



**Monday Morning Minute - USW Paper Sector**  
**Monday, June 24, 2019**

**Union Work – Collective Bargaining, Organizing, Arbitration, Worker Rights, Community Work, Political Work, Labor History**



**WestRock Council Continues to Coordinate Actions Towards Bargaining a New Master Agreement** – The WestRock Council continues to mobilize across more than 70 sites in preparation for master bargaining, which will begin later this year if the Company moves on key items. While preliminary meetings have been slow, they are steady and the Council has been regularly demonstrating their solidarity for a fair agreement.

Local Leadership passed out leaflets to members last week, which shared the progress of preliminary meetings with the Company and detailed the local bargaining cycle beginning next year.

In the photo, Craig Marts – USW Local 12-237, Tacoma, WA, Standing Committee Member – hands out the latest leaflet.

**USW Local 654 – Graphic Packaging – West Monroe, LA – Making a Difference, Winning One Fight at a Time!** – The Company agreed to restore eligibility for disability retirement benefits for a group of employees.

The DC Plan was included in a MOA that resulted from a ME2 agreement during the 2011 contract negotiations. The MOA was signed in September of 2012 to go into effect January 1st of 2013. The GPI disability pension portion under the plan allows any vested employee the right to draw their pension without penalty if they become totally disabled and cannot perform their job any longer. The company took the position that the disability portion of the retirement plan was removed during a change they made in 2015 and was no longer available. A grievance was filed on behalf of a member whose disability was denied. There was also a U.L.P. charge filed with the N.L.R.B. over the unilateral change without bargaining with the Union.

Within a week, the grievance was amended to become an ET AL grievance so as to cover everyone under the contract. An arbitration panel was ordered and sent to the company due to its strong position of being able to make changes without bargaining with, or notifying, the Union. It took a year in order to compel the company to strike the panel. Just a few weeks before going to arbitration the company's lawyer offered a compromised settlement that was accepted by the Staff Representative on behalf of Local 654. The settlement agreement restored the eligibility for disability benefits in full and made the employees whole.

The settlement in itself became a legal binding document. This was a long hard fight that involved countless hours from several Locals, Staff Representatives, District Leaders, the USW Paper Sector and legal department and several others outside the USW family that contributed

to the victory for our membership. Retirement with dignity is a fight that we as a Union must never back away from, and WE didn't.

Local Union President, Daryl Johnson, said “A single and simple grievance **can** make a huge impact. The...settlement is a great victory for such a long hard fight. It is sad that we have to fight to force these companies to honor what they have already agreed to, but none the less we as a Union know how to and for that I am thankful to be a part of it.”

**USW Local 11-436 Cedar Rapids, IA** – This location as a box plant has undergone a number of transitions in the past decade. Originally Longview Fibre, it was purchased by US Corrugated, then by Kapstone and became WestRock earlier this year. Now part of over 40 box locations and 20 mills, the Local is part of the WestRock Union Council that is gearing up for bargaining. USW Paper Sector Leadership and District 11 Staff visited and toured the facility on Monday, June 17 and met with local leaders to familiarize them with the master process and build solidarity among WestRock locals.

### **Safety**

**U.S. Department of Labor Announces \$10.5 Million in Funding Opportunities for Susan Harwood Training Grants to Support Worker Safety and Health** – A total of \$10.5 million is available for nonprofit organizations including community and faith-based organizations, employer associations, labor unions, joint labor/management associations, Indian tribes, and colleges and universities. The grants will fund training and education for workers and employers to help them identify and prevent workplace safety and health hazards. Harwood applications must be submitted by July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The United Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization (the Tony Mazzocchi Center) has been awarded grant money through the Susan Harwood Grant Program. The funds have allowed the USW Tony Mazzocchi Center to conduct the “Preventing Fatalities and Improving Safety and Health in the Paper Sector” under which many Local Unions receive valuable training.

**Tell Us Your Stories! Has your local done something amazing? Have you had a great solidarity action? Done something huge to help your community? Made significant connections with other labor groups? Is your Women of Steel or Next Gen committee making waves? Have you had success in bargaining, major accomplishments? We all stay so busy working to improve our workplaces and communities that we often do not take 5 minutes to reflect, share and celebrate our accomplishments. Tell us your story so we can all be part of it! Contact Laura Donovan at [ldonovan@usw.org](mailto:ldonovan@usw.org), or at 412-562-2504.**