic and inaccurate aspects of his message.

As Local 2L Unit Chair Rick Nixon explained, the

Goodyear “ban” the president mentioned is actually a long-standing corporate prohibition on all partisan political messages on Goodyear’s shop floor – not just on pro-Trump gear.

**“The policy has always been no political stuff – hats, T-shirts or anything in the shop,” said Nixon, who has worked for the tire-maker for 27 years. “It’s been that way since I started with Goodyear.”**

In addition, President Trump, who repeatedly touts his so-called “America First” policies, chose to directly attack a 122-year-old iconic American company that is the largest U.S. tire maker and employs more than 6,000 USW members. The company operates 16 research and manufacturing facilities in 12 U.S. states, as well as three in Canada.

“For a president who campaigned four years ago on standing up for fair trade and saving American jobs, for him to turn around and call for a boycott of an Amer-

ican company that employs thousands of people in the state of Ohio alone, that is not just irresponsible, it’s shameful,” said District 1 Director Donnie Blatt.

Trump’s post, which came around 10:30 a.m. and was eventually re-shared by more than 123,000 Twitter users, led Goodyear stock to drop more than 6 percent over the next few hours. Given a chance at a press conference later to rescind or clarify his call for a boycott, the president instead doubled down, saying that if Goodyear sales declined and workers were laid off as a result, they would simply “be able to get another good job.”

“He attacked not only American workers, union workers, he attacked all Americans,” said Keith Kling of Local 5439 in Magnolia, Ohio, during a rally in Goodyear’s hometown of Akron, Ohio, in support of the company’s workers. “It’s just a sad day when a sitting president jeopardizes American workers, American voters’ livelihoods, jeopardizes their families.”

For International President Thomas M. Conway, Trump’s attack was made

worse by the fact that the union had repeatedly sought the president’s help over the past year to save jobs at the Goodyear factory in Gadsden, Ala., which closed its doors this year after 90 years in operation.

“Our union and our individual members reached out directly to the president and his White House staff on countless occasions,” Conway said. “It would have been nice if the president would have paid as much attention to that loss of American jobs as he does to his MAGA hats. Maybe a tweet or two back then would have been helpful.”

Trump’s boycott message, USW members said, was another example of his failure to support American workers when they need it the most.

**“Donald Trump has broken his promises to the American worker,” said Joe Platt of Local 1123 in Canton, Ohio. “He’s let down the American Steelworker, and enough is enough.”**



# VICTORY

## AT KUMHO

### Georgia Tire Workers Win Despite Brutal Anti-Union Campaign

Workers at Kumho Tire in Macon, Ga., won their battle to join the USW this August after withstanding the company's relentless, illegal campaign to thwart their organizing rights.

"These workers voted to unionize even though Kumho tried every underhanded, despicable stunt it possibly could to violate their rights and poison the election results," said District 9 Director Daniel Flippo, whose district includes Georgia and six other southern states, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) declared the union drive victorious after processing the final 13 ballots from an election last fall. Kumho filed objections; while the local is eager to begin bargaining, the company is refusing to negotiate until those objections have been resolved.

The election victory was a long, difficult battle for the Kumho workers. In 2017, they narrowly lost in their first organizing attempt after the company waged a vicious union-busting campaign, which included threats against USW supporters.

The company's conduct during that campaign was so egregious that Administrative Law Judge Arthur J. Amchan not only ordered a new election but took the extraordinary step of ordering the company to read workers a list of its numerous labor law violations. The violations included illegally interrogating employees, threatening to fire union

supporters, threatening plant closure, and creating an impression of surveillance.

The violations continued when workers relaunched their organizing campaign in 2019.

In one particularly egregious case of bullying, the company tried to make an example of quality control worker Victoria Whipple, who was pregnant and working overtime to make extra money while awaiting the new addition to her family. As the election was wrapping up in September 2019, managers pulled Whipple off the plant floor and suspended her indefinitely without pay because she was supporting the union. She was later reinstated.

"The workers' solidarity in the face of extreme intimidation shows just how urgently they need the protections that only a union can provide," said Flippo. "Their victory over an abusive, greedy company should inspire other workers who want to end the mistreatment they face from their own employers."

Flippo said that he hopes the Kumho victory, especially in the face of long odds and persistent, well-funded opposition, provides inspiration for other workers to organize, particularly in the southern United States, where most states have anti-union "right to work (for less)" laws on their books.

"In forming a union and holding Kumho to account," Flippo added, "these workers will help set stronger pay and workplace standards for the whole industry."

As they awaited the results of their vote, workers saw conditions at the Macon factory continue to deteriorate, especially in the area of health and safety. When the pandemic struck, the company failed to implement common-sense

safety measures, and workers faced an outbreak that put their lives at risk.

The workers alerted health officials to their conditions, expressing fear that the lack of precautions could put the wider community at risk.

Workers spoke before the Macon-Bibb County Board of Health during a public meeting conducted by telephone, describing an employer that failed to distribute an adequate supply of face masks or sanitizer, refused to implement consistent social distancing, and failed to provide sufficient paid sick leave for workers forced into quarantine.

"The only thing important to them is the tires," said one Kumho worker, who said he brought his own mask and sanitizer to work but still feared catching the virus because he worked closely with colleagues on every shift.

Other workers reported that Kumho was refusing to regularly and thoroughly disinfect the factory, consistently limit the use of common areas or give details about the rash of COVID-19 cases, such as the number of colleagues infected.

Now that their victory is official, Kumho's workers can sit down with their employer and bargain health and safety protections, as well as fair wages, benefits and other working conditions, said International President Thomas M. Conway.

"Kumho thought they could get away with just continuing to bully and intimidate their employees, hard-working people who simply wanted to exercise their right to bargain collectively," Conway said. "That is a losing strategy, and these brave workers have proven that yet again. Rather than fighting their own workers, employers should work with them to build a better future for everyone."

After years of working with student athletes to pursue more just and humane policies in college sports, the USW this summer announced its full support for a comprehensive College Athletes' Bill of Rights.

The measure would be based on a framework that U.S. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey proposed with the support of the National College Players Association (NCPA), an organization with whom the USW has collaborated for nearly 20 years.

In a letter to members of the U.S. Senate on July 24, International President Thomas M. Conway urged senators to support Booker's framework, which includes proposals to allow athletes to secure representation and receive compensation for the use of their names and likenesses, establish health and safety standards, increase the freedom for student athletes to transfer, and provide medical coverage, among other provisions.

"NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) sports is a predatory industry that exploits college athletes physically, economically, and academically," Conway wrote. "Unjust NCAA policies and practices have a disproportionate negative impact on Black college athletes, many of whom are from low-income homes."

### Broad Support for Reform

The framework, which has strong support in the U.S. House, won the backing of the NCPA and other advocacy organizations, as well as a number of current and former professional athletes. The NCPA includes more than 20,000 Division I athletes at more than 150 campuses. The USW has supported the organization's work since its inception in 2001.

"The USW has stood in solidarity, side by side, with the NCPA," Conway wrote. "Our union strongly supports congressional action to put an end to the countless injustices that have plagued college athletes for generations."

The advancement of the Bill of Rights framework is the latest in a series of victories won through the NCPA's advocacy. In October 2019, the NCAA governing board voted to relax rules banning college athletes from

earning money when their names or images are used for profit. Following that announcement, a handful of representatives in the U.S. House began talking openly about overturning the NCAA's long-held rule barring athletes from competition if they benefit financially from their names or images.

"Over the years, the NCPA has been pivotal in bringing forth reforms," Conway said. "As the organization continues to succeed, college athletes will continue to gain the protections they so desperately need."

## USW HELPS ATHLETES GAIN MOMENTUM



Ramogi Huma

### Steelworkers Join College Group to Urge Congressional Action

The NCPA has been instrumental in helping to develop antitrust lawsuits that were the impetus for the easing of economic restrictions against student athletes. Those settlements also led to an expansion of health care for athletes, as well as an increase in funds to support them as they complete their degrees.

The success of the NCPA is a direct result of the early support the group received from the USW, said NCPA Executive Director Ramogi Huma, who helped launch the organization when he was a football player at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"This progress would never have been possible without the support of the USW. The Steelworkers could have easily declined to be involved, but instead have stood side by side with us since the

beginning," Huma said. "Your support means everything to these athletes, who are fighting for justice with zero leverage."

### The Worth of Big-Time Athletes

In 2012, Huma co-authored a report with Drexel University sports management professor Ellen Staurowsky called "The \$6 Billion Heist: Robbing College Athletes Under the Guise of Amateurism." The carefully researched study concluded that over a four-year period, NCAA rules would deny college football and basketball players \$6.2 billion that they would otherwise receive in a fair market.

The pair found that, on average, an athletic scholarship at the time was worth about \$23,204 per year, while the market value of a major college football or basketball player was between \$137,000 and \$289,000 per year.

The report also found that many college athletes still struggled to pay for basic necessities while in school.

An increase in compensation of only about \$3,300 per student athlete per year "would be enough to free many from poverty and reduce their vulnerability to breaking NCAA rules to make ends meet," the report said.

### Barriers to Unionization

Despite the board of governors' decision, the NCAA consistently made it clear it would not declare that college athletes are employees of their schools. That designation would, among other things, give the players the right to join traditional labor unions.

Conway promised, though, that the USW would continue to support the NCPA's mission to fight for justice for student athletes across the country. "This small, determined group of people has made a major difference in the lives of thousands of people," he said.

Conway said the partnership would not exist without the persistence of Huma and retired International President Leo W. Gerard.

"We know there is still work to do if we want to achieve the kind of fair and just treatment that these hard-working athletes deserve," Conway said. "We hope that the progress we have seen is just the beginning."



# WE Really NEED FOOD

## USW members answer call to help struggling Philadelphia neighbors

When Rich Cucarese first saw the abandoned factories and other signs of poverty in Philadelphia's Nicetown neighborhood, he decided to involve his kids in community service projects there.

But then Cucarese, Rapid Response coordinator for Local 4889, realized how much more could be accomplished by mobilizing hundreds of Steelworkers to help the struggling community.

In the 20 months since Local 4889 relocated from the Philadelphia suburbs to Nicetown, Cucarese and other USW members have dedicated themselves to improving one of the most troubled neighborhoods in one of America's poorest big cities.

They held food, coat and toy drives for Nicetown

residents and opened the community's first food pantry in the union hall on West Allegheny Ave.

They cooked meals at the Ronald McDonald House and a homeless shelter, planted a community garden to provide fresh vegetables sorely needed in residents' diets and forged an innovative partnership with an anti-poverty group called the Poor People's Army.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, exacerbating the former manufacturing community's already-high unemployment and poverty rates, scores of residents began relying on the food pantry to sustain their families.

"As fast as we can get the food in, we're emptying that pantry out," observed Cucarese, an assistant operator on the galvanizing line at U.S. Steel's Fairless Hills works. "We probably need to double or triple the size of it."

Photos by  
Steve Dietz

20 USW@Work • Fall 2020

Local 4889's help has been a godsend, said Cheri Honkala, a national organizer with the Poor People's Army, who has worked with poor and homeless Philadelphia residents for 40 years.

Although she's partnered with other labor groups over the years, she added, "nobody has really embraced the cause like the Steelworkers have." She said USW members understand poverty isn't a personal failure but the direct result of a broken economy that deprives many Americans of family-sustaining jobs, leaving them just one unexpected expense away from financial ruin.

"I just think the Steelworkers get it on a whole different level," said Honkala, noting many Nicetown residents struggle to make ends meet even though they juggle multiple minimum-wage jobs.

After Local 4889 merged with Local 404 and consolidated operations in Nicetown, Cucarese and other local officers took an immediate interest in their new neighborhood.

Nicotown's decay, precipitated by a wave of factory closures that began decades ago, stunned them. Companies making steel, snack foods, vehicle parts and pulleys, among other products, all closed or relocated.

"The jobs disappeared, and the area just basically fell in on itself," Cucarese explained, relating a fate that's befallen former manufacturing towns all over the country because of offshoring, industry consolidation and other factors over which workers had no control.

Housing in Nicetown deteriorated because owners couldn't keep up with payments or maintenance. Blight spread. Chronic disease rates skyrocketed because residents lacked access to health care and nutritious food. Besides the old factory buildings that serve as constant reminders of the neighborhood's decline, former manufacturers left behind costly environmental problems that compound the challenges of revitalization.

Today, Nicetown's median household income is about \$21,000—down \$8,000 over the past decade. Men in Nicetown live about 64 years, 10 fewer than the citywide average.

Along with abandoned factories and other telltale signs of decline, however, USW members encountered warm-hearted residents eager to turn Nicetown around. "There's despair," Cucarese said, "but there's also hope."

He contacted Honkala, a familiar figure in the neighborhood, to say the Steelworkers wanted to be good neighbors and to help however they could.

Honkala told him: "We really need food."

Local 4885 placed collection boxes at U.S. Steel and Coilplus, another USW-represented workplace, and asked members to donate canned goods, cereal and other nonperishable items. Members at those locations responded overwhelmingly not just on one or two food drives but on half a dozen.

"It was amazing," Honkala said. "The Steelwork-





ers really delivered. They filled those boxes, and it continued over and over again.”

During the holiday season, Chris Harley, Local 4889’s Next Gen coordinator and an operator at Coilplus, worried about neighborhood children going without gifts.

So USW members, their families and friends collected used toys and bicycles—and even cleaned up the bikes before distributing them.

“We’re here for you,” Harley said he and fellow USW members told their neighbors.

As members began making overdue repairs to the union hall, they decided to turn a small space into the food pantry. Donations from churches and civic groups help stock the pantry now, even as the local envisions additional food drives at the 20 or so workplaces it represents.

This is the first time Honkala can recall having a food pantry right in Nicetown. While some residents traveled to pantries in other neighborhoods, she

said, many simply did without the help.

When they arrived in Nicetown, Local 4889 officers realized that the grounds of the union hall needed as much attention as the interior.

In clearing away brush, tree limbs and other debris that had accumulated in recent years, members made space for the community garden that Honkala, Cucarese, Harley and Local 4889 President Rob Cusick agreed was urgently needed.

Volunteers made raised beds from old door frames and other wood scavenged from the neighborhood, then planted melons, tomatoes, cucumbers and other vegetables to distribute through the food pantry.

The local also rented office space to the Poor People’s Army, which happily relocated from a local church because of the union hall’s more central location. With the pantry and anti-poverty group under one roof, Honkala said, the hall functions like a kind of community center.

The local and Honkala’s group already are working on plans to reha-

bilitate neighborhood housing, hold job fairs, host screenings of labor films on the union hall’s lawn and create a library of union materials for residents to peruse inside.

Their goal isn’t only to meet their neighbors’ daily needs but to encourage labor organizing, a pathway to long-term prosperity. By fighting for family-sustaining wages and decent benefits, unions help workers build middle-class lives and strong communities.

Right now, many residents struggle with low-pay jobs lacking health care and other benefits. Honkala wants them to know, “It doesn’t have to be like this. That’s where the labor piece comes in.”

Cucarese wants to not only involve more members of Local 4889 in community service projects but invite residents to participate as well.

Already, he said, some neighbors stop by periodically just to see what union members are doing next.

“People are hearing about what we’re doing,” he said, “and they’re actually getting pretty excited about it.”



# Celebrating LABOR

Labor Day 2020 was unlike any other USW members have seen in their lifetimes. Holiday parades and community celebrations that traditionally draw thousands of participants in cities

like New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh and elsewhere were canceled due to COVID-19. Still, even in the midst of a global pandemic, workers found a way to express their solidarity and dedica-

tion to the cause of labor. Here are just a few images of the many ways USW members across North America celebrated Labor Day this year.



# ICD's WORK CONTINUES

## Despite Obstacles

*Educational Program Offers Online Trainings, New Career Opportunities*



The economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic through the spring and summer placed both obstacles and opportunities in front of USW members whose locals participate in the Institute for Career Development (ICD).

The ICD, a joint labor-management training program that the USW has made a part of its collective bargaining agreements with 15 employers, provides more than 50,000 members with a chance to learn new skills or advance existing ones.

While the ICD has 65 physical locations in steel, rubber and tire, glass, container and utility sectors, the spread of the coronavirus posed challenges to students looking to take advantage of the program this year, even as layoffs in a number of industries led to a higher-than-usual demand for such instruction.

“When former International President Lynn Williams first envisioned the Career Development Program, his concept was not only to provide future employment opportunities for members, but to also enhance their talents and develop new personal skills,” said International Vice President David McCall, who serves on the ICD governing board along with International President Thomas M. Conway.

Rashon Davis, of Local 5133 at U.S. Steel’s East Chicago Tin, has explored several of those avenues. He took advantage of the program’s tuition-assistance benefits to earn a degree in human resources from Purdue University, as well as a real estate license.

“With a steel mill, it’s cyclical. You ex-

pect that there are going to be some slow times and very busy times. You get used to that,” Davis said. “This is a slow time, but just because it’s slow doesn’t mean I have to sit around and do nothing.”

### New Business Venture

Besides pursuing what he called “regular school,” Davis also decided to do – as he put it – “something fun” and began taking classes in woodworking.

“Out of the blue,” he said. “I didn’t have any experience.”

That opportunity eventually led Davis to create his own small business, “From the Heart Woodworking,” which sells his hand-made pens, bowls and other items and helped Davis and his wife, Quiana, make ends meet during challenging economic times. The company name was inspired by Davis’ son, Graham, who died at age 2 due to a heart defect.

“This was supposed to be a hobby ... but I’ve made this work for me and my family,” Davis said. “I think a lot of people lose sight of the fact they can make money outside of their jobs and be productive.”

The ICD also provided a safety net for Local 12L members Joel Ingram and Brian Smith, who lost their jobs when Goodyear closed its factory in Gadsden, Ala., and shifted production to a plant in San Luis Potosi, Mexico.

### Providing a Backup Plan

At the time, Smith had worked at the plant for 25 years, and Ingram was seven weeks away from full retirement. They

utilized their ICD benefit to take courses in heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

“You have members coming out of here with no trade or skills. You have to have a backup plan,” said Ingram, who worked at the Gadsden factory for 27 years. He found a job at an automotive plant about an hour away from his home, and said that his HVAC experience likely helped open the door for him.

“If I could tell anybody something about ICD – use your benefit,” Ingram said. “Take advantage of it.”

The ICD began in 1989 as a joint venture between the USW and its employers, a chance to provide retraining opportunities for workers who had lost their jobs during the steel crisis of the 1980s. USW members can gain access to the ICD’s programs by negotiating with employers to include the benefits in their contracts.

The governing board of union and company leaders oversees the ICD as a whole, while each individual location also has a joint committee that tailors the educational offerings at an individual site to members’ specific needs.

The ICD partners with colleges and universities to offer some programs, and several dozen USW locals operate learning centers near their work sites to make classes as accessible as possible.

### Learning During a Pandemic

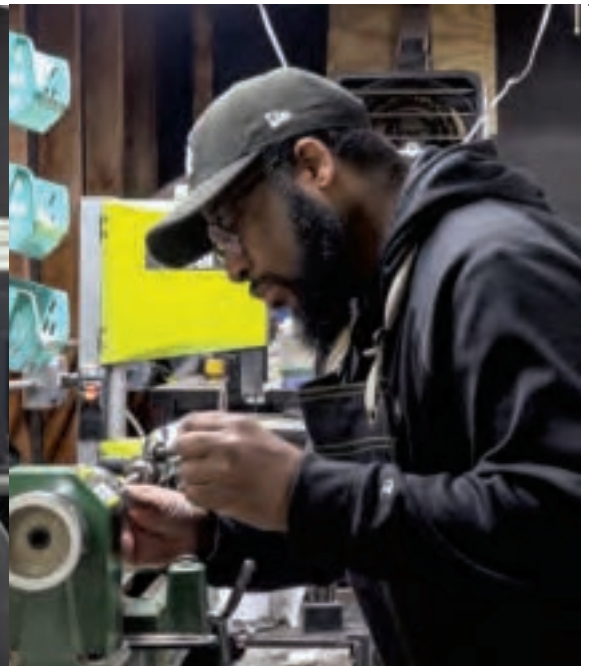
While a number of those training sites had to shut down in-person classes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the institute continued to offer online options, and members in some locations re-





*“This is a slow time, but just because it’s slow doesn’t mean I have to sit around and do nothing.”*

Rashon Davis, Local 5133



tooled existing sites to ensure they could follow the necessary safety protocols.

“Just because some of our centers are shut down, that doesn’t mean that learning has to stop,” said ICD Executive Director Sean Hayden.

Through the ICD, LaTanya Saunders, of Local 1014 at U.S. Steel Gary Works, completed a master’s degree program in human resources management online through Columbia Southern University.

She said the institute eliminated the financial burden of pursuing higher education and provided her with the flexibility she needed to earn a degree while continuing to work.

“It has been so important for me to be able to reinvent myself,” said Saunders, who saw her hours reduced during the pandemic. “With COVID, people are losing their jobs, and with this degree, I am more marketable.”

### Online Education

This summer, the ICD also offered three-month trials of language classes to USW members through the Rosetta Stone software company.

“It’s a great opportunity for someone to explore whether they can learn a new language or converse better with friends and family at no risk,” said Conway, who has been instrumental in the expansion of the institute during his tenure as an international officer.

The ICD also partners with online learning centers like Penn Foster, Tooling U and others to provide remote education.

“It’s a new avenue, because we have

a lot of people who may not be able to sit in a classroom, but they want to do something like this,” Hayden said. “It’s a good opportunity for any member, anywhere.”

Whatever the opportunities may be, whether they are for members working to build new skills or pursue a new career, the ICD is a valuable asset to the USW membership, an avenue for members to gain knowledge they can carry with them forever.

“I told the guys once we finish this, they can’t take it away from us, like the closing of the plant,” Smith said of the Goodyear factory in Gadsden. “That’s why the ICD was started, to help the members in times of need. It’s given us something to turn to in desperate times.”

### ‘This Gives You Hope’

Nick Zimmerman was facing just such a time this spring, about two years after moving with his family from Wisconsin to Northwest Indiana. He became a crane operator and member of USW Local 1010 in East Chicago, Ind., but was laid off as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Zimmerman earned a commercial driver’s license (CDL) through the ICD and eventually received two job offers. Although he later got called back to his job at ArcelorMittal, he said he is happy to have the CDL in his pocket.

“It’s a great program,” he said. “Times are tough for a lot of people right now, and this gives you some hope.”



## ABOUT the ICD

### WHERE IS IT AVAILABLE?

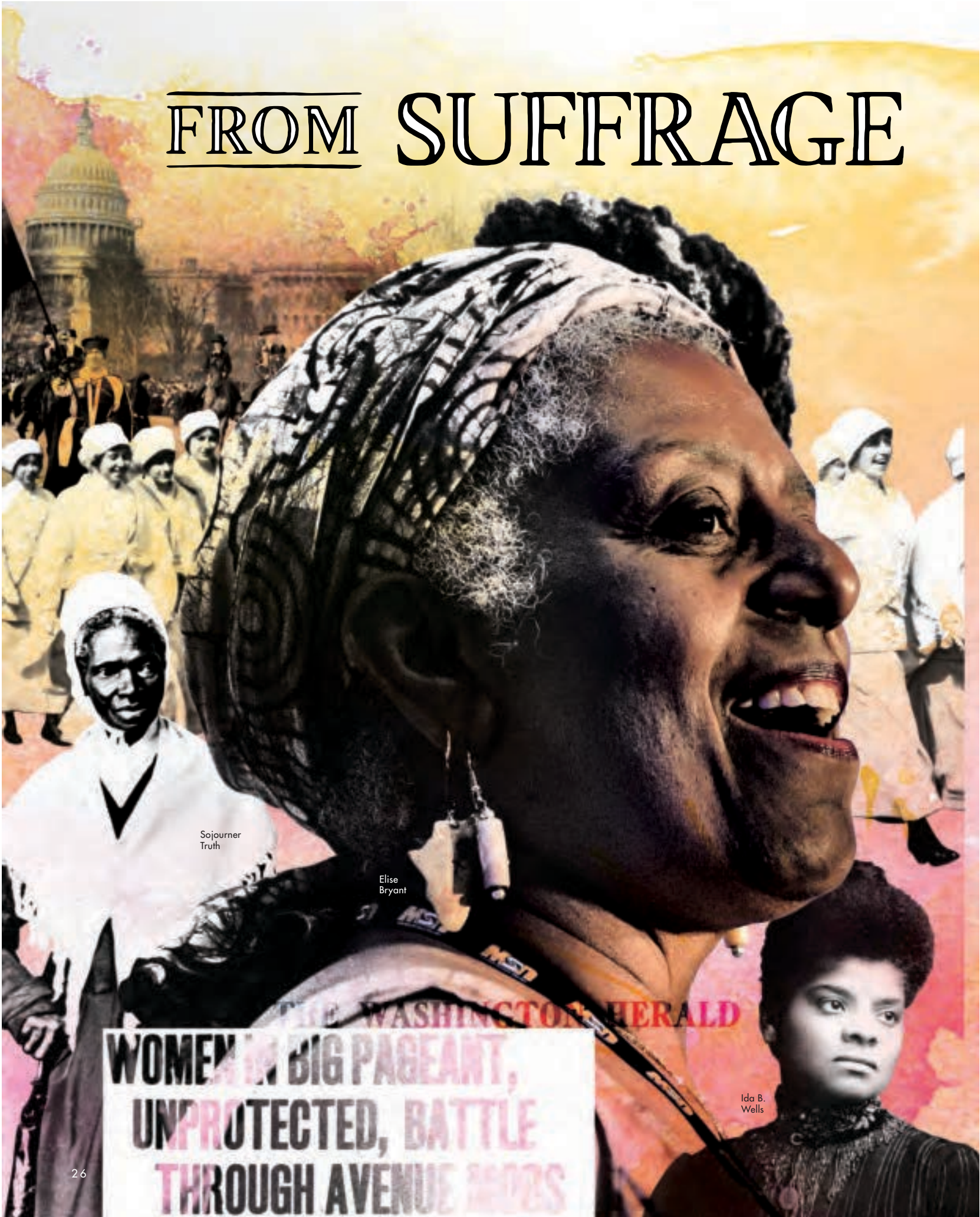
The USW has negotiated ICD benefits as part of its contracts with the following companies: AK Steel, ArcelorMittal, ATI Metals, ATI Specialty Metals & Components, BFGoodrich, Bridgestone Americas, Continental-ContiTech, Corning, Goodyear, MacLean Power Systems, Republic Steel, Sumitomo, Tetra Pak, U.S. Steel and USS-POSCO Industries.

### HOW DO WE GET IT?

If the ICD isn’t part of your contract, you can bargain with your employer to include it.

For more information, visit [www.icdlearning.org](http://www.icdlearning.org), contact the ICD at 219-738-9029 or email [icdlearning@icdlearning.org](mailto:icdlearning@icdlearning.org).

# FROM SUFFRAGE



Sojourner  
Truth

Elise  
Bryant

Ida B.  
Wells

THE WASHINGTON HERALD  
**WOMEN IN BIG PAGEANT,  
UNPROTECTED, BATTLE  
THROUGH AVENUE MOBS**

# TO EQUALITY

WOMEN MOBILIZE  
TO HONOR THE 19<sup>TH</sup>  
AMENDMENT

A group of dozens of labor union women dressed all in white marched outside the White House on Aug. 18, holding candles and singing songs like “This Little Light of Mine” and “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing,” the Black national anthem.

The hot night was dedicated to the anniversary of the 1913 women’s suffrage parade in Washington, D.C., as well as to the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing white women’s right to vote.

Coalition of Labor Union Women President and Executive Director of the Labor Heritage Foundation Elise Bryant marched this past August, leading the women in song. She said this year it is more important than ever to remember Black women like Ida B. Wells, a journalist and women’s rights activist, and Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist and early suffragette.

“These women recognized there was racism within the women’s suffrage movement,” Bryant said. “We have to bring those stories forward and tell the complete ‘her-story’ of women’s suffrage.”

The USW’s director of the Women of Steel program, Ann Flener-Gittlen, also believes it is vital for women’s rights and labor activists to know the history behind the progress that’s already been made in order to move forward.

“It makes you realize that often

change starts with just one person,” Flener-Gittlen said.

She also said engaging women as leaders at all levels to help them get practical experience is especially important during this pivotal year, where so much is on the line for workers and women.

“The stakes couldn’t be higher,” she said. “This is all hands on deck, and Women of Steel committees across the United States are mobilizing right now to make sure every vote counts this year.”

Women of Steel activists have turned the program into a vast network, which makes it an ideal partner. Their focus has been sending postcards to members who are suspected of being purged from the rolls, reminding them to check their registration status and update it if necessary.

All of that can be found and completed at [uswvoices.org](http://uswvoices.org).

The activist arm of the union also hosted a Facebook livestream discussion on Sept. 15, featuring International Vice Presidents Leeann Foster and Roxanne Brown. The leaders virtually met with Women of Steel members across the

country to talk about registering voters and the importance of women turning out to the polls.

“In all of our communities, women step up, do the work, lead and inspire,” said Foster. “It’s especially important we do our part.”

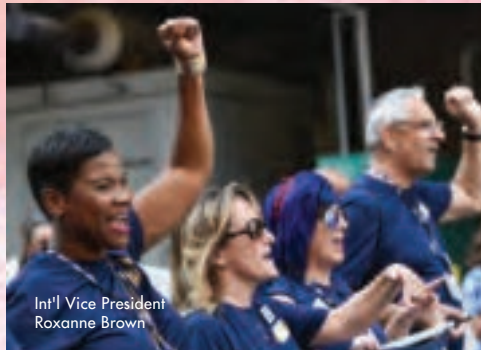
Deanna Hughes, president of Local 9460 in Duluth, Minn., and a military veteran who broke quite a few glass ceilings during her service, said she can understand the trepidation some workers may feel about getting involved with political advocacy.

But, she said, at the end of the day, she knows if workers don’t get involved, someone else will get involved for them, and those people may not have the people’s best interests in mind.

“Everything in your life can find its way back to politics and legislation,” Hughes said, “from the price of the cup of coffee you buy every morning to the response, or lack thereof, we’re seeing right now from the government to the coronavirus.”

Bryant believes that if anyone can find a way to adapt to and activate within the many challenges posed by the virus and the upcoming election and rise above them, it is women and their allies.

“Women are the surge who are going to make the tipping point in this election go in the direction of democracy and inclusion and equality for all,” Bryant said. “I really believe that.”



Int'l Vice President  
Roxanne Brown



LISTEN TO A USW PODCAST EPISODE ABOUT EMPOWERING WOMEN LEADERS, FEATURING COALITION OF LABOR UNION WOMEN PRESIDENT ELISE BRYANT AND OTHERS. VISIT [USW.TO / PODCAST](http://USW.TO/PODCAST).

USW WORKERS CLEAN UP

# America's NUCLEAR LEGACY

HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES REMAIN A CONSTANT  
CHALLENGE FOR ATOMIC SECTOR

When it comes to health and safety concerns, the USW's atomic workers are unique – they handle toxic chemical waste and radioactive material that require great care, extensive personal protective equipment (PPE) and attention to health and safety rules and procedures.

Also, unlike most members, they have to contend with a third party – the Department of Energy (DOE) – that awards contracts to companies that employ them. Then add to that mix the U.S. Congress, which appropriates funding for the environmental cleanup work at atomic sites, and there is plenty of gamesmanship and politics to go around.

Despite the challenges that these situations pose for the USW's atomic sector leaders, members and the international, they always push forward to create safe and healthy workplaces.

"The contractors and DOE need continual education," said International Vice President Roxanne Brown, who oversees the USW's Atomic Energy Workers Council (AEWC). "No one knows better how safe or unsafe a task

is than the person doing the job."

Brown said that any time there's a potential for danger, the USW won't hesitate to raise an alarm, whether it's with a contractor or DOE officials.

"We're pushing to make health and safety better at the bargaining table as well as at the policy level in Washington, D.C.," Brown said. "It affects DOE, the Department of Labor (DOL) and their health and safety standards."

## Workers in the Dark

Making sure contractors or government agencies do the right thing to keep workers safe isn't always easy.

AEWC President Jim Key, a vice president of Local 8-550, has worked at the former Paducah, Ky., gaseous diffusion plant, now a cleanup site, for 46 years. As an environmental, safety and health representative for his local, he testified before a U.S. House subcommittee in September 1999 about how the federal government did not tell workers for 40 years about the level of radiation to which they had been exposed.

The DOE's predecessor, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), failed to

tell workers they were handling recycled uranium that had been used in the production of plutonium – one of the most dangerous substances on Earth. The material contained cancer-causing, radioactive traces of plutonium, neptunium and technetium-99.

The use of the recycled reactor tailings continued until 1974, but it wasn't until more than 15 years later workers learned the full truth about the materials they had handled.

At government-run uranium plants like those in Paducah, Piketon, Ohio, and Oak Ridge, Tenn., the AEC was responsible, as the DOE is today, for monitoring worker safety and environmental issues, including those of the contractors.

"It was the fox guarding the henhouse," Key said. "They hid (exposure information) under a veil of secrecy."

Key also told the House panel that the "reality of plutonium contamination in the production process did not register with the overwhelming majority of the hourly work force at Paducah" until they read about it in the newspaper.

"The majority of current and former



workers are afraid that they may have been exposed to substances like plutonium without proper protection and that they will, as a result, be stricken with a fatal disease,” Key testified.

After the government acknowledged it had exposed workers to hazardous material for years without their knowledge, Congress passed the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA) in 2000. People who worked in nuclear weapons production and contracted certain illnesses because of their exposure could receive compensation and medical care.

### Incremental Progress

“Since the mid-1990s, health and safety within DOE facilities has drastically improved because the agency requires its awarded operating contractors that have a unionized work force to engage the unions and their own health and safety representatives who are trained by the USW and the USW’s Tony Mazzocchi Center,” Key said.

That improvement stops with the prime contractor, however. Oversight suffers when work is subcontracted to

outside, low-bid companies, he said.

“The majority of complaints that exist today at all DOE locations concern low-bid, outside contractor personnel not being held to the same safety requirements as the internal USW work force,” he said.

Subcontractors, he said, view safety through the lens of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) construction rules and not the internal, OSHA general industry safety and health regulations.

Key cited an example of a subcontractor hired to perform asbestos abatement at the former Paducah gaseous diffusion plant. The local union told the prime contractor that it had asbestos-certified workers, but the contractor still chose to subcontract the work. When the subcontractor employees arrived, local union safety representatives monitored them.

After handling asbestos, workers must go through a rigorous containment process involving multiple rooms and containment systems in which the workers remove potentially contaminated clothing and shower before moving to a

clean room where they can get dressed in their street clothes.

Local union members watched at Paducah as the subcontractor’s employees blew through those processes and removed potentially contaminated clothes in the last stage, Key said.

The local filed a “stop work order” and shut down the job, he said. Local union members met with the prime contractor, which then held a meeting with subcontractor workers.

“Their response was: ‘Why do we have to do this containment process here? We don’t have to adhere to all these safety regulations on public projects,’” Key recalled.

Ultimately, the work was taken away from the subcontractor, and the remainder of the project was completed by the USW’s highly skilled, well-trained, safety-conscious members.

“Each time we hold our AEWC meetings, there are different stories related to subcontractors not being held to the same health and safety regulations as our USW work force,” Key said.



“WE STILL HAVE POCKETS OF NUCLEAR COWBOYS WHO ARE EITHER CHASING INCENTIVES OR JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO MANAGE PEOPLE.”



## Money over Safety

The profit motive sometimes causes companies to fail to prioritize safety, said John Knauff, president of Local 1-689 in Piketon, Ohio.

“Management ego, pride and money are always your biggest safety dangers,” said Knauff. “Contractors were so eager on getting a performance bonus that they left contaminated equipment in the open air. We had highly contaminated areas that had not been contaminated before.”

The pressure for performance-based incentives starts with Congress. At an AEWG meeting last fall, Kevin Dressman, director of DOE’s Office of Enforcement, acknowledged the push to show results in cleaning up former nuclear sites.

“There is a lot of pressure from Congress for DOE to show progress,” he said. “That is part of what they are trying to incentivize.”

Key said there are incentives on specific scopes of work. “If the contractor can get work done in a specific period of time, they get bonuses. This leads to low-bid, outside subcontractors that promote shortcuts to all health and safety rules and requirements in order to get the job done quicker.”

A good example of the influence of performance-based incentives was the deactivation and demolition of the Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP) at the Hanford Site in Washington state.

The plant encompassed dozens of structures that processed plutonium nitrate into solid buttons and plutonium-oxide powder for shipment to U.S. weapon factories. The facility was one of the most highly contaminated areas of the nuclear complex, as plutonium’s status as an alpha emitter with a high propensity to go airborne makes it one of the most dangerous radioactive particles.

“The PFP closure project spread plutonium contamination on site and off,” said Local 12-369 Vice President at Large Bill Collins.

One major incident occurred in December 2017 during the demolition of the main PFP plant.

“Most workers had respiratory

protection on, but there were some without it,” he said. “Personal vehicles, government vehicles, workers, trailers and a large area of the site had to be cordoned off as a result of management’s failure to control radiological work.”

The contractor was attempting to get a performance-based incentive of \$40 million for decontaminating, decommissioning and demolishing the PFP ahead of schedule, Collins said.

As a result, he said, trailers were contaminated and had to be sprayed with chemical stabilizing agents, and will have to be demolished and buried as radioactive waste. More than 40 workers ingested or inhaled radioactive particles, prompting a nine-month work stoppage.

Another time, workers were told to tear a hole in a facility roof to show that demolition work had been done so the contractor could receive its incentive money, according to Collins.

“A rainstorm occurred shortly after the roof was torn open, and the rain water washed radioactive contamination throughout a portion of the building. It made no sense to cut the hole in the roof, but it had a payout, and it was done anyway,” he said.

## Defective Equipment

Collins said that Hanford workers are potentially exposed to hazardous waste, tank vapors, chemical vapors, processing chemicals, asbestos, beryllium, plutonium, strontium and a host of other materials, in addition to facing confined spaces and regular industrial hazards. They wear every type of respiratory protection available from a self-contained breathing apparatus to a powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR).

But some of the PAPRs workers wore during the cleanup of the PFP site leaked.

“This type of respirator, regardless of brand, has had intermittent battery failures, some from design and others due to improper charging practices,” Collins said. “The PAPRs have a history of workers knocking off filters during

their work. It was a low-percentage problem, but working with plutonium requires almost perfect personal protective equipment and work execution,” he said.

To prevent filters from getting knocked off inadvertently, the contractor worked with the manufacturer to create a “bump stop,” a ring that fit between the filter and its housing, Collins said. This worked for one type of filter cartridge, but not for another one designed to protect against chemical and radioactive contamination. It leaked, according to a test the contractor did in October 2016.

“USW workers, including all the other Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council crafts were exposed to hazards while using these PAPRs at PFP,” Collins said. “The contractor has not taken responsibility for tracking any of the workers’ future health effects.”

### Safety Systems Vary

“We have some sites that do their best to ensure health and safety and others that really need to do the work,” Brown said.

Locals put pressure on contractors and local DOE officials, and also bring their concerns to the international to put pressure on the DOE in Washington, D.C.

“It is a work in progress,” Brown said.

Collins said the safety systems at Hanford can be at times outstanding and other times an accident waiting to happen.

“The majority of the site, I would say, has management that does a really good job, but we still have pockets of nuclear cowboys who are either chasing (incentives) or just don’t know how to manage people,” he said.

At Idaho National Laboratory (INL), the health and safety relationship that Local 12-652 has with its contractors varies, according to the local’s president, Matt Chavez, and vice president, Henry Littleford.

They said that Fred Hughes, the INL program manager for the cleanup contractor, Fluor Corp., will ensure health and safety issues get resolved if lower management does not listen to the union’s health and

safety representatives.

“Now, if health and safety reps bring a concern to a lower manager’s attention, the manager knows that if the situation is not fixed, we will bring it to Fred,” Littleford said.

Chavez said that Fluor’s safety systems have improved greatly since it first came to the site, and that it has better safety systems than the contractor on the nuclear energy side.

“I give Fred a lot of credit for that. If we have an issue, we will stop by his office in a surprise visit or call him. We don’t have that with the contractor on the nuclear energy side,” Chavez said. “You bring up a health and safety issue to lower ranked management there and it’s not dealt with like it should be.”

Fluor’s contract with DOE is almost up and the agency issued a new RFP (request for proposal). This does not sit well with Chavez and Littleford. “Our local is hoping the DOE will extend the current contract so we don’t have to experience another transition; it seems like we just got through the last one,” Littleford said.

Key said safety returns to zero every time a new contractor is awarded a prime contract and comes to a site. He said the most important activity a local can take is to negotiate with the prime contractor to have one USW health and safety representative for every 100 in-house employees.

Then, when the DOE agreement with the contractor ends or the contractor leaves the site, the local will still have a contract with a successor clause that keeps the representatives intact, Key said. Over the last few years, USW atomic locals have been able to increase the number of USW health and safety representatives in the field, he said.

“Our members are the best, smartest, most aware workers across this country. That is no different across the DOE complex,” Brown said. “I trust them implicitly about what is best for them when it comes to safety and health. They should always have a say on health and safety and be at the table because they are the ones who can ensure the safety at the site.”



Photos courtesy of Department of Energy



“MANAGEMENT EGO, PRIDE AND MONEY ARE ALWAYS YOUR BIGGEST SAFETY DANGERS.”



**B**efore there was a United Steelworkers union, there was Henry Ball, steelworker.

Ball, who turned 100 this year, started working at a steel mill in Johnstown, Pa., in 1941, a few years after the formation of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), and a year before the members of that organization helped form the United Steelworkers.

It wasn't long before the United States entered World War II, and the young Henry left his job to serve in the 605th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Gun Battalion in Europe, where he earned three Bronze Stars and a Belgian fourragère for his bravery.

After the war, Ball returned to Bethlehem Steel's Johnstown plant, about 60 miles east of Pittsburgh. He spent the next four decades in the mill's steel car department, helping the factory become one of the world's most well-known manufacturers of railroad freight cars.

"When I started, we didn't have the union," Ball said. "But then, bit by bit, things started getting better."

In the early days, Ball said, dues were 45 cents a month, and the starting wage was 59 cents an hour.

Through constant activism and a series of well-planned strikes, the Steelworkers in Johnstown's Local 2635 and across the country won numerous contractual gains, Ball said.

"When we had to, we would strike, and strike, and strike to get a fair deal," Ball said. "When I left, we were making \$15 an hour. That was big."

USW members fought for more than just wages, Ball said. Health care, pensions and safety were other major concerns.

Ball recalled that he and his fellow union leaders at Bethlehem Steel opted to forgo raises several times so they could direct more money to their pension.

### Fighting for Workers

Outside of contract bargaining, Ball and other activists fought hard for government programs to protect workers – achieving major victories such as the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC).

The latter institution, created in 1974 to protect defined benefit retirement plans, proved to be a crucial lifeline for Ball and thousands of others when American steel companies faced a crisis in the 1980s and pension

funds began to – as Ball said – “go belly up.”

“That’s what we fought for,” Ball said. “In case something like that would happen.”

Bethlehem Steel filed for bankruptcy in 2001, and the company was dissolved in 2003. Through a series of mergers and acquisitions, the company’s assets eventually became part of what is now ArcelorMittal.

But thanks to the PBGC and the decades of tireless activism by USW members, Ball and other retirees continued to receive their pensions.

### A SOAR Pioneer

Ball retired from the Johnstown mill in 1982, but his activism didn't stop there. In fact, he was just getting started.

He became a founding president of his local chapter of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) when the organization was formed in 1985. He remained in that role until last year, when he moved in with family in South Carolina.

Over the years, he also served as vice president of the Greater Johnstown/Somerset Central Labor Council and volunteered for numerous political campaigns in the Keystone State.

“I am a die-hard Democrat,” Ball said. “That’s the way I always saw politics.”

Ball, who remains a dues-paying member of SOAR, said he was hopeful that the labor movement could have a bright future with a worker-friendly president.

“I think you’ll see a resurgence of unions,” with Joe Biden’s election in November, Ball said. “He’s making those statements already. He wants to see all workers have a chance to join a union.”

Ball, who attended dozens of USW conferences and conventions over the years, keeps in touch with several former co-workers from Johnstown, closely follows the work of the USW and delights in meeting fellow Johnstown transplants in South Carolina who remember the town’s deep labor roots.

“Everywhere you go, you meet someone from Johnstown,” he said.

At the end of a recent chat with *USW@Work*, Ball said his goodbyes in the way he’s grown accustomed to ending all of his conversations.

“You have a good day,” he said, “and a better one tomorrow.”

## USW RETIREE CELEBRATES

# 100 YEARS



## Local 1016-3 Begins ULP Strike at NLMK

More than 400 members of Local 1016-3 began an unfair labor practice (ULP) strike at Western Pennsylvania's NLMK steel plant in August after company management presented the members with a "last, best and final" contract offer.

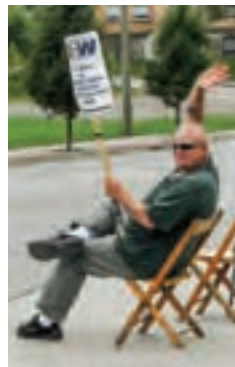
The USW and NLMK have been negotiating for months on a new contract, but the company has insisted on forcing members to accept a high-deductible health plan.

District 10 Director Bobby "Mac" McAuliffe said that the USW members at NLMK are committed to holding management accountable.

"We've stood together to survive during hard times in the

past and know that we can accomplish great things through solidarity and collective action," McAuliffe said. "NLMK needs to stop breaking the law and negotiate in good faith with its workers."

The USW filed ULP charges against NLMK with Region 6 of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) based on the company's failure to provide information necessary to bargain on an informed basis, management's refusal to process grievances and for unilaterally changing benefits to exclude the families of deceased employees, effective immediately upon their death.



## Netroots Nation Goes Online

COVID-19 prevented Netroots Nation from holding its annual convention in person this year, but it didn't stop thousands of grassroots organizers and labor activists, including USW members, from collaborating virtually.

Originally scheduled for August 13-15 at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver, the conference was preempted by the coronavirus pandemic but was still able to host 150 hours of virtual sessions this year for organizers from across the world.

Now in its 15th year, Netroots has hosted presidents and presidential candidates, labor leaders and other high-profile speakers over the years, including Barack Obama, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Sen. Bernie Sanders, Vice President Al Gore, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Gov. Howard Dean, Richard Trumka and the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber.

More than 3,800 activists participated this year, from groups including the USW, the Communications Workers of America, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the Service Employees International Union, the Amalgamated Transit Union, UNITE HERE and the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers. Participants took part in in-depth training sessions and panel discussions focused on improving organizing and communications for labor and other progressive organizations.

## USW Seeks Intervention to Save Titanium Sponge Plant

The USW in August urged Congress and the Trump administration to act to save TIMET's titanium sponge plant in Henderson, Nev., from permanent closure, after TIMET announced July 13 it intends to idle the facility.

Without the Henderson facility, the U.S. would completely depend on imports for titanium sponge and scrap from China, Japan, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan or India.

"We cannot risk our national security by depending on other countries to supply titanium for our military airplanes, helicopters and aerospace equipment," said USW District 12 Director Gaylan Prescott.

"Before it's too late, President Trump and congressional leaders from both parties must take action to prevent compromising our national defense."

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Nominate a Steelworker for Multiplying Good

USW members who went above and beyond to aid coronavirus relief in their communities recently earned the USW the prestigious Multiplying Good One In a Million Award for outstanding public service.

Steelworkers across the United States and Canada stepped up to make and donate masks and other PPE for health care workers, provided meals to those on the front lines, and collected food for local pantries throughout the pandemic.

Multiplying Good, formerly known as the Jefferson Awards Foundation, trains community leaders, activates service projects, and celebrates people doing public service. The USW has long sponsored and participated in the program.

“Our members show time after time that through struggle can come great solidarity and community,” said USW Vice President Fred Redmond, who oversees the union’s health care sector. “They always find a way to come together, and everyone should be proud of what they are accomplishing in the face of these challenges.”

To nominate a Steelworker you know who is multiplying good in their community, and for more information about the USW’s historical involvement in the Jefferson Awards program, visit [usw.org/uswcares](http://usw.org/uswcares).



## Fisher Cast Workers Fight for Fairness

Even after their employer received hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars in federal COVID-19 relief funds, members of USW Local 2342 at Fisher Cast Steel Products in West Jefferson, Ohio, are still fighting the company’s efforts to bust their union.

As the members negotiate a new contract, the company is attempting to strip away some of the workers’ most fundamental protections and rights, including union security, seniority, just-cause discipline and arbitration.

For the first time in its 51-year relationship with the USW, Fisher Cast hired an outside attorney to bargain with the union. In more than three months since the existing contract expired, the company only agreed to four days of meetings and has so far only offered a one-year agreement with wage increases of 25 cents per hour.

“This relief funding was meant to help small businesses and support good jobs,” said District 1 Director Donnie Blatt. “The company benefited from taxpayer money and now is attacking good, union jobs.”

## Members Ratify Contract with Briggs & Stratton Bidder

Members of Wisconsin’s Local 2-232 voted overwhelmingly in August to ratify a new contract with a newly formed affiliate of KPS Capital Partners, an investment firm that is purchasing the Milwaukee-area manufacturing plant and other assets from bankrupt engine maker Briggs & Stratton.

The five-year agreement, which covers about 300 hourly workers, was contingent upon the U.S. Bankruptcy Court’s approval of the sale to KPS, which came on Sept. 15. Briggs & Stratton filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in July.

“The USW supports the KPS bid, and we look forward to a long and productive partnership with the company here,” said Michael Bolton, director of the USW’s District 2, which includes tens of thousands of union members in Wisconsin and Michigan. “The company has a solid track record of success in running manufacturing facilities like this, and this contract will put the company and the workers on that same track.”

The agreement includes wage increases of more than 11 percent over the term of the contract and maintains the workers’ existing health care coverage. The contract also includes a strong retirement plan, increased sick and accident coverage, and the establishment of a voluntary employees’ beneficiary association (VEBA) to fund retiree health care coverage.

The new contract also includes a number of union-friendly provisions such as dues check-off, new employee orientation, and neutrality on union organizing in the event that the reorganized Briggs & Stratton owns or operates similar facilities.

“The USW is very familiar with KPS from its past operations and acquisitions,” said International President Thomas M. Conway. “Our union will welcome their ownership, and we expect to have a strong relationship with the company as we work with them to turn this business around.”

The Briggs & Stratton sale was due to close by the end of September.

## USW Joins Allies in Suing EPA over Toxic Chemical Review

The USW and its allies filed a lawsuit on July 16 seeking a review of a new risk evaluation of the chemical methylene chloride, a toxic chemical and potential occupational carcinogen.

The petition, filed with the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, argues that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not fulfill its obligations under the 2016 Toxic Substances Control Act to fully measure the dangers associated with the chemical.

The USW and its allies flagged concerns in an open comment period on the draft version of the risk evaluation last year, alleging that the EPA under-assessed workers' exposure to methylene chloride.

"We cannot allow incomplete assessments of toxic chemicals to place our members at unnecessary risk," said USW Secretary-Treasurer John Shinn, who heads the union's chemical sector.

The USW and its allies anticipate a notification this fall from the appeals court about when it will accept legal briefs and hold oral arguments in the case.

## Local Settles Contract with Solvay Blue Island

Local 7-209-09 members at Solvay's Blue Island, Ill., plant reached a new three-year agreement with the company this spring that includes wage and benefit increases.

The new contract runs through March 31, 2023.

Production, maintenance, shipping and receiving workers received a one-time signing bonus as well as annual wage increases. The contract also includes improvements in holiday pay, vacation and overtime language.

The Blue Island site creates chemicals that go into soaps, shampoos and other sanitizing products. Local 7-765's bargaining at Solvay's Chicago Heights, Ill., plant was put on hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic, however.

## Members Earn Bonuses for Front-Line Dedication

Members at Appalachian Regional Healthcare (ARH) locations throughout eastern Kentucky and southern West Virginia will finally see appreciation bonuses that acknowledge their hard work on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The local's USW leaders announced the bonus payments in mid-August.

The bonuses, in the amount of \$400 each, were not part of the members' collective bargaining agreement and came after USW leaders sent two letters to ARH urging them to award appreciation payments to all of their employees.

"Our members are the front line of this pandemic," District 8 Director Billy Thompson said. "They deserve to be treated with the same appreciation as you showed managers and non-union employees."

The payouts apply to all workers hired prior to March 1 and also include furloughed employees.

The eight USW locals include roughly 2,200 members across nine hospitals, while ARH employs roughly 6,000 workers system-wide.

Photo by Steve Dietz  
Jan. 20, 2020.



## Unions File New Charges Against ASARCO

The USW and other unions at ASARCO filed new unfair labor practice (ULP) charges after ASARCO failed to reinstate workers returning from the ULP strike and kept replacement workers in the returning strikers' jobs.

On July 5, the unions at ASARCO notified the company that they were ending the strike that began last October, ceasing picketing activity and making an unconditional offer to return to work, effective July 6, at 8 a.m. in Arizona and 10 a.m. in Texas.

As ASARCO has ignored its obligations under federal labor law, on August 13, the USW filed its position statement with Region 28 of the National Labor Relations Board seeking an injunction to compel the company to return workers to their rightful jobs, expel replacement workers if necessary and make whole those who were deprived of wages by the company's continued unlawful actions.

The unions have also requested information concerning alleged "permanent replacement" workers currently on the job and have demanded to bargain over the announced temporary and indefinite shutdowns of the Hayden Concentrator, Hayden Smelter and Amarillo Refinery.

## USW to Hold Virtual Education Conference

The USW is planning the international union's first virtual education conference: "Smarter is Stronger!" The two-day event, Nov. 18-19, is intended to make sure members are able to continue doing the work of the union until they can gather in person again.

The online conference will include nearly 100 training sessions about representation, officer duties, health and safety and other topics to provide members with practical knowledge for use in their locals and workplaces. The conference will include district breakout sessions and opportunities for members to socialize, including activist groups such as Veterans of Steel and Next Gen.

The conference is free for USW and SOAR members. Register and find out more information about the conference at [www.usw.org/educationconference](http://www.usw.org/educationconference). Participants are urged to pre-register for classes online due to limited capacity in some of the trainings. Once registered, members will receive information about additional classes, required hardware and internet connection, and how to access the conference through your device. The USW will also offer training sessions before the conference to make sure participants can use their equipment.

# Have You Moved?

Notify your local union financial secretary, or clip out this form with your old address label and send your new address to:

USW Membership Department,  
60 Blvd. of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Name \_\_\_\_\_

New Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

You may also email the information to [membership@usw.org](mailto:membership@usw.org)



**WORKERS  
BLAST  
BOYCOTT**  
*See Page 17*



Photos by Steve Dietz