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NEWS FOR THE UNITED STEELWORKERS IN

DISTRICT 4

D4 NEXT GEN



While the District 4 states are slowly opening up after these long few months, we must still remember that we as union members are essential to making this world run.

We are essential, industrial workers who produce the goods and services needed not just for our country, but for people all over the world to be able to survive and thrive. We are essential workers who show up every day, despite worries about our own health and that of our families. We are essential public sector workers who help protect and serve our communities. We are essential workers in health care, fighting on the front lines, saving the lives of the millions infected with coronavirus.

We do all this despite daily worries over the lack of proper protective equipment to safeguard ourselves. We remind our employers that they will remember that we are essential. We are essential workers who keep the economy going and are union proud. When we hear that we are essential, there is only one response: "Of course we are, we're union!"

In July, District 4's Next Gen Coordinators and local Next Gen committees created a special edition 'COVID-19 Essential' T-shirt and fundraising event. With the support and solidarity of our USW members across the United States and Canada, a total of \$28,700 worth of shirts were sold. The net proceeds from the sale will be used to purchase PPE for union-represented medical facilities that have been heavily impacted in the high-risk areas of District 4. We again would like to thank all of the USW members and their local unions for your support and dedication.

This is our second edition of the District 4 Newsletter produced as an insert in *USW@Work*. We hope our message is reaching more of our members in this format. We would love to hear from you about what you think and what you would like to see in future editions, so please drop us an email with some feedback.

Unfortunately, we're all still dealing with the dangers and restrictions of Covid-19. I hope that you, your family, and your friends are well. As a union, we have become used to holding meetings through video and conference calls, but as the states in our district ease restrictions, it presents the opportunity for some meetings to be held in person, as long as mask and distance guidelines can be met. Our staff is working hard to overcome these obstacles, maintaining the high level of service our membership has come to expect, and of course, monitoring our employers' adherence to guidelines for the safety and health of our members.

Election Day is fast approaching and like everything else these days, the voting process will be affected by the coronavirus. Some of you may have already taken advantage of early or mail-in voting. Those who plan to vote in person may find fewer polling locations and longer lines, so mail-in voting may be a safe and viable option. I hope that everyone will exercise their right to vote, regardless of the challenge or inconvenience. If you have any questions on your registration status or whether you are eligible to vote by mail, please visit uswvoices.org.

When you vote, please consider how important labor issues will be during the next four years and how much influence a president and their administration will have on those issues. During the past four years, the labor movement has been under constant attack by the Trump administration.

Since 2017, EPA and OSHA regulations that were designed to protect workers and the population have been rolled back for the benefit of corporations. The president has signed numerous executive orders weakening federal workers' rights.

Perhaps the worst attacks against unions have come from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The NLRB is composed of an

anti-union majority appointed by the current administration and has made one rule change and decision after another favoring employers and handicapping unions. Because of these actions, it is now easier for employers to make unilateral changes during the term of a contract. In general, most decisions favor employers and even in those instances where circumstances clearly do favor the union's position, the NLRB needlessly delays the decision.

The importance of labor issues does not end with the vote for president. There are decisions to be made for both congressional and state-level offices. Who we elect to Congress matters because that is where all laws originate and it is to our benefit to elect candidates who will support pro-labor legislation. Anti-worker bills and union-weakening laws are consistently introduced by anti-union legislators, while pro-worker bills such as the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act that would help strengthen our movement do not get the vote they deserve.

In addition to federal leadership, the need for union-friendly legislators at the state-office level cannot be overstated. In just the past year, elected officials who we supported helped to pass pro-labor laws like "Buy American" in New York and extended unemployment in Massachusetts during the National Grid lockout.

Your vote is yours and I would not presume to tell anyone how to vote. I only hope you will consider the importance of labor issues when making your decision. However you choose to vote, please stay safe!



DEL VITALE
DISTRICT 4 DIRECTOR

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

CHEEKTOWAGA JIM BRIGGS, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

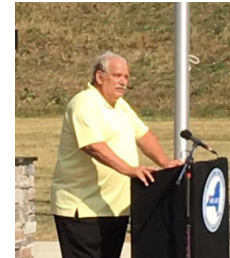
Greetings from the Buffalo sub-district office! We have been busy working to protect our essential workers who keep our country moving. It's not an easy task, and our companies and elected officials quickly forget what our members do. As businesses began to open up, many employers applied for benefits under the Paycheck Protection Program. Gowanda Remtronics, in Dunkirk, N.Y. was one. Just weeks after asking our members to complete the paperwork to qualify Gowanda Remtronics for stimulus dollars, the company served a WARN notice announcing its intent to close the site. These members make parts for the aerospace, industrial, medical, and military industries – essential, yes, and mistreated? Definitely. We will continue to fight for these workers and find employment for them at other USW-represented

locations.

I would like to thank the staff of the Buffalo office for their help and participation with the Niagara-Orleans Central Labor Council Workers Memorial Day. Special thanks to Mark McDonald for helping with preparation at the site. Both Assistant to the Director Dave Wasiura and I felt it was important to put this event together during this pandemic. The message was clear: you go to work and you get sick, it's a work-related sickness. There are no plans or paths forward from the current administration; rather, they propose to give employers a free pass on any liability for exposing their workers to COVID-19. We are facing a time when it is crystal clear this is a middle-class issue. Union or non-union, Republican or Democrat, people have died on the job and their fami-

lies are being left behind. We cannot walk away from this fight.

Stay healthy and stay safe.



MILFORD STEVE FINNIGAN, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

While the summer season has come to an end and the majority of our members have returned to full-time employment, our focus still remains on COVID-19 issues. We continue to deal with issues such as maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for members, and for many, the danger still exists.

Although COVID-19 is still a priority and will be for the foreseeable future, the work of the union must go on. There has never been a better time to get involved with your union. Our sub-district includes multiple states with different COVID-19 mandates and regularities, so this election season will certainly be a challenge.

The election of 2020 may be the most critical election of our time, certainly

starting with the president of the United States. However, as we look at key races throughout our sub-district, it is incumbent on all of us to elect politicians who have the best interest of working people at the forefront of their campaigns. Some of the key races we are concentrating on in the various New England states are the U.S. Senate seat in Maine; Maine Congressional District 2; New Hampshire governor; New Hampshire Congressional Districts 1 and 2; U.S. Senate in New Hampshire; and various state-level races in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, where we will be working in conjunction with the state AFL-CIOs.

That being said, we will not be successful in getting friends of labor elected

without boots on the ground, including union volunteers to knock on the doors of our members and families, to distribute literature at our work sites, and to make phone calls to our members to get the message out.

The USW has political coordinators developing the plans for this campaign. They will be contacting your local union president and asking for volunteers to assist in getting the message to working families. If you can contribute a few hours of your time during the weekend, or before or after a shift, it would mean a lot.

Now is the time to get involved to make sure the labor movement thrives now and in the future.

HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE

It feels like we have been living under the threat of the coronavirus for an eternity. Many of our facilities are now back to full employment and as we are at the end of the summer months, many of our workplaces are still experiencing extremely hot work environments. These extreme working conditions have been made worse by the need to wear face coverings to help us defend against the threat of COVID-19. We have received numerous calls asking whether the use of medical or surgical masks or cloth face covering causes unsafe oxygen levels or harmful carbon dioxide levels to the wearer. In an attempt to answer this question, we reached out to OSHA and NIOSH for answers.

OSHA's response is: *Medical masks, including surgical masks, are routinely worn by healthcare workers throughout*

the day as part of their personal protective equipment ensembles and do not compromise their oxygen levels or cause carbon dioxide buildup. They are designed to be breathed through and can protect against respiratory droplets, which are typically much larger than tiny carbon dioxide particles. Consequently, most carbon dioxide particles will either go through the mask or escape along the mask's loose-fitting perimeter. Some carbon dioxide might collect between the mask and the wearer's face, but not at unsafe levels.

Like medical masks, cloth face coverings are loose-fitting with no seal and are designed to be breathed through. Workers may easily remove their medical masks or cloth face coverings periodically (and when not in close proximity with others) to eliminate any negligible buildup of carbon

dioxide that might occur. Cloth face coverings and medical masks can help prevent the spread of potentially infectious respiratory droplets from the wearer to their co-workers, including when the wearer has COVID-19 and does not know it.

We are suggesting that any member who is experiencing problems with breathing while wearing facemasks (especially in hot work environments) seek medical advice. It is also important that our local union health and safety committees address the issue of these hot environments in combination with the requirement to wear these face masks for COVID-19 prevention. Management should consider alternate engineering controls or administrative controls to deal with this added burden in our work environments.

EDISON MICHAEL L. FISHER, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Here in the Edison Sub-District, we're starting to see things moving in the right direction. The New York City and New Jersey metro area, a major part of this sub-district, has seen the greatest COVID-19 outbreak, and tragically, the highest number of fatalities throughout the country. Since the worst days in April and May, our infection and fatality numbers continue to improve.

Our USW members are largely considered essential, and many of our brothers and sisters have been working throughout the pandemic. Our health care members worked throughout, providing essential care and treatment to our friends and neighbors. Our professional and technical members worked long hours, day in and day out, remotely providing pertinent information and advice to their clients. Our members who work in the manufacturing sector worked alternative shifts, produc-

ing essential products and goods, while at the same time observing the proper safety and health measures necessary to protect themselves and their families.

Our Sub-District office reopened in July in a limited fashion, following safety protocols issued by the USW International Executive Board. Our Staff are out in the field negotiating contracts, processing grievances and handling arbitration hearings using new technology that none of us ever expected to use as recently as a year ago. In January, few people knew what a "Zoom" meeting was – now it's an everyday thing for many workers.

Despite it all, our members and our employers have taken time out to give back to the community. For example, members of Local 318 at George Harms Company (pictured below) took the time to blacktop a location in Newark, N.J., which will become a food pantry run by a local house of wor-

ship. I was pleased to be there, along with some of the officers of Local 318, for the dedication. Many of our members are taking part in such efforts. If you are, or know of someone who is, please let us know, as we'd like to celebrate their good works in a future District 4 insert in *USW@Work*.



George Harms Construction Company made an in-kind charitable donation to the community of Newark, N.J., by blacktopping an area for the newly constructed food pantry, located at the Canaan Missionary Baptist Church in Newark's South Ward. Pictured (in white hats) are company management Robert Harms and Jason Hardell; members of USW Local 318 employed at Harms; Edison Sub-District Director Michael Fisher; Local 318 President John Seckretar; and Local 318 Vice President Brian Callow.

SYRACUSE JIM VALENTI, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

There is an old saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." The staff and the local union leadership of the Syracuse Sub-District are doing just that – one day at a time and one step at a time. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, we still must maintain our union contracts. We must be ever watchful of employers who would take advantage of their workforce in these trying times. Grievances are still being filed, which must be processed through the contractual procedure up to, and including, arbitration. Some employers are insisting that we conduct these meetings via conference call or video conferences. Arbitrators are insisting on virtual hearing procedures or pushing in-person arbitrations months out. Contracts are expiring and we must negotiate successor agreements utilizing

a virtual platform. Federal mediators are directed to conduct all contacts via a virtual platform as well. The safety and health of our members is always a priority and we are bringing safety concerns to management on a regular basis.

As hard as it is to do the work of the union in this "new" way, and despite all these challenges, we are getting the job done. Local union leadership in the Sub-District has also stood up to the challenges that we face in these trying times. New and innovative ways of communicating directly to our membership are being utilized despite the reality that many of our local unions have been unable to hold membership meetings since March. New ways of communication have emerged as meeting sizes are limited to very small groups and

social distancing requirements are in place to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Email and text blasts, newsletters, and web pages are being used to keep our membership informed, engaged, and ready to act when called upon.

Local unions have certainly stepped up to the challenge and the Sub-District is exploring new ways to advance our training agenda for them. We are working with the USW Education Department in Pittsburgh to develop online training classes in health and safety, stewards training, grievance committee training, and financial officers training. We aim to roll out this new training curriculum in the coming months.

We will face all these new challenges together, and united.

USW VETERANS COUNCIL

Many of us have been faced with difficult situations during these trying and uncertain times, and that most certainly includes our veteran brothers and sisters in District 4. I am excited to report that the Veterans Council held its annual Veteran Golf Fundraiser again this year, and all money raised will go to support veterans throughout the district. Throughout these difficult times, we have been sending regular emails to our veterans and their families about the programs and resources that are available to help them. If you would like to be on our email list, please send your request to celdridge@usw.org.

I would also like to take time to recognize the untimely passing of brother Dave

T. Evans. Dave was a dedicated husband and loving father who, along with his daily duties at USW Local 135, always made time for his union brothers and sisters. For years, Dave was an important part of the District 4 Emergency Response Team and recently was appointed to the International ERT staff. As part of the ERT staff, he dedicated himself to ensuring that everyone he was sent to help had the assistance and resources they and their family needed during exceedingly difficult times.

Dave enlisted in the United States Marine Corps on July 8, 1982. All who knew Dave regarded him as a staunch advocate, loyal brother, true friend, and a Marine.

If any local would like more informa-



Dave T. Evans

tion on the Veterans Council, has questions about veterans' issues, or would like to discuss possible veteran projects, please contact me at celdridge@usw.org or (315) 468-1623.

DISTRICT 4

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ORGANIZING

We continue to see an uptick in organizing leads coming from workers all across District 4, despite rule changes by the current administration making it much more difficult to organize under the National Labor Relations Board. Workers face new challenges in their workplaces related to the COVID-19 pandemic while having no voice in improving their working conditions or health and safety. As a result, those workers are reaching out to the USW for help. Several organizing campaigns continue to push forward and District 4 has remained committed to all workers as they adapt to new ways of organizing safely.

A warm welcome to our new brothers and sisters in District 4: Staff Representatives Luke Gordon, representing Local 4-438 at Jones

WOMEN OF STEEL

Women of Steel is an activist arm of the United Steelworkers that all female members of the USW are considered a part of regardless of their union position or the industry sector they work in. Some are activists, and some serve on their local's Women's Committee.

The mission of Women of Steel in District 4 is to educate, empower and mentor sisters within our union so they will have the tools to move into a role they aspire to attain within the union.

It is also our mission to work with other standing committees within the union, to develop and foster solidarity, and to build support within our home communities for the USW, which in turn will help to grow our union.

CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The USW District 4 Civil and Human Rights Committee's vision is to build a stronger and more diverse District; to ensure that all members are respected, welcomed and valued; and that they receive the representation they are entitled to.

The Civil and Human Rights Committee helps to protect the rights of our members regardless of race, religion, age, nationality, disability, culture, sexual orientation or identity. The Civil and Human Rights Committee, in conjunction with all other USW constitutionally-mandated local union committees, helps

Lang LaSalle in New Brunswick, N.J., and Mike Higgins, representing St. Croix Chipping in Baileyville, Maine. Gordon and Higgins assisted workers in securing voluntary recognition of their unions with their employers after the majority of workers signed authorization cards wanting to be part of the United Steelworkers. Welcome to District 4!

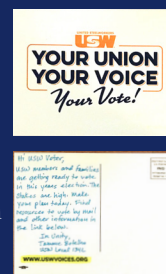
As you continue to have conversations with your loved ones and friends, if you hear of issues that you believe having a union would help, please do not hesitate to call Brigitte Womer at (716) 565-1720. We are here to answer any questions you may have, and to help all workers and their families gain respect and a better quality of life, both on the job and in their communities.

GET OUT THE VOTE

District 4 Women of Steel and Next Gen have taken the lead on coordinating a get-out-the-vote postcard effort.

USW members are volunteering to send messages through handwritten postcards urging USW members to get registered to vote, or reminding them to vote. The written postcards will be sent to fellow USW members encouraging them to make a plan to make sure that their vote is counted.

The postcard encourages members to visit uswvoices.org, where USW members can find several options to get involved.



the local provide a workplace free of hostility, harassment, and discrimination of any kind.

The Civil and Human Rights Committee works within District 4 to help build and strengthen the labor movement through community activism, inclusion, building awareness and educating all members of the USW International civil and human rights process, procedures, and current issues.

GET INVOLVED