

NEWS FOR THE UNITED STEELWORKERS IN

DISTRICT 4

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NEW HAMPSHIRE
RHODE ISLAND
NEW JERSEY
NEW YORK
VERMONT
MAINE
DELAWARE
PUERTO RICO
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WOMEN OF STEEL

Despite not being able to meet in person, District 4 Women of Steel stepped up big for the elections this year. All regional councils reported activities such as phone banking, literature drops, poll working and writing post cards for the general election and the Georgia special elections. We are proud of all of the work District 4 Women of Steel have continued to do.

Women of Steel adopted families to donate Thanksgiving meals and gifts for Christmas, gave to food banks, and worked in food lines to feed many families in need.

Councils sponsored educational trainings on zoom concerning safety and health, Rapid Response, and changes from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Many sisters attended the first USW Virtual Education Conference and raved about how much they learned in the two days of sessions.

District 4 sisters continue to step up and have been featured on local news stations reporting the great work we are doing in our communities. The magnitude of the work that has been done is incredible, and a testament of the resolve from Women of Steel to help in any way we possibly can during these turbulent times.

Happy New Year to all in District 4. I hope your holiday season was safe. We all enter the new year with hope and optimism that our future in 2021 will be brighter than what 2020 gave to us.

We are still dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and in many places, the number of cases and hospitalizations is worse than at any point in the last year. But now there are two vaccines, and hopefully more will be approved soon. As I write this article in early January, healthcare workers, first responders and nursing home residents are being vaccinated. Soon that will be expanded to other essential workers and those 75 and over. In the coming months, everyone will have access to the vaccine.

In my opinion, the vaccine is our best hope to return our lives to normal. I'm optimistic most people will take this same view. The sooner we get a majority of people vaccinated, the sooner the virus will subside. I plan to be vaccinated as soon as I am eligible, and I encourage others to do the same. With that said, I do not believe employers should make vaccinations mandatory. Each person should be allowed to make their own decision in consultation with their medical professional.

While these are my hopes for the near future, the present reality remains as it has been. We are still under restrictions that were enacted for the safety of all, but which have curtailed our ability to hold in-person meetings of any size. This includes union meetings, training sessions and conferences. With the election of local union officers coming shortly, this will present some challenges.

In order to address these issues, Secretary-Treasurer John Shinn sent a letter to all local unions offering guidance on how to navigate the election process under current COVID-19 restrictions. This includes suggestions on taking nominations, electing tellers and safe voting procedures. Of course, your Staff Representative is available to assist with any questions or concerns.

Once elections are completed and officers are sworn into their positions, training will be needed for those who have been newly elected. This typically includes steward training, financial officer and trustee training as well as any other type of education that our local unions request. Normally, we would schedule classes at various locations all over the district. This year we'll need to be more flexible. Depending on COVID-19 restrictions in place at that time, we'll either schedule in-person

SAVE THE DATE!

USW District 4 Educational Conference
August 23-26th, 2021
Caesar's Atlantic City, NJ

training or virtual training or some combination of the two. Either way, we will address the needs of our members for training while maintaining their safety.

Another important part of our union's work that has been impacted by COVID-19 has been organizing. To help with this, we have developed a District 4 organizing website. This is a place where workers who want to organize and those who are involved in organizing drives can find out about District 4 and see the diversity of our membership as well as the benefits of belonging to our union. If you have family or friends who could benefit by having a union in their workplace, direct them to this website: joinusw4.org.

Finally, our District office will be moving to a new location as of March 1. These will be larger quarters with a new training center on site. The office will be more centrally located for our members in Western New York and, we hope, once COVID-19 is finally passed it will become a hub of activity for our membership in the Buffalo area. We are excited about the move and look forward to servicing our members from this new, modern facility.

In closing, let me say that despite all the challenges associated with COVID-19, your union is fully operational. If you have any needs, please reach out to your Staff Representative. We are here for you. Please stay safe and I hope to see you soon.



DEL VITALE
DISTRICT 4 DIRECTOR

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

CHEEKTOWAGA JIM BRIGGS, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

We hope that everyone enjoyed their holidays and wish all of our District 4 members a safe and healthy 2021! The Buffalo Sub-District office is operating remotely and conducting all necessary bargaining and arbitration issues virtually, which has been extremely different for most of us. We have had success with negotiating some one-year agreements to hopefully get us back to a period of some normalcy, whatever that will be down the road.

We are now about two-thirds of the way into our office relocation. We look forward to the new facility, which will provide us with more opportunities to interact with our members on site at our office, once permit-

ted by state guidelines. We would like to thank Director Vitale and Assistant to the Director Wasiura, along with district secretary Lisa Husami, for all of their support in making this happen.

With regards to the rest of the staff in the Buffalo office, I would like to thank them for all their work during this difficult time. Our members are being represented and their issues are being addressed despite the pandemic. I would also like to take a minute to thank District 4's John Scardella for all his work in assisting us in keeping our workplaces safe during his career. We wish him a happy and healthy retirement!

To the Buffalo Sub-District Locals,

thank you for your work at each of your work locations! Being identified as essential employees has certainly created new issues relating to the safety of our members. Each of our locals has implemented practices and procedures with employers to provide a high level of protection for you, our members, and your families. We are in the process of launching some new and innovative ways to reach the unorganized in our area and grow our union. We all know the importance of organizing.

In closing, I can only say that I am looking forward to a successful year when at some point we will be able to meet face to face again. Stay safe and thank you!

MILFORD STEVE FINNIGAN, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Happy New Year, my brothers and sisters. 2020 was a trying year for all of us. However, I want to take the opportunity to commend the leadership of our local unions that continued to represent their members in grievances, arbitrations and the collective bargaining process without missing a beat.

2021 looks to be very busy with both local union and international officer elections. I realize that whenever there are local union elections there is always a certain amount of turnover and the newly elected officers and grievance committees will need some form of training. Therefore, we are in the process of identifying the types of training that will be needed. Examples of the type of training that will be offered include shop steward, collective bargaining, health and safety, and how to prepare for arbitration.

Depending on the status of the current pandemic, the training will be conducted either in person or virtually via Zoom or other available technologies. Once the schedule is formulated, we will send communications to the local unions advising them of the date, time and location of the training.

One of the most positive developments recently, not only for our union but for the labor movement in general, is the appointment by President Joe Biden of the current mayor of Boston, Marty Walsh, to the position of Secretary of Labor. Marty is the former President of the Laborers' Union Local 223 and the Boston Building and Construction Trades Council. Marty has been a great friend of labor not only as mayor, but when he previously served as a state representative in the Massachusetts State Legislature.

Marty truly believes in unions' right to organize and collectively bargain. Marty has been very outspoken in his opposition to the Supreme Court decision in the Janus case, which eliminated the agency fee for non-members. He believes every bargaining unit member should pay their fair share. Marty is known to be a leader who gets involved in solving problems. Some examples of that are the Massachusetts nurses' strike, transportation reform involving various unions, and the seven-month-long lockout with National Grid. As you can see, Marty has not forgotten where he came from and the values of a good trade unionist. We wish him well in the confirmation process and in his new position.

NEXT GEN

We're happy to introduce our newest appointees to the District 4 Next Gen program: Bradley Kolb and Greg Jones. Bradley has been selected as the regional coordinator overseeing the Next Generation program of the Tri-state regions of New Jersey, Delaware, and the New York City Metro Area. Greg has been selected as the regional coordinator overseeing the Next Generation program in the Southern Tier of New York State.

Kolb is a member of USW Local 9265, employed by the New York State Public Employees Federation (or PEF) as a union representative since 2018. From the start, he has been involved in Next Gen. According to Kolb: "I got involved with Next Gen because it is a program that educates and emboldens future union activists and leaders. I was raised within a union family, and I was always taught that when I

become a union member, I need not be a spectator, but someone who is heavily involved in the union. Next Gen sets up the new members of today to become the future leaders of our locals tomorrow. Next Gen ensures that the new members have the tools and education to further advance the USW and their locals."



Bradley Kolb

Greg Jones

Jones is a member of USW Local 1034, employed at Corelle Brands as a quality control operator, where he has always been active and involved in the

union. He is the local coordinator for Next Gen. He's also on the Rapid Response and Political Committees, among others, and helps run his local union CAT Team. Jones has been on the Local 1034 executive board for the last two terms and is currently a grievance handler at work. "I first got involved simply because I was upset at what the company was doing at that point in time," said Jones. "My involvement in Next Gen helped me become more educated and leads me to help educate other members."

Please join us in congratulating Kolb and Jones on their dedication to our union and the Next Generation program and for accepting the honor of being appointed by the District as our newest Regional Coordinators. They join our team of Next Gen Regional Coordinators: Josh Hall from Local 135 in Western NY; Keishla Carbo from Local 6135 in Puerto Rico; and Israel Torres from Local 1702 in the New England area. We look forward to working with you as we grow our program.

EDISON MICHAEL L. FISHER, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

First, let me express gratitude for all the members of the USW within our District, and especially for those within the Edison Sub-District. I believe there is light at the end of the tunnel.

It is my hope for a brighter outlook for the year 2021. We have now passed through a year that has offered some of the most difficult challenges in our individual communities, in our nation, and the world as a whole.

We are encouraged by the COVID-19 vaccines now available from Pfizer and Moderna. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy recently visited Roosevelt Care Center in Old Bridge, N.J., where members of USW Local 4-406 work as registered nurses and licensed practical nurses. This was one of the first facilities in the state to distribute vaccinations to eligible patients.

The state of bargaining in the Sub-District is worthy of mention: in the recent past New Jersey public employees were under certain state mandates, which limited improvements in wages and benefits. How-

ever, in recent bargaining with the USW, a significant settlement was reached at the Long Branch Sewerage Authority. The collective bargaining agreement provides a wage package with 4 percent increase in wages in each year of the three-year agreement, along with what may be the first occurrence of the observation of Juneteenth included as a paid holiday. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has limited the ability to travel, a provision allowing two years of vacation time to be rolled over was also included. At another bargaining unit, the first day of negotiations reached a tentative agreement on adding Juneteenth there as well. Recent bargaining in the pharmaceutical section has also resulted in significant wage increases. These are all essential employees, and management is slowly recognizing that.

In closing, as our nation turns the corner, with hope of recovery from the coronavirus, with a new administration taking the helm, I am optimistic. Our new President, Joseph R.

Biden, has pledged to address the pandemic that turned our world up-side down, put our economy back on the right track, and our prayers are with him and also with all of you and your families.



USW Local 4-406 members Kendra Bass, LPN, and Pam Smith, RN, are helping inoculate the patients at Roosevelt Care Center in Old Bridge, N.J., with the new COVID-19 vaccine. Sister Bass is the acting director of admissions, and Sister Smith is a clinical Ccare coordinator, and both are members of Women of Steel.

SYRACUSE JIM VALENTI, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

It seems like I just wrote an article for the newsletter a couple weeks ago. While it certainly has been longer than that, the conditions in the trenches unfortunately remain the same. We had all hoped that the pandemic would be behind us going into the new year, but it is still here and getting worse in the Syracuse Sub-District region. Over the last months we have seen a substantial spike in the number of positive COVID-19 cases amongst our membership.

This is not only devastating to those who have tested positive and have been quarantined but also for those who have been forced to work excessive overtime due to the resulting reduced staffing levels. We have also seen a spike in our accident and injury rates, in part due to excessive overtime and also due to the stress we all feel during this pandemic.

To add insult to injury, those in our Sub-District have faced the challenges of the newly implemented New York State Paid Sick Leave law that is being interpreted 100 different ways by employers and attorneys across the state. Some of our employers have chosen to do the right thing and have given their employees the 40 or 56 hours of paid sick leave the law provides, without utilizing or reducing members' negotiated paid time off. The majority of employers, however, have decided to reduce employees' vacation time or other contractual paid time off to comply with the new law. As you can imagine this has created a tremendous amount of anger amongst our members.

I can assure you that the USW leadership communicated to the state our displeasure at being forced to take concessions relative to our previously negotiated paid

time off benefits. I am hopeful that the State Department of Labor and the Governor will reconsider their decision regarding collective bargaining agreements negotiated before this new law was implemented.

As far as the day-to-day work, we are continuing to do our work virtually. We have a number of contract negotiations and arbitrations in 2021 that will be conducted in a non-traditional virtual manner. While this is very difficult, we believe we will be successful due to the hard work of the staff and the local union leadership. Please be patient and understand that our union will not stand for any abuse by employers who sense an opportunity to take advantage of our membership. Our lives and our livelihoods depend on us being unified during these trying times.

RAPID RESPONSE

Unprecedented. There really is no other way to describe 2020.

The challenges facing our country and the world last year were ones for the record books. They've meant a demanding year for Rapid Response, with repeated actions and 123 different InfoAlerts, Action-Calls, and Feedback Reports. We wanted to take a moment to reflect on all the excellent work you did this year protecting and fighting for the core values of our union.

In 2020, we took actions around:

- Collective Bargaining
- Safety & Health
- Job Security & Trade
- Health Care
- Retirement Security
- Domestic Economic Issues and...

Rapid Response was on the front lines to defend democracy by making sure our members had access to critical information like voter registration deadlines, mail-in ballot information, and how to cast your ballot on Election Day. We also helped recruit badly needed poll workers and are thankful for each of you who stepped up in your communities.

We know this past year has been hard on all of you. We thank you for your work and dedication despite the challenges. We also thank our front-line workers who have worked tirelessly to keep our country safe, healthy, and on its feet.

Here is to a much better year for workers and communities across our nation as we head into 2021!

If you are interested in getting more information and being part of the changes that Rapid Response can achieve with your help, for our union, and for working class America, email District 4 Rapid Response Coordinator Mark McDonald at mmcdonald@usw.org.

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DISTRICT 4

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ORGANIZING

2020 proved to be a challenging year for organizing due to the pandemic. The organizers in District 4 quickly adapted to the new way of doing things, so that the important work of helping the unorganized could go on. We've seen victories, with workers gaining a union in their workplaces, which included SEIU organizers in Rhode Island and Connecticut as well as the workers at Exela in New Brunswick, N.J. The Exela workers won union recognition by the NLRB after a long battle with the company. These are just to name a few.

While organizing the unorganized has always been a priority for our union, the pandemic has highlighted some of the more serious reasons workers in the United States need union representation. The United Steelworkers have been successful in negotiating thousands of COVID-19 agreements across the United States to help keep our members safe as they are deemed essential. Meanwhile unrepresented workers have no say in their working conditions and no avenue to make their employers comply with state regulations and

mandates. On behalf of the District, I would like to thank our member organizers, Brian Callow and Israel Torres as well as project field organizers, Alex Riccio and Daniel Irons for their dedication and determination to help these unrepresented workers in their organizing efforts during this difficult time.

The District is also pleased to announce that a special District 4 organizing website is expected to go live by Feb. 1. This website will feature both English and Spanish content. This will be a useful resource where unorganized workers can find information about District 4 and the sectors we represent and can submit a form to the District if they want to speak to an organizer or learn more about the organizing process. The website is joinusw4.org – check it out!

In addition to the website, the Western New York Sub-District is launching a new Friends and Family Organizing Plan. We are asking all Western New York Locals to be on the lookout for how you can make this new Friends and Family program a success!

HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT

We have all been hoping and praying that as we enter the new year the COVID-19 pandemic would be behind us and we could go back to some form of normal life. But the disease is still with us and is spreading rapidly across the United States. Federal, state and local governments are taking steps to slow the spread of the disease by limiting crowds in public settings, such as schools, workplaces, public transportation, and cultural and sporting events. These necessary measures not only disrupt everyday life, but cause economic uncertainty for millions of working people.

The labor movement is working nonstop to protect the health and safety of all workers, including workers on the front lines of this public health emergency. We have trained, educated and equipped our members with the tools they need to be safe on the job, but we are demanding additional urgent action to ensure employers implement comprehensive plans to protect workers and reduce the risk of exposure to the general public. Many employers

are doing the right thing but unfortunately many more are taking shortcuts to protect productivity and profits, but not employees.

This crisis has exposed the shortcomings of our worker protection and health care systems. We cannot afford to allow cost considerations to be the number one factor in taking the necessary actions to protect workers and their families. Workers should not bear the costs of being essential, including quarantining, testing, and treatments, while their employers get monetary relief during this pandemic.

Over the next several months we will be calling on you to support our efforts to limit the negative impact that this pandemic has placed on all of us. One of our first initiatives is to insist that OSHA create and promote an emergency standard dealing with this pandemic to protect the safety and health of our members and their families. We hope that the new administration will take immediate action in our time of need. When called upon to take an action please respond in kind and in force.

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