“The problem is that oil companies are too greedy to make a positive change in the workplace and they continue to value production and profit over health and safety, workers and the community.”

International Vice President Tom Conway
Feb. 1, 2015

ON STRIKE
The USW called a selective strike in the oil industry over working conditions after contract talks broke down with the lead bargaining company, Shell.

ON THE COVER
Local 2155 members Jim Celletti, Gary Jones and Jerry Butcher work at RTI International Metals in Niles, Ohio. See page 6.

Photo by Steve Dietz.

ELECTION WIN
Workers at a Chinese-owned copper plant in Alabama vote to join the USW despite Gov. Robert Bentley urging they vote no.

PAPER TRADE WATCH
The USW and paper producers are seeking relief from unfairly traded uncoated paper from China, Indonesia, Australia, Brazil and Portugal that are hurting the American industry.

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Stand Up for Retirees
I am a retired USW member from Marathon Petroleum. I paid union dues my whole life, since I was 18 years old.
I read USW@Work, and I see the union leaders fighting for higher wages, better benefits and better health care for members. My question is, why aren’t we fighting harder for retirees living on Social Security?
I received a 1.7 percent raise on my Social Security, which amounts to $28 a month. It is a disgrace.
We need to start fighting for the people who paved the way for all union members, who went on strikes and stood on picket lines. Fight for Social Security increases!

Reynard F. Mutigli, Bonita Springs, Fla.

Say No to Fast Track
Fast Track trade agreements are not good for working families. They cost jobs, increase inequality and have depressed wages and weakened the rights of workers to organize and collectively bargain.
The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) cost the United States more than 682,000 jobs. Local 1999 has endured numerous plant closures directly attributable to NAFTA and other equally bad trade deals. In the plants that have remained, we have seen wage stagnation and an erosion of employee benefits.
It is easy to see why more than 60 percent of voters oppose Fast Track for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal. Yet Congress is poised to make it a reality. We must take action to stop bad trade deals.

Kelly Ray Hugunin, Local 1999
Indianapolis, Ind.

Stop Fast Track
My brothers and sisters from Local 50 at Granite City recently received a 90-day notice that U.S. Steel was closing their coke-making operations. Around 176 members stand to lose their jobs.
We can’t continue to allow Congress to pass free trade agreements with Fast Track authority. The Trans-Pacific Partnership is being touted as the largest free trade agreement in U.S. history. Please call your representative and say “no” to Fast Track.
The job we save could be yours!

Terry Biggs, Local 1899
Granite City Ill.

Right to Work for Less
President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. repeatedly warned us about false slogans like “right to work.” They knew that this type of legislation does not offer any rights or work and was designed only to lower wages. It is actually a right to work for less.
Before I became a union member, I was at the mercy of my employer. It was only after I became a USW member that I discovered dignity in the workplace, security associated with a collective bargaining agreement, job protection, higher wages and better benefits. Being a union member has given me the right to work for more.

Chris Ormes, Local 1241
Bardstown, Ky.

Rapid Response Turns 20
It’s hard to believe our Rapid Response program is 20 years old. When we started, we were using fax machines. Now we have computers, e-mails, text messages, Twitter, Facebook and smartphones.
Through the 1995 Bridgestone/Firestone strike, standing up for steel, fighting for fair trade and other campaigns, Rapid Response has become the most recognized and respected program in the country.
Rapid Response is not just a committee or a tool, it is our members’ voices, and we carry them everywhere we go. For me, it has become a way of life, and I look forward to taking the fight wherever it may be.

David Beard, Local 752L
Texarkana, Ark.

Fighting Voter Suppression
I am 100 years old, and still have my wits about me but have little sophistication about the Internet. I still manage snail mail well. I am of limited income so I can’t donate money. There is little I can do except endorse heartily your campaign against voter disenfranchisement.
I also support a constitutional amendment to repeal the Citizens United decision enabling corporations to act as people. We need to contact our senators and representatives to start the ball rolling.

Mary Louise Seguel, Seattle, Wash.

Set Standards in Trade Deals
Before President Barack Obama enters into any Fast Track free trade agreement, he should put the interests of the people first.
There are basic standards that every trade agreement should meet, including safety standards for workers, environmental standards, and an expedited process to implement penalties on countries that engage in unfair trade or product dumping.

Pete Trinidad Sr., Local 6787
Burns Harbor, Ind.
USW members rally at the entrance to the Marathon refinery in Catlettsburg, Ky., as part of a national day of action on Feb. 7.

AP Photo/The Independent, Kevin Goldy

USW members rally at Shell headquarters in Houston.

USW Photos by Scott Weaver

National day of action at the Marathon office building in Texas City, Texas.
Arrogant oil refiners concerned more about profits than the safety and workplace concerns of thousands of USW-represented oil workers forced the union to call an unfair labor practice (ULP) strike.

The industry, represented by Royal Dutch Shell, gave the USW no other option when it refused to bargain in good faith over a national contract even though the union was prepared to continue talking beyond the midnight deadline. “Shell refused to provide us with a counter-offer and left the bargaining table,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “We had no choice but to give notice of a work stoppage.”

The negotiations for a new national contract cover 30,000 USW-represented workers at over 230 facilities, including 65 U.S. refineries and dozens of oil terminals, pipelines and petrochemical plants.

Once bargaining broke down over the companies’ bad faith bargaining, strikes began on Feb. 1 at nine refineries and related facilities in four states that employ 3,800 workers and produce nearly 10 percent of the nation’s gasoline, diesel and other fuels.

The companies committed ULPs at all locations that resulted in the strike, including failure to bargain over benefits, threatening employees with reprisals if they struck, and cutting vested benefits once strikes began.

The initial targets included a Shell refinery and laboratory in Deer Park, Texas; two Marathon refineries and a co-generation power plant in Texas City, Texas, and Catlettsburg, Ky.; Tesoro refineries in Anacortes, Wash., Martinez, Calif., and Carson, Calif.; and a LyondellBasell refinery in Houston.

After a week of little progress at the bargaining table, the strike was expanded on Feb. 7 to include two BP refineries in Whiting, Ind., and Toledo, Ohio.

The escalation of the strike brought another 1,440 USW-represented workers into the fight, including about 1,100 members of Local 7-1 in Whiting and 340 members of Local 346-3 in Toledo.

The ULP strike was the most widespread action in the oil industry since 1980 when workers represented by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW), now part of the USW, struck for three months seeking improved pay and benefits such as dental coverage.

**Initial strike targets**

All of the struck companies have publicly announced contingency plans to keep the refineries running during the strike with non-union labor.

The remaining USW-represented refineries and oil facilities, including those operated by ExxonMobil Corp., were operating under a rolling 24-hour contract extension.

The union’s bargaining agenda was developed last October during a meeting in Pittsburgh of 300 delegates from oil locals and units who met in 10 company councils.

Delegates passed the resulting policy by unanimous vote. It was then distributed and explained to rank-and-file oil workers who voted on the document, approving it by a necessary 75 percent margin.

Leading up to the start of negotiations in January, oil workers around the country made preparations for the possibility of a strike and discussed negotiations with co-workers, friends and family. They held rallies, conducted informational pickets, distributed leaflets and displayed stickers and placards.

**Members are ready**

“Our members are ready to do what it takes to get a fair contract,” said Local 12-591 member Steve Garey, who works at the Tesoro refinery in Anacortes, Wash.

“We are determined to get a contract that improves safety in the workplace, provides contractors the ability to become full-time employees and compensates us for the dangers we face every day for our contributions toward making the oil industry one of the richest in the world.”

While Shell spokesmen were telling the public during negotiations that the company was focused on reaching a settlement, the industry never gave the union’s proposals any serious consideration and failed to give key relevant information.

As lead bargainer for the industry, Shell made several woefully inadequate offers that the union’s bargaining committee rejected as an insult to hard-working USW members.

The bargaining took place as the cost of crude oil plunged to its lowest prices in years. Yet wages and economics were not the driving issues prompting the strike. The strike was primarily about unsafe working conditions in an industry that regularly experiences fires and explosions, as well as unresolved ULPs.

International Vice President Gary Beevers, who heads the union’s National Oil Bargaining Program, said the industry refused to address workplace safety, safe staffing issues and its brutal, dangerous scheduling that is frequently manipulated to avoid paying overtime.

The industry also refused to address its unhealthy and unsafe reliance on outside contractors to handle day-to-day maintenance at its refineries. And it would not discuss offering opportunities for job training so that critical work in USW-represented refineries can be done by USW members who actually know and work in the facilities.

**Health care an issue**

In addition, the industry refused to discuss out-of-pocket maximums in health insurance coverage and the financial strain created by high costs when members and their families have serious health issues.

“This work stoppage is about onerous overtime, unsafe staffing levels, dangerous conditions the industry ignores, and the daily occurrences of fires, emissions, leaks and explosions that threaten local communities,” Beevers said.

“It’s also about the flagrant contracting out that impacts health and safety on the job and the erosion of our workplace, where qualified and experienced union workers are replaced by contractors when they leave or retire,” he added.

Other issues at the struck locations concern membership reports of company supervisors and others violating our members’ legal right to support their union and their bargaining committees, Beevers said.

The USW bargaining team is prepared to return to the table to negotiate a fair agreement for both sides, but the industry must first abandon its arrogant and illegal stance and no longer disregard the union’s proposals.

“The oil companies do not want to work with us to improve the workplace and safety at oil refineries and facilities,” said International Vice President of Administration Tom Conway.

“The problem is that oil companies are too greedy to make a positive change in the workplace and they continue to value production and profit over health and safety, workers and the community,” Conway said.
BOOM TIMES
DEMAND FOR TITANIUM KEEPS USW MEMBERS BUSY
The veteran leadership of Local 2155 at the RTI International Metals plant in Niles, Ohio, was tested by a bitter 6½-month strike in 1998 and a 13-month lockout in 2004.

Today those work stoppages are fading memories replaced by a boom in work flowing from increased demand for light and strong titanium used in the growing aircraft industry. “Right now, we’re in the biggest commercial upturn in the history of the airline industry,” said local union officer Ray Raschilla Jr. “They are expecting it to roll through 2020.”

The union has represented workers in Niles since the plant began manufacturing advanced titanium mill products in 1951. Its current compliment of products include ingot, bloom, billet, bar, sheet and plate.

In 1998, the business was reorganized into a holding company named RTI International Metals Inc. RTI Niles, previously known as RMI, became a subsidiary of RTI.

RTI has developed into a vertically integrated global supplier of advanced titanium and specialty metal mill products, parts, engineering and other services. It operates facilities in more than 20 locations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and China.

The company’s primary markets are aerospace, both commercial and military, oil and gas exploration, non-aerospace military and other high-end users.

As commercial airlines beef up their fleets, many of Local 2155’s 350 members are working six and seven days a week, with some putting in 12-hour shifts – a prosperity of work that is a far cry from the circumstances of the long lockout 10 years ago.

“After all the complications the employer/employee relationship has brought, there are good things happening,” said Todd Weddell, Local 2155’s longtime president.

“This has been a semi-stable career for many, and we continue as a union to work through our differences and make this company competitive and profitable,” he said.

“We look forward to a bright future.”

Titanium light and strong

Titanium metal and its alloys are often used in the structural parts of jet engines and high-speed aircraft because of its high strength-to-weight ratio and high-temperature properties.

“Anytime you are in a plane, think of us,” said Frank Reno, a longtime grievance committee man with the local who works in an area where jet engine parts are made.

“I look at the engines. I look at the landing gear, the structural pieces, and I know a lot of that stuff was made by us,” Reno said. “It goes anywhere from the skin on the plane to the fuselage.”

The titanium made in Niles is also used for armor plating and other defense gear that protects American troops. It’s used to produce equipment used in drilling for oil and gas on the ocean floor and in surgically implanted medical devices.

The process starts by pressing titanium sponge and other raw materials including alloys into blocks, which are racked and welded together to form a large “stick” that is then melted in a vacuum furnace.

In most cases, it takes three sticks to create a final melt ingot with an average weight of 18,000 to 20,000 pounds. The ingots are forged into various shapes. Sheets and plates sized to customer orders are produced in the rolling mill.

There is an extremely high emphasis on quality due to the expense of titanium and its critical aerospace applications. Because its primary market is in aerospace, the Niles plant must meet stringent federal, industry and customer quality standards.

Products are tested and retested before they leave the shop. The work force, Weddell said, is keenly aware that the metal they make can be critical to the safety of others, even themselves, their families, friends and neighbors.

“We take that aspect very seriously,” he said. “There are strict quality procedures in place to assure that our products meet demanding specifications. Those specifications help to guarantee the safety of airline passengers flying above us as well as those in the military and the working people who rely on the titanium we make for use in oil rig risers.”

Global supplier

Niles is RTI’s only union operation and the “only plant that is consistently profitable for the company,” Weddell said, noting that its competitiveness is recognized through quarterly profit-sharing payouts to the local’s members.

Profit sharing was among the economic issues that sparked the strike, which began on Oct. 1, 1998, and took 6½ months to settle. Though profitable, the company had demanded a two-tier wage structure, take backs in pensions and profit sharing and sweeping work rule changes.

Those demands by management followed a lean period in the business where the union had made sacrifices to keep the company afloat and out of bankruptcy court protection.

“One thing that is notable about this local is we have done everything we can to keep the company viable and profitable with concessions and work rule changes,” Reno said.
Union members believed the company had forced the strike on longtime workers and then brought in scabs to take their jobs. The furor over replacement workers caused some media at the time to describe Niles as a tense battleground.

**Long lockout**

Picket lines went up again on Oct. 26, 2003, during an economic downturn. This time the company locked out workers after they rejected a contract offer that would have frozen wages and benefits and combined jobs. Those who reported to work were met with locked gates.

“The titanium industry took a nosedive,” recalled Raschilla, who is the unit president of Local 2155-7, which represents clerical and technical employees.

The dispute wore on for 13 months. During that time, the membership mobilized with workers helping each other get through the lockout and avoid home foreclosures and other catastrophic losses.

Reno recalled the lockout’s tough times when he and his co-workers wondered if they would ever go back to work. “It’s the loneliest feeling in the world to wonder if I am ever going to get back inside that gate,” he said.

There were good experiences too. Both the strike and the lockout brought the local’s membership together. “We were able to work as a team,” Weddell said of the lockout. “We had an infrastructure — an economics committee, a food committee — and it all worked.”

In the decade since the 2004 dispute, “the negotiated contracts have been good,” Weddell said. “We have a lucrative profit-sharing plan that pays well and we are proud of.”

**Contract extension**

In 2012, the local reached an early six-year contract extension with the company that guarantees labor peace through June 30, 2018. In addition to wages, pensions and profit sharing, the contract commits the company to capital investment in the Niles facility.

“Once you live through a strike and lockout as we have, it’s embedded in your mind, and you really do everything you can to settle,” said Reno, who has been involved in many contract negotiations over the years.

As an incentive to modernize, the union agreed to divert $2 million per quarter from money earmarked for profit sharing to upgrade the plant and equipment.

“The investment was a commitment by the union to solidify the future of the Niles plant,” Weddell said. “Naturally, you want to make sure your future is there and the future is there for the people coming after you.”

While there is some concern among the local’s members over how management spends that money, there is no disagreement with the intent of improving the facility and saving it for future generations.
“We’ve got to be competitive,” Weddell said, noting the market for titanium is international. “Sometimes we have to make changes that we don’t really like, but we do it because we are competing with the Chinese and the Russians.”

The local is currently focused on meeting the needs of a changing and diverse work force that includes men and women of varying nationalities and age groups. Nearly half of the membership has been hired in the years since the work stoppages. About a third of the work force has 25 years or more of service.

Excessive overtime an issue

One sign of the generational shift is a changing attitude toward overtime. Older workers who have experienced the boom and bust nature of the business accepted all the overtime they could get when it was available, while younger workers today want time with family.

The union is pressing the company to hire more workers so it can continue to meet production and quality goals and eliminate the need for excessive overtime.

“Business is good. There’s a lot of long work weeks, long work days,” Weddell said. “Some guys don’t want to work six and seven days. When I came in, the market was up and down and you worked everything that you could get your hands on. You see that changing.”

For now, Raschilla said, the company has resisted adding new employees beyond openings created by retirements and departures. Employment has stayed roughly steady at about 350 for several years.

“Their position is we’re not sure what the future will bring,” Raschilla said. “They say we don’t want to lay people off if the market changes.”

There are other growing pains including adapting to a turnover in management as executives with experience retire and monitoring how the company spends the capital improvement funds.

District 1 Director Dave McCall credits the experienced local union leadership for helping to steady the ship throughout the last decade of changes.

“Our members, stewards and elected officers have survived up and down markets in the past,” he said. “Their proven track record of productivity and profitability and the membership’s unwavering solidarity and support for each other gives all of us more credibility and power at the bargaining table.”

The local gives credit to CEO Dawne Hickton for being a fair and calming influence compared to previous executives. Hickton was appointed vice chairman and CEO in 2007 after serving as the company’s vice president and general counsel.

“We’ve made sacrifices and they (management) have invested back into the plant,” Raschilla said. “It hasn’t always worked out to everybody’s satisfaction, but we are trying. We are all rowing in the same direction. That’s a plus.”
Honoring Commitments
USW Defends Retiree Benefits before Supreme Court

Richard J. Breen — USW General Counsel
William Payne — Special Counsel
Joseph Stuligross — USW Associate General Counsel
Julie Penny Clark — Lead Counsel
Iva Sisson prays she will live long enough to see chemical company M&G Polymers pay the doctors who treated her for cancer when she had no insurance.

“My big wish is that M&G pay my hospital bills. Those doctors saved my life. They deserve to be paid, and I can’t give it to them,” said Sisson, 67, the wife of a USW retiree, Bob Sisson, who worked at the Apple Grove, W.Va., company for 30 years.

“I hope I live to see that,” she said. “If I die after they pay, it would be OK.”

USW lawyers are fighting to make sure the company keeps its promises to retirees. The union and a group of retirees in 2007 filed a class action suit alleging M&G violated a collective bargaining agreement when it required retirees to pay substantial premiums toward their health insurance.

The USW and retirees took their argument all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which on Jan. 26 affirmed that contracts should be interpreted according to ordinary principles of contract law with attention paid to the actual intent of negotiating parties.

M&G, supported in its appeal by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, argued its obligations to provide a “full company contribution” to retiree health care plans ceased when its contracts expired. The USW disagreed.

The case was returned to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in Ohio. The USW remains confident of prevailing there in its argument that the benefits were intended to continue for life.

“We look forward to returning to the Sixth Circuit with the overwhelming evidence that the parties intended benefits to continue,” Associate General Counsel Joseph Stuligross said.

Right thing to do

The USW is not legally obligated to pursue these types of cases, yet the union does so because it is the right thing to do for retirees, General Counsel Richard J. Brean said.

“Defending our contracts, reinforcing the promises employers make to us also protects active workers because many times these cases involve interpretation of the same retirement plan,” he said.

Retiree health benefit plans are an important source of supplemental coverage for roughly 15 million Medicare beneficiaries in the United States and are a primary source of coverage for more than 2 million retirees under age 65, according to a 2014 report by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

In a modern era where corporations have tried every possible strategy to cut retiree benefits, many other unions have given up the fight to preserve them. The cases are expensive to litigate and, in many areas of the country, conservative courts have turned sour to retiree interests and ruled in favor of corporations seeking to cut costs.

“Retirees are getting hurt by these cuts, and someone has to stand up for them,” Stuligross said.

Bob Sisson was promised fully paid health care coverage for life when he retired from Shell Chemical, which had purchased the plant in Apple Grove, W.Va., from Goodyear in 1992.

Previous plans adopted

Shell adopted Goodyear benefit plans previously in effect during bargaining with the United Rubber Workers, which merged into the USW in 1995. After Shell sold the facility in 2000 to M&G, the new owner entered into agreements with the USW and Local 644.

The union bargained “full company contribution” language indicating the parties intended to cover the full cost of health care retirement benefits for employees of M&G and its predecessor companies.
When M&G purchased the plant, it agreed to take responsibility for the health insurance costs of those who retired from Shell. Accountants valued the expected lifetime cost of these benefits, which was subtracted from the purchase price.

In 2007, M&G shifted a large part of the health care costs onto retirees who believed they had earned fully-paid lifetime benefits on retirement.

The unexpected costs were too much for many retirees, including the Sissons, who were forced to drop coverage because the new premiums ate up all but $10 of the monthly pension Bob Sisson received from three decades of work.

“It was a real injustice,” said Freel Tackett, a former local union president who is one of three named plaintiffs representing a class of 492 retirees and spouses in the class action lawsuit. “When we were working, we took less money on the hour to get these benefits, and then after we retired, they charged us an excessive amount.”

Medicare-eligible when he retired, Tackett paid over $19,000 in premiums from 2007 when M&G started charging retirees until 2012 when the company, faced with a court injunction, resumed providing coverage. He said some retirees who were not eligible for Medicare paid more than $40,000 over the same period.

Cancer diagnosis

While uninsured, Iva Sisson was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Within a month, she and her husband were $100,000 in debt and quickly racked up nearly $200,000 in unpaid medical bills, forcing them to declare medical bankruptcy to save their house and spend their modest retirement funds to get by.

Mrs. Sisson, then working as a secretary with no benefits, was so worried on her first day in the hospital after diagnosis that she forced the staff to let her go home, only to return as the illness progressed.

“We had always paid our bills. I was so overwhelmed with what was happening, I was in tears most of the time,” she recalled. “It was probably the closest way to be alive and still be in hell that I ever knew.”

Several retirees passed away during the break in insurance coverage, and there is no way of knowing how many of them died as a result of not going to the doctor when needed or not getting medication because they couldn’t afford insurance.

“In my opinion, M&G Polymers is just as guilty of murder as if they put a gun to their heads,” Mrs. Sisson said.

A trial was held in May 2011 and the court found the company unlawfully required premiums and issued an injunction ordering reinstatement of benefit plans without contributions.

Supreme Court takes case

On the company’s appeal, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the lower court decision. Last year the Supreme Court agreed to use the case to rule on when or whether employers can unilaterally end retiree health benefits even if they are negotiated as part of a union contract.

In its decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the lower court had improperly applied a presumption that contracts providing retiree insurance benefits promise those benefits for the life of the retiree.

By placing a “thumb on the scale in favor of retirees,” the decision found the lower court violated normal principles of contract interpretation. But the “thumb on the scale” ruling also applies to courts which have held that retirees must point to clear and express language before benefits can be vested.

In the M&G case, the USW maintains the contract explicitly states that surviving spouses of retirees receive benefits “until death or remarriage.”

“That’s a pretty clear indication that benefits were intended to continue beyond the normal expiration of a contract,” Stuligross said.

The court heard oral arguments last November. Arguing for the union and its retirees was attorney Julia Clark of Bredhoff & Kaiser, a firm that has worked with the USW for many years.

Stuligross was at the counsel table with Clark. Brean and employee benefits attorney William T. Payne, a former USW attorney who participated in the preparations, were also in the courtroom.
The USW has long been known for professional excellence in the legal representation it provides to its members and allies in court and at the bargaining table.

An early notable was Arthur Goldberg, a Chicago labor lawyer who was appointed general counsel of the United Steelworkers and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1948.

He later served as U.S. Labor Secretary under President John F. Kennedy, who also appointed him to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1965, Goldberg was appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Goldberg was senior partner of Goldberg, Feller & Bredhoff in Washington and the successor to that firm, Bredhoff & Kaiser, still works with the USW.

Recruiting legal talent

Bernard Kleiman, appointed general counsel by former International President I.W. Abel in 1965, built up the union’s internal legal department by recruiting top-notch attorneys.

Kleiman held the position for over 30 years and often served as the union’s chief negotiator. His bargaining skills helped to make Steelworkers among the nation’s highest-paid industrial workers.

He negotiated a 1973 agreement that barred strikes in the steel industry for a decade. The Experimental Negotiating Agreement was designed to curb the use of steel imports brought into the United States before contract negotiations as a strike hedge.

In the 1980s, when the steel industry was traumatized by recession and surging imports, Kleiman negotiated contracts that saved jobs and helped to keep troubled steel companies afloat.

The legal department is currently directed by General Counsel Richard J. Brean, and has continued to provide USW members with first-rate legal services.

The department now consists of a dozen lawyers in Pittsburgh who pursue strike, lockout and other cases before the NLRB, and handle federal court litigation under a variety of federal statutes, including the WARN Act, federal contract statutes and ERISA. They also advise staff and negotiators in the field on a variety of matters.
Workers at a Chinese-owned copper tubing plant in one of Alabama’s poorest counties defied the state’s Republican governor by voting to join the United Steelworkers.

Employees of GD Copper USA, the U.S. affiliate of China’s Golden Dragon Precise Copper Tube Group, voted Nov. 7 to join the USW by a narrow margin, 75 to 74.

Overwhelming initial support among workers for the campaign was eroded by Gov. Robert Bentley’s public urging for a no vote and the company’s anti-union tactics. Well over 65 percent of the work force signed union cards.

District 9 Director Daniel Flippo said he was not surprised by the close vote, noting that the company hired a law firm to run a vicious anti-union campaign with Bentley’s support.

“So, when you’re totally barraged by an anti-union firm, and frankly, the state government, day in and day out, that has to have an effect,” he said.

Flippo said employees were concerned about health and safety issues as well as wages and benefits. “They just really want a say in their working conditions,” he added.

**NLRB hears objections**

At press time, workers were waiting to hear from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on the company’s objections to the election. The USW also filed unfair labor practice charges over the demotion of a union supporter.

The $100 million plant, located in the small west Alabama community of Pine Hill, manufactures copper parts for air conditioners, appliances and other applications.

The new facility was welcomed throughout the community for creating jobs in Wilcox County, where the population of 11,670 is 72.5 percent black with a median household income of $16,646, according to the 2010 census.

Even though the organizing drive began with a large majority of eligible workers signing union cards, the efforts of Bentley and other public officials to persuade workers to vote no had an impact.

“I always thought Gov. Bentley was meant to represent all the people in the state,” Flippo told reporters. “For him to insert himself into the union election against the workers — it’s sad that a governor of this state or any state would try to have a say in the workplace that would negatively impact their living conditions and community.”

In a letter dated Nov. 5 and circulated among employees the day before the vote, Bentley dismissed problems at the Golden Dragon plant as “growing pains.”

“Your decision will impact your job, but could also have a possible negative impact on your community by discouraging other companies from locating there,” Bentley wrote.

**Alabama gave tax breaks**

Alabama, like other Southern states, is aggressively recruiting Asian firms looking to establish facilities in the United States. They typically tout low labor and land costs and their status as right-to-work (for less) states.

In the Golden Dragon case, Alabama put together a capital income tax credits package reportedly worth $160 million over two decades, along with infrastructure improvements that include a state-constructed road and bridge to serve the project.

Tariffs may have also played a role in the company’s decision. In 2010, U.S. trade regulators imposed duties
on copper pipe and tubing imported from China and Mexico, where Golden Dragon operates facilities. It opened a plant in Mexico in 2009.

In 2011, with Golden Dragon in mind, the Alabama legislature passed a tariff subsidy bill to provide tax reductions or exemptions to non-U.S. enterprises that face federal tariffs on imports if the enterprise invests more than $100 million in the state and creates at least 100 local jobs. The state bill was the first of its kind in the United States.

In fighting the union, Bentley took a page from the playbook of Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam, who last year opposed the UAW drive at Volkswagen’s plant in Chattanooga. The VW vote failed, but the union has since chartered a local that has gained some measure of recognition from VW.

Safety concerns
Safety concerns coincided with the organizing drive at the Golden Dragon factory. In the months after the plant opened last May, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) found 14 serious health and safety violations and proposed fines of $36,000.

There were concerns among the work force about a six-point disciplinary system and the high cost of health care benefits. Some also complained that employees were being paid less than what was initially advertised.

“People are making around $9 and $10 an hour, but they had been promised $12 to $15,” said organizer Fentre Graves. “That’s a big difference.”

Graves said the first meeting was held in rented space at city hall in Thomasville. Once the reason for the meetings got out, though, the workers had to look elsewhere for space and were eventually welcomed at a community college.

“People were really afraid, but lucky for me, I had some good committee people who did a lot of talking to people,” Graves said. “We had great turnout at the meetings.”

Many Golden Dragon employees continue to support the union despite the opposition and delays caused by NLRB investigations, Graves said.

“They are very determined,” she said. “They are still on board. They are ready to move forward.”

The USW now has “a little Captain” in it, thanks to the newest members of Local 8526 in St. Croix, Virgin Islands, who make Captain Morgan Spiced Rum. The workers there voted in October to join the USW.

The rum distillery in St. Croix, owned by London-based beverage maker Diageo, opened in 2010 and produces 130,000 liters of rum each day. Diageo has 80 locations around the world where it produces beer, wine and spirits such as Guinness stout, Smirnoff vodka, Johnnie Walker scotch and a number of other well-known brands.

The 40 USW members at the St. Croix factory work in the rum distillery as well as at a nearby warehouse. They are part of an amalgamated local that also includes workers at the former Hovensa oil refinery, now being used as a storage facility after closing in 2012.

“We’re proud that these brave workers have made their voices heard,” District 9 Director Daniel Flippo said. “We look forward to bargaining a contract that provides them with the wages, benefits and protections that all workers deserve.”

Bargaining on a first contract is scheduled to begin on Feb. 25.
Long-awaited rule changes by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) intended to alleviate delays and unnecessary litigation in union elections are scheduled to take effect on April 14.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka applauded the procedural reforms as “modest but important” and said they would help to reduce delays in the process and make it easier to vote on forming a union in a timely manner.

“Too often, lengthy and unnecessary litigation over minor issues bogs down the election process and prevents workers from getting the vote they want,” Trumka said. “We commend the NLRB’s efforts to streamline the process and reduce unnecessary delay.”

The rule changes were one of three decisions issued by the NLRB last December that could have a positive impact on union organizing. Another permits workers to use company e-mail to discuss workplace issues, including union organization. A third decision could allow more faculty members at private colleges and universities to join unions.

As part of the rule changes, the NLRB eliminated a previously required 25-day period between the time an election is ordered and the election. It also required employers to furnish union organizers with all available personal e-mail addresses and phone numbers of workers eligible to vote.

As expected, employers heatedly denounced the NLRB’s move as a favor to labor by the Obama administration. Groups representing manufacturers and retailers were considering legal challenges.

Fulfill the promise

NLRB Chairman Mark Pearce, however, said the changes would modernize the representation process and “fulfill the promise” of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).

“Simplifying and streamlining the process will result in improvements for all parties,” Pearce said. “With these changes, the board strives to ensure that its representation process remains a model of fairness and efficiency for all.”

The rule, the NLRB said, would bring union elections up to date with modern technology and eliminate “unnecessary litigation and delay” while making its procedures more transparent and uniform across regions.

“With these amendments, the board will be better able to fulfill its duty to protect employees’ rights by fairly, efficiently and expeditiously resolving questions of representation,” the NLRB said in a statement.

In addition, the board said the new rules allow parties to consolidate all election-related appeals into a single appeals process. They also require that additional contact information such as personal telephone numbers and e-mail addresses be included in voter lists to the extent that information is available to the employer.

The rule changes were a long time coming. Similar changes were proposed in 2011 but the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit struck it down, ruling that the board lacked a quorum to issue the rule. The five-member NLRB re-proposed the rule last February.

The board eventually adopted the rule by a 3-2 vote, with the Democratic-appointed members all voting in favor and the Republican-appointed members all voting against.

More information is available on a fact sheet on the agency’s website, www.nlrb.gov, including a link to the final rule in the Federal Register.
Workers can use company email accounts for union organizing and other workplace-related purposes, if they do it on their own time, the National Labor Relations Board has ruled.

The December ruling reverses a 2007 decision that employees don’t have a legal right to use their employers’ email for union activity or for discussing wages or other workplace issues.

Noting that the use of email has dramatically expanded, the board ruled that if an employer gives workers access to the company email system then it cannot restrict what the employee writes as long as it is generally workplace-related and not done during working hours, the board said.

The decision came in a case brought by the Communications Workers of America (CWA) in 2012 after it was prohibited from using company email to organize employees of Purple Communications, a California company that provides interpreting services for the deaf and hard of hearing.

CWA Vice President Bernie Lunzer called the ruling a big victory for all workers although he noted the limitations: email use cannot take place during work hours and cannot obstruct company productivity.

“With this decision, the NLRB has taken a major step forward to make sure workers’ rights to organize are protected in the 21st century workplace,” Lunzer said.
It’s understandable if members of Local 7-669 at the Honeywell plant in Metropolis, Ill., are experiencing déjà vu.

Honeywell, which initiated a 14-month lockout at the plant in 2010, has locked its doors again, this time just three weeks after bargaining began on a new contract last August.

The 150 members of Local 7-669 rejected a “last, best and final” offer that failed to address major concerns over job security, health care and safety.

“Our goal is simple. We want a fair agreement for all sides,” Local 7-669 President Stephen Lech said. “It’s clear that Honeywell would rather intimidate than negotiate.”

Honeywell, one of the world’s largest corporations, recently announced that it made a profit of more than $1 billion in the third quarter of 2014.

“This is a highly profitable company that repeatedly refuses to recognize the union’s right to a seat at the table,” Lech said.

The Metropolis site produces uranium hexafluoride, a highly toxic product used to make fuel for nuclear reactors. Management has continued to operate the facility using salaried personnel and contractors, most of whom have no experience running such a dangerous operation.

That situation has not gone without incident. In late October, workers on the picket line observed gas, suspected of being uranium hexafluoride, escaping from the plant for several minutes. The USW responded to the release by calling for a full investigation and for an end to the lockout.

“It is time for Honeywell to end this senseless lockout, return these 150 experienced workers to their jobs, and come to terms on a new, fair contract agreement,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

A Nuclear Regulatory Commission representative blamed the leak on the failure of equipment installed by contractors, work that was previously done in-house by USW members, said Lech.

Knowing what it takes

Because they emerged stronger after a similar work stoppage just four years ago, many Local 7-669 members already know what it takes to prevail.

Members have participated in solidarity-building activities, traveled around the country building ties with other labor groups, and taken steps to hold Honeywell accountable for its actions, including filing charges with the National Labor Relations Board.

On Nov. 10, the USW filed a charge with the NLRB alleging Honeywell threatened to permanently replace its union work force, illegally dealt directly with employees instead of bargaining with the union, and failed to respond to union information requests.

“Whenever our members are wronged and companies attempt to take advantage of and bully them, we will take action to protect their rights,” said District 7 Director Mike Millsap.

Keep fighting

Lech said NLRB charges in the past have served to motivate Honeywell to grudgingly do the right thing.

Not long after the end of the 2010 lockout, the NRC ordered the Metropolis plant to be shut down and upgraded.

About a year later, the company had recalled almost the entire 150-member USW work force, but left Lech and about a dozen other union activists laid off in a clear attempt to bust the union.

After the USW filed charges challenging the layoffs, the company eventually re-hired all of the laid-off employees.

“This is a company that will not do the right thing until it is forced to do so,” Lech said. “That’s why we have to stay strong, stand together and keep fighting.”
The USW and 450 members of Local 235A – locked out of their jobs at Sherwin Alumina in Gregory, Texas, since October 11 – have stepped up their fight, filing unfair labor practice (ULP) charges against their employer and enlisting global allies to challenge the company’s multi-national corporate owner.

The USW filed a host of ULP charges with the National Labor Relations Board on January 6, accusing Sherwin of initiating an illegal lockout, failing to bargain in good faith, interfering in union activity, threatening workers, and several other labor law violations.

“This lockout is nothing more than the act of a greedy company seeking to increase an already healthy bottom line,” said District 13 Director Ruben Garza.

On December 10, Local 235A bargaining committee member Jessie Green joined international allies from Unite and other unions in London for Glencore’s annual Investor Day. The protest also coincided with International Human Rights Day.

Sherwin Alumina locked its doors on its hourly work force after the workers there refused to accept cuts to health care and pension benefits, as well as cuts in overtime pay. Glencore, the world’s 10th largest company, made a net income of $4.6 billion in 2013.

“This is a company that makes huge profits off the backs of its workers and tries to bully those workers into accepting less,” Green said. “It’s corporate greed – pure and simple – and unless we stand up to it, it will only get worse.”

Dozens of members of Unite, Britain and Ireland’s largest union, took part in the December protest. Unite is the USW’s partner in the 3 million-strong trans-Atlantic union Workers Uniting.

The protest was the first in a series of global actions launched as part of a new Glencore global network, which USW representatives helped to create in November during a meeting of the IndustriALL Global Union mining sector in Sao Paolo, Brazil.

IndustriALL mining sector Director Glen Mpufane said supporting the locked-out USW workers is just the start of a global campaign.

“We are calling on Glencore to resolve labor and community conflicts extending around the world,” he said.

During the December rally in London, Green delivered a letter to Glencore CEO Ivan Glasenberg on behalf of Workers Uniting, calling on the company to negotiate in good faith to resolve the labor dispute in Gregory, as well as those at Glencore-owned mines in Peru, South Africa and Colombia, where the company has been accused of illegal firings, anti-union intimidation, pollution and tax evasion.

“The only way we can stand up to these corporate giants is to bring the fight to them,” Green said. “Through Workers Uniting and other global alliances, we are able to challenge the abuse of workers all over the world.”

As the USW and its allies were rallying in London, a USW delegation was meeting with company representatives in Gregory for the first bargaining dates since the lockout began. Sadly, the company continued to demand deep cuts in pay and benefits and flatly refused a USW proposal to end the lockout while continuing to bargain.

“Glencore seems determined to bully and intimidate its work force until they agree to unreasonable and unnecessary demands for deep cuts in pay and benefits,” Garza said. “This company’s greedy behavior is bad for workers, their families and the entire community.”
The steel industry is facing unexpected trouble – particularly in the energy sector where plummeting oil prices have led to a decline in exploration and sharply reduced demand for pipe and related products.

The problems caused by lower oil prices are compounded by a record surge in steel imports, global overcapacity and lower prices for domestic steel.

“We are seeing the impact of both the price of oil dropping and a rush of unfairly traded imports on the supply chain,” said International Vice President Tom Conway, who oversees steel bargaining for the union.

U.S. Steel, the nation’s largest producer, has led the way in announcing work force cutbacks. On Jan. 27, the company said it would curtail operations at pipe-making facilities in Fairfield, Ala., and Lone Star, Texas.

Layoff notices, the company said, were issued to 1,918 represented workers in Texas and Alabama “as a precaution” under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act.

Several weeks earlier, U.S. Steel said it would idle operations that produce pipe and tube for oil and gas exploration in Lorain, Ohio, and Houston, Texas, impacting 756 workers.

“Drilling activity has been severely cut back, and unfairly priced and subsidized imports continue to land in the U.S. market, just compounding the situation,” Conway added.

“This is affecting our plants where we manufacture pipe for the oil and gas industry as well as the flat rolled steel plants that in some cases supply those pipe mills.”

Contract protections

Through decades of up and down markets, the USW has negotiated security provisions in contracts that are designed to help Steelworkers cope with temporary downturns.

“We are taking the steps contained in our labor agreements to minimize the impact of these issues at our plants and to our members, and together with our local unions are monitoring it constantly and looking at every available avenue to pursue regarding the imports,” Conway said.

Most steel products in the energy sector are under attack, including line pipe, oil country tubular goods (OCTG) and others by unfairly low-priced imports from China, South Korea and Turkey with other trading partners in the wings.

U.S. trade authorities are currently investigating requests by the USW and domestic manufacturers for duties on unfairly traded welded line pipe exported from South Korea and Turkey. The USW joined petitions filed last October that call for relief from the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and the International Trade Commission (ITC), the two U.S. agencies charged with investigating trade complaints.

The investigations cover carbon and alloy welded line pipe up to 24 inches in diameter produced to American Petroleum Institute specifications. Line pipe generally refers to pipe and tube that carries material in a refinery or on land.

The DOC in November opened a pair of investigations to explore claims of illegal subsidies and dumping, the selling of products below market value. The ITC later issued a preliminary determination saying there was cause enough to continue the investigations.

“These illegal trade practices have the potential to cause significant harm to American manufacturers, kill good-paying American jobs and inflict serious damage on our economy,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.
The USW’s campaign to level the playing field and protect 28,000 jobs in the U.S. tire industry from a flood of unfairly priced Chinese-made tires is bearing positive results.

Acting on petitions filed by the USW, the United States on Jan. 21 set large preliminary duties on passenger car and light-truck tires from China, saying producers and exporters were dumping them into the U.S. market at below fair value.

“Left unchecked, the combination of illegal dumping and subsidization on imported tires from China would cost Americans tens of thousands of additional jobs,” Gerard said.

In both decisions, the government agencies found apparent efforts by Chinese producers to evade the impact of the investigations by frontloading shipments to the United States.

“As a result of the (Jan. 21) decision, which includes a finding of preliminary critical circumstances, it is possible that any duties that do become final may also apply to those tires that entered over the last three months.”

United in fight for jobs

The USW petitions, filed under Sections 701 and 731 of the Trade Act, claim Chinese producers and exporters are supported by illegal government subsidies and engage in dumping – the practice of selling a product at below what
The USW and four U.S. paper producers are seeking relief from unfairly traded uncoated paper products from China, Indonesia, Australia, Brazil and Portugal that are harming the American industry and killing jobs.

U.S. mills have shut down, workers have been laid off, market share has been lost and the financial performance of producers has deteriorated as a result of trade practices outlined in petitions filed by the union and the paper makers.

“Since 2011, eight U.S. mills that produce uncoated paper have been forced to close in the face of increasing unfairly traded imports, resulting in the loss of thousands of paper jobs,” International President Leo W. Gerard said in announcing the action.

“Foreign predatory practices targeting America’s producers and workers, including tens of thousands of our members, are the root cause of production declines and job losses,” Gerard added.

Absent the unfairly traded imports outlined in the petitions, the domestic industry would be in a better position to weather a changing economic landscape and the impact of digital technologies on paper use.

Petitions were filed Jan. 21 with the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC), the agencies responsible for investigating alleged unfair trade practices.

They seek duties to offset dumping, or discriminatory pricing, of certain uncoated paper from all five countries and to offset government subsidies on imports from China and Indonesia.

2,500 jobs lost
Almost 2,500 U.S. workers were identified in the petitions as having already lost their jobs because of unfairly traded imports, with many more jobs at risk if more machines or mills close.

The eight mills that have been permanently or indefinitely shuttered, at least in part, are located in Alabama, Arkansas, Maine, Minnesota, Ohio, Washington and Wisconsin.

The U.S. Department of Labor has certified workers at seven of the eight closed facilities to receive federal Trade Adjustment Assistance after concluding that imports contributed significantly to the closures.

Imports from all five countries are underselling domestic producers, harming an industry that has undergone substantial consolidation in recent years.

“Foreign paper makers are taking advantage of unfair trade practices of dumping and subsidies to undermine U.S. manufacturers,” said Mark Kowlzan, chief executive of Packaging Corporation of America, one of the four companies participating in the complaint.

Domtar Corp., Finch Paper LLC and P.H. Glatfelter Co. are the other companies that joined the union in filing the petitions.

“Competition makes us a better, stronger company, but it must be fair competition,” Domtar President and CEO John D. Williams said. “This petition asks the government to look at the facts and make any adjustments required to establish a level playing field.”

Uncoated paper sheets
The petitions cover all uncoated paper in sheets (including cut-size and folio), weighing between 40 and 150 grams per square meter, and having a GE brightness level of 85 or higher.
Uncoated paper has a wide variety of uses with the most common being copy paper. It is also used in books, business forms, instruction manuals, flyers, brochures and maps. It may come in various colors.

According to official data, total imports of uncoated paper from the five targeted countries jumped by 466,291 tons in 2011 to 671,208 tons in 2013, an increase of 43.9 percent.

The imports jumped another 40.4 percent from the first nine months of 2013 (January to September) as compared to the same period in 2014. Domestic shipments declined by 9.7 percent in the same time periods.

A year to complete

Dumping occurs when a foreign producer sells in the American market for less than the price that the producer charges in its home market or when it sells below the cost of production.

If the DOC finds there is dumping, and the ITC finds that the U.S. industry is injured by the dumped imports, duties will be imposed to offset the amount of dumping found to exist.

Dumping is alleged in the petitions to be as high as 271 percent for China, 187 percent for Australia, 182 percent for Brazil, 98.9 percent for Indonesia and 31.8 percent for Portugal.

The DOC will also determine whether producers in China and Indonesia benefit from government subsidies. Duties will be imposed if the DOC finds that subsidies have been provided and if the ITC finds that the U.S. industry was injured by them.

The cases should take about a year to complete.

The ITC will make a preliminary decision regarding whether the U.S. industry is being materially injured by April 16, although that date could be extended to June 22. Its decision regardingdumping is expected by June 30, or Aug. 19 if extended.

Workers and management at Chase Brass and Copper Co. have a good understanding of how Fast Track authority can harm the Montpelier, Ohio, manufacturer.

That’s because they cooperated in two days of training that is part of a campaign by the USW Rapid Response program to defeat Trade Promotion Authority, commonly called Fast Track.

District 1 Rapid Response Coordinator Donnie Blatt worked with Chase Brass president Devin K. Denner to train 250 members of Local 7248.

Rapid Response is working to explain to USW members how Fast Track menaces U.S. manufacturing, to identify lawmakers who can be persuaded to vote against it, and to energize USW members to contact their legislators to express their experience-based fear that Fast Track will cost them their jobs.

Some lawmakers are trying to ram Fast Track through Congress as a way to quickly approve the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) with 11 Pacific Rim countries, and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with European Union countries. These are so-called free trade style deals like NAFTA that have closed U.S. factories and destroyed millions of family-supporting jobs.

Fast Track allows lawmakers to relinquish their constitutional responsibility to regulate international trade. Under Fast Track, Congress forbids itself from filibustering or amending proposed trade agreements. Congress limits itself to 90 days for review and 20 hours for debate.

This is an abdication of lawmakers’ duty to subject trade deals to lengthy line-by-line review, public hearings and amendment to ensure they are in the best interests of the United States and American workers.

Free trade failures

A report on free trade failures issued in January by Public Citizen’s Trade Watch says it all with this title: “Prosperity Undermined: Fast-Trackened Trade Agreements’ 20-Year Record of Massive U.S. Trade Deficits, American Job Loss and Wage Suppression.”

“Over two decades, a series of trade agreements not only failed to meet their business sector and political backers’ glowing promises of job creation, but instead resulted in unprecedented and unsustainable trade deficits, the net loss of nearly 5 million U.S. manufacturing jobs and more than 57,000 factories,” the report says.

In Ohio, Blatt and Denner talked about those statistics to workers at training sessions on Jan. 23 and 24. Blatt is particularly sensitive to so-called free trade because he believes aluminum dumped by China played a significant part in the shuttering of his former employer, Ormet, in Ohio.

Denner, who serves as chairman of the board for the Copper and Brass Fabricators Council, is deeply concerned about unfair trade. The vast majority of news releases on the council’s website detail trade imbalances for brass products – imbalances that virtually never favor U.S. manufacturers.

Denner talked about the effect Fast Track and TPP would have on the copper and brass market and ultimately on Chase Brass.

“We deserve fair trade agreements that include provisions for currency manipulation and that have balanced trade as their objective,” he said.

Blatt told the workers, “We are looking for a new trade model, one that would not enable corporate America to write our trade laws, one that would level the playing field for small and medium U.S. manufacturers and for U.S. workers. But we can’t do that unless we defeat Fast Track.”
The rapidly expanding trade deficit with China has cost the United States at least 3.2 million jobs – 2.4 million of them in manufacturing – since 2001, the year China entered the World Trade Organization.

The job losses hit all 50 states and the District of Columbia despite repeated assurances that increased trade with China would boost the U.S. economy, according to new research by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), an economic think tank in Washington, D.C.

“The growing deficit with China has hurt American workers and decimated U.S. manufacturing,” said EPI economist Robert Scott, a co-author of the report.

Instead of growth, Scott said the United States saw its trade deficit in goods with China widen from $84 billion in 2001 to $324 billion in 2013, the period studied. The deficit increase has contributed to growing American debt, loss of jobs and loss of export capacity.

“The answer to rebuilding the American middle class lies with reducing the trade deficit,” said Scott Paul, president of the non-profit Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), which released the study to the media.

Beyond the direct job losses, competition with low-wage workers from less-developed countries such as China has eroded wages for U.S. manufacturing workers and reduced the wages and bargaining power of many other workers throughout the economy.

Workers most affected by the downward pressure on wages are the 70 percent of the U.S. work force with less than a four-year college degree, EPI said. That’s about 100 million people.

Trade law enforcement

The failure of politicians in Washington to adequately enforce existing trade laws and protect American industry has contributed to an uneven economic recovery, said International President Leo W. Gerard, who participated in a media conference call on the report.

“I can tell you the American economic recovery hasn’t reached all sectors of the economy,” Gerard said. “The stock market is up. Income is up for wealthy Americans, but for hard-working manufacturing workers, times are still very tough.”

Nearly 40 percent of the 2.4 million manufacturing jobs lost were in the computer and electronic parts industries, a segment of the economy in which the United States was previously thought to have an advantage.

The technology products sector accounted for more than half of the $240 billion increase in the U.S.-China trade gap over the 12 years in the study. Other hard-hit sectors included apparel, textiles, fabricated metals, electrical equipment, appliances and components.

“We now have a huge deficit in advanced technology products with China, and those were the jobs we were told were going to be the jobs of the future,” Gerard said.

Supporters of American manufacturing blame China’s predatory trade practices, which include manipulating the value of its currency to keep it artificially low. The devalued currency makes
Chinese imports less expensive for U.S. consumers and U.S. exports more expensive for Chinese consumers.

Also cited for blame were the dumping of products into the United States at below-fair-market prices, tariff and non-tariff barriers that restrict American exports, and the allowances and other subsidies China uses to support manufacturing and fuel its export-based economy.

Gerard noted that the USW fights back against China’s increasingly predatory practices with trade cases in industries such as tires, steel pipe and rebar where union members work.

“We file trade cases against China, and we can win because their business model is one of cheating and not playing by the rules,” Gerard said.

At the same time, Gerard said, U.S. trade laws and the process for getting relief are perverted. “In order for us to succeed,” he said, “we have to first lose jobs.”

Balanced approach needed

Paul, the AAM president, and others, including U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Ohio), faulted Washington for not declaring China to be a currency manipulator, a largely symbolic gesture requiring the United States to enter into currency negotiations with China.

“If we didn’t have this currency manipulation, extensive subsidies, illegal barriers and dumping, the suppression of wages and labor rights, we wouldn’t have the plant closings and the layoffs,” Ryan said.

While saying President Barack Obama has done a commendable job of supporting U.S. manufacturers domestically, Paul complained that the administration’s efforts on trade have been “completely inadequate.” He called for a more balanced approach than focusing on improving U.S. exports, one of the president’s goals.

“Rebuilding the middle class starts with a robust and growing manufacturing base,” Paul said. “The key to a robust and growing manufacturing base in the U.S. is to be exporting more, to have a balanced economy between production and consumption and to have reciprocal trade with our major partners including countries like China and Japan.”

The United States has imposed anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties on carbon and certain alloy steel wire rod produced in China and sold in the United States at less than fair value.

The duties were issued after compatible rulings by the International Trade Commission (ITC) and the U.S. Department of Commerce, the agencies charged with investigating trade complaints.

Element Electronics packages its LCD televisions in red, white and blue boxes that prominently display a waving American flag and the slogans “Assembled in the USA” and “America Matters.”

But, according to a complaint filed with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) by the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), the manufacturing is mostly done in China.

The petition by AAM, a non-profit organization formed to strengthen American manufacturing, alleges Element violates FTC standards that require a product undergo a “substantial transformation” on U.S. soil before it can be sold as domestically assembled.

Element import televisions and electronic motherboards, or circuit boards, from China. At a facility in Winnsboro, S.C., Element employees unpack Chinese-made televisions from their boxes, insert motherboards and repackage the televisions in the same boxes for sale to American consumers, the AAM contends.

Screwdriver assembly in the United States of foreign components into a final product at the end of the manufacturing process doesn’t usually qualify under FTC rules for the “Assembled in the USA” claim.

“If a company wants to wrap itself with the American flag in advertising, it should at least meet the bare minimum standard for manufacturing and assembling products in the USA,” AAM President Scott Paul said.

Element, which does business with Wal-Mart as part of the retailer’s widely publicized “Made in USA” initiative, denies the allegations. The company said in a statement that it believes it meets the FTC standards required for using “Assembled in the USA.”

In the statement, Element said it has hired more than 300 employees in Winnsboro since the factory opened in March 2014. The firm previously operated a smaller facility in Detroit.

The AAM is asking the FTC to stop Element, which has its principal office in Eden Prairie, Minn., from claiming that its televisions are assembled in the United States.

The AAM’s submissions to the FTC included several photographs of the patriotic boxes and one image taken at a Wal-Mart store showing a “Made in China” marking on the back panel of an Element television.

The AAM said Element misrepresents that all of its televisions are assembled in the United States, when in reality, just a “subset of its product line might be assembled” here.
For many USW members, their commitment to helping others doesn’t end at the plant gate or at the door to the union hall — it only begins there. USW members are not only leaders in their workplaces but in their communities.

“The reason many of us get involved in the labor movement in the first place is that we care deeply about the welfare of our fellow human beings,” said International President Leo W. Gerard.

“Yet too often, the media portrays unions as self-serving institutions and union members as only interested in their own well-being. We know the real truth, but our best work often goes unnoticed because most people don’t know about it.”

From food and holiday toy drives to bike races and fundraisers for children’s charities, there is a steady flow of good will, volunteerism and generosity from USW members year round, throughout the United States and Canada.

In order to make that case more clearly and encourage other members to follow suit, the USW has launched “USW Cares” to highlight as many stories as possible from locals and their members who put in extra time, money and effort to assist their communities.

You can submit your local’s story and photos online at usw.org/uswcares and encourage others to do so.

You can also post stories on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the #USWCares and #USWWorks hashtags. And don’t be shy about calling your local newspaper, television or radio station, community newsletter or website to ask for coverage of your good work.

“This good work doesn’t happen just during the holidays — it goes on year round,” said International Vice President Fred Redmond, who is leading the USW Cares effort.

“By celebrating and highlighting these efforts, we hope to duplicate them all across North America, and create a culture within our union of constantly serving and giving back to the communities that have always been there for us.”
The United Steelworkers and the Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU) in Canada have completed a merger that brings 12,000 members into the union.

“This merger is an example of a shared, positive vision for the labor movement: global, outward-looking and focused on concrete action,” said Canadian National Director Ken Neumann.

The TWU’s 12,000 members work in telecommunications, cable TV and call center locations across Canada. Employers include TELUS and Shaw Communications, among others.

The TWU membership approved the agreement by a 73.7 percent margin in a referendum vote counted last Nov. 7. The merger document was signed in Pittsburgh on Dec. 10 by USW officers and the national executive council of the TWU. The merger became effective Jan. 1.

Balloting was conducted electronically, over a 24-day period, to facilitate participation by members in a wide array of workplaces, communities and shift arrangements.

The two unions have shared a strategic alliance since 2010. A first attempt at a merger in 2013 failed when TWU members voted 64.4 percent in favor, just short of a required two-thirds approval.

Strong mutual commitments

The agreement includes strong, mutual commitments to support bargaining, membership education, legislative action and bringing in new members from the telecom sector.

“Together we’ve built an innovative, flexible merger agreement that blends the best of both of our unions,” Neumann said in a statement.

TWU National President Lee Riggs said the agreement met and exceeded the TWU’s goals. “Our goal was to build a merger that focuses on concrete action here in Canada on day one and that is also global in reach at the same time,” he said.

International President Leo W. Gerard predicted that the newly merged union will, with help from the USW’s extensive international network of allies and resources, become a global leader in the telecommunications sector.

“Because TELUS and other telecommunications companies have operations around the world, our work as a merged union will multiply across borders,” Gerard said.
Delegates from the USW proudly played a prominent role throughout the 2015 AFL-CIO Martin Luther King Jr. Civil and Human Rights Conference held in Atlanta from Jan. 15-19.

“It’s clear that we Steelworkers with our union brothers and sisters are leading the way when it comes to continuing the work and honoring the legacy of Dr. King,” International Vice President Fred Redmond said.

The theme for this year’s conference at the Westin Peachtree was “Dream Big, Love All, Act Now,” and, as always, included a significant emphasis on community service.

“To honor Dr. King’s dream we must be willing to look to a future larger than life, love our union family and the surrounding community and be willing to turn our dreams into action,” AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Tefere Gebre said in welcoming remarks.

About 700 conference participants traveled throughout metro Atlanta to rebuild parks and homes, prepare food in soup kitchens, read books to kids and much more.

USW hats, shirts, coats and other gear were easily identifiable and pervasive throughout the crowd during the conference, leaving participants with the unmistakable impression that Steelworkers comprised the largest group in attendance.

The USW also managed transportation, sponsored exhibits, staffed the registration table and provided security for the conference, in addition to the various other service and volunteer activities.

“I’m very proud of the role our union played in planning, organizing, staffing and attending this important conference,” Redmond said.

**Voting rights anniversary**

The conference took place in the 50th anniversary year of the Voting Rights Act, legislation that reformed how people of color were able to participate in the political process.

“We must take this opportunity to honor the struggles of our brothers and sisters, and continue to advocate for life-changing policies and practices that better the lives of all workers, communities of color, women and LGBTQ people,” Gebre said.

Workshops focused on helping conference participants who work in the labor movement to advocate more effectively for civil rights in our workplaces and to make our voices heard on issues such as racial justice, economic empowerment, education, gender equality, immigration reform and fairness and equality on the job for everyone.

Speakers and panelists included a wide variety of elected union leaders, academics, activists, legislators and other government officials.

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed provided the conference a warm welcome and thanked attendees for their commitment to volunteer their day of service in and around the city.

The conference culminated on Monday, Jan. 19, with a march and a rally. Gebre challenged activists in attendance to put their passion for civil rights to work in their own communities.

“I see 2015 as an opportunity for labor and civil rights advocates to come together and not only organize more union shops, but to advocate for the issues we care about – racial injustice, economic empowerment, education, gender equality, voting rights, immigration reform and equality in the workplace,” he said.
For those who wonder whether the labor movement still makes a difference, they need to look no further than college football for the answer.

With support from the USW, Northwestern University football players made history last year when they became the first college athletes to vote in a union election for the College Athletes Players Association (CAPA).

Since that day in April 2014, two of the biggest and most powerful conferences in college football made significant changes to address the union’s core concerns and improve the lives of student athletes.

“That’s what the threat of a union does,” said former Northwestern quarterback Kain Colter, who helped lead the CAPA organizing drive at his school.

Among the players’ demands were guaranteed scholarships, more attention to concussions and other debilitating injuries, and better health care for players during and after their playing days.

In response to those issues, the Big Ten and PAC-12 have begun to guarantee athletes’ four-year scholarships. The PAC-12 also will begin to offer health care to players after graduation.

Before CAPA came along, athletes could lose scholarships due to injury or the whim of a coaching decision (many still can). Health care for players who graduated with lingering injuries was almost non-existent.

The results of the April election have yet to be announced. The votes were sealed pending a decision by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on an earlier ruling by a regional director that held players could be considered university employees and could unionize.

Regardless of how the Northwestern vote ultimately turns out, these players have already won,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “These changes are just the beginning, and they represent a victory not just for these players, but for hundreds of thousands of athletes around the country as well as millions more coming in their footsteps.”

As Colter and CAPA President Ramogi Huma pointed out, college athletes in football and basketball generate nearly a billion dollars a year in revenue for the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). CAPA simply wants a small portion of that money to be redirected for the benefit of those who generate it.

“We are truly the engines of a multi-billion-dollar industry,” Colter said.

In January, Colter, Huma and other CAPA activists met in Washington with representatives of the USW and the NFL players’ union to lobby lawmakers and NCAA officials to make more changes. The group planned the meeting to coincide with a nearby NCAA convention, where schools were due to vote on proposals to enact more benefits for athletes.

“We want to make clear that any type of reform should not exclude college athletes’ rights,” Huma said.
Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, president and general secretary of the National Union of Mine, Metal and Steelworkers of Mexico, also known as Los Mineros, is free to travel after living for many years in exile in Canada.

In December, on his first trip to the United States since being forced to flee persecution in Mexico in 2006, Gómez visited Pittsburgh and thanked the USW for its support and solidarity during his ordeal. Gómez was warmly greeted at the USW’s headquarters. He spoke to a meeting of the International Executive Board (IEB) and later addressed the union’s entire staff.

“Napoleón is one of my heroes,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “For eight years he stood strong against the attacks on his union and constant threats against him and his family. I am proud that the USW and the entire international union movement have stood with him in the fight for justice for Mexican workers.”

Gómez was forced into exile when the Mexican government brought trumped-up criminal charges against him after he denounced as “industrial homicide” the death of 65 miners in an explosion at Grupo Mexico’s Pasta de Conchos mine.

Charges finally dismissed

Last August, a Mexican appeals court dismissed the last of the charges against Gómez. The court ruled that a charge related to the dissolution of a union trust fund in 2005 was baseless and unconstitutional. It was the 11th time that appellate courts in Mexico ruled in his favor.

The ruling was a triumph for the USW’s alliance with Los Mineros and for an international campaign to vindicate him spearheaded by Workers Uniting and the IndustriALL Global Union.

The USW and Los Mineros have since 2005 built a North American solidarity alliance based on joint bargaining, organizing and political action.

Gómez said cooperation between the two unions has included coordination at common employers such as Grupo Mexico and ArcelorMittal; collaboration on organizing campaigns; joint work on health and safety; Mineros participation in the USW Leadership-Scholarship program, and the establishment of a Mineros Women of Steel program.

“I am proud of our alliance with Los Mineros,” said Gerard. “I welcome Napoleón back to the United States, and I hope to be with him when he returns to Mexico.”
ALEC finally has a rival. For four decades, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has gone virtually unchecked in using its vast network of right-wing politicians in state capitols across the United States to skew the mainstream political agenda away from working Americans to benefit corporations and the richest one percent.

In recent years, a progressive alternative, the American Legislative and Issue Campaign Exchange (ALICE), stepped up to challenge ALEC’s dominance.

In the wake of the disastrous 2014 election, ALICE joined forces with two other progressive groups – the Progressive States Network (PSN) and the Center for State Innovation (CSI) – to create what they hope will be a powerful counterpoint to ALEC: The State Innovation Exchange (SIX).

“We’re going to be much more aggressive than ALEC,” said Nicholas Rathod, SIX executive director and former special assistant to President Barack Obama. “There is a hunger and a need for an organization like this.”

Since the Tea Party “revolution” in the 2010 election, ALEC’s already substantial influence has grown exponentially. The group, fueled by the same corporations and wealthy families that back the Tea Party, has flooded state legislatures with an anti-union, pro-business agenda.

This has resulted in repeated attacks on workers’ rights, environmental and workplace safety regulations and voting rights, as well as privatization of public services, tax breaks for big business, and cuts to education, transportation and health care funding. Every step of the way, it has been bad news for union members and working families.

The 2014 election results only added more fuel to the fire, as Republicans now have full control of state governments (senates, legislatures and governors’ mansions) in 23 states, including the entire American South. By contrast, Democrats only enjoy full control in seven states.

As its activities have gained more media scrutiny, ALEC has lost a number of corporate funders in recent years, including technology giants Google and Microsoft. Still, the group enjoys strong support from some of the richest, most arch-conservative corporations and billionaires in the United States.

Disaster for working people

For years, ALEC has done the bidding of those super-rich donors, stepping up its state-level attacks on labor and civil rights. Now, the group has begun to push local initiatives (using a similar group it calls the American City County Exchange) to outlaw minimum wages, paid sick time, anti-contractor ordinances and other pro-worker moves, while pushing right-to-work (for less) laws at the local level.

“ALEC has been an absolute disaster for working people, and a boon for the already rich and powerful,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “It’s time for common sense to take hold again in our state capitols, before the voices of working families are drowned out for good.”

For years, ALEC had no coordinated, national opposition to mount a concerted push for progressive legislation. That changed last year with the establishment of SIX, which provides progressive lawmakers across the country with an extensive database of model legislation on issues such as union rights, civil rights, living wages and workplace safety, among others.

Unlike ALEC, which is funded by anti-union corporations seeking to warp the system to increase profits, SIX gets much of its support from non-profit public interest and advocacy groups, as well as small individual donations. Officials from the American Federation of Teachers, Communications Workers of America, Service Employees International Union and the AFL-CIO sit on a SIX advisory board.

Though ALEC is registered as a “charity,” it has a budget of more than $8 million a year, which it spends on lavish getaways for member lawmakers at fancy resorts, where members exchange “model” pro-business legislation and determine the “talking points” needed to disguise its intent enough to get it passed.

While SIX doesn’t have lavish retreats on its agenda, the group is hoping it can use a few pages from ALEC’s playbook to make sure its extensive network of grassroots organizations and progressive lawmakers can unite behind a common agenda, one that includes higher wages, stronger protections for workers, affordable and accessible health care, and economic security for retirees.

“Progressives are looking around to figure out where to go,” Rathod said. “It’s the biggest missing piece in the progressive infrastructure.”
Kaiser Aluminum Pact Ratified

Members of Local 338 at Kaiser Aluminum’s Trentwood plant near Spokane, Wash., and Local 341 at its Newark, Ohio, facility have ratified a five-year master collective bargaining agreement.

An agreement was also reached at Kaiser’s Alutek plant in Spokane.

The new contract, which runs through Sept. 30, 2020, raises wages by 14 percent over its term and includes a $1,000 ratification bonus for some 1,200 production, maintenance, clerical and technical workers. The health plan was maintained with no new premium contributions.

District 12 Director Bob LaVenture, who chairs the union’s Kaiser Aluminum negotiations, complimented the work done by local union leadership and staff.

“We’ve improved the security of our earnings, benefits and retirements during a period of uncertainty in the industry as Chinese, Russian and other competitors try to push and shove their way into a larger share of our market,” LaVenture said.

Adjunct Faculty Seek Election

Members of the USW’s Adjunct Faculty Association at Robert Morris University outside of Pittsburgh have filed a petition for an election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

A majority of an estimated 215 adjunct professors signed cards supporting the drive. They are seeking improved wages and working conditions, including a more transparent and fair system for assigning courses.

International President Leo W. Gerard said the union looks forward to winning representation rights at the 5,400-student university.

“We welcome the opportunity to help workers looking for fairness on the job no matter where they work,” Gerard said. “We Steelworkers are still working on factory floors, but now we also staff hospitals, practice law and teach college students as adjunct faculty. The diversity of our membership continues to make us stronger.”

The association has won an NLRB vote at Pittsburgh’s Duquesne University, but the school has objected, citing a religious exemption. At Point Park University, also in Pittsburgh, the association is bargaining for a first contract.

Stillwater Workers Reach Safety Milestone

USW-represented employees at a Stillwater Mining Co. lab in Montana were recognized in 2014 for working one million man hours without a lost-time accident.

It took from January 2001 to May 4, 2014, to achieve the million-hour safety mark, said Scott McGinnis, president of Local 11-0001.

The lab in Columbus, Mont., employs 46, including 35 hourly workers represented by the USW.

The USW represents about 1,200 Stillwater employees.

Union Plus Helps Veterans

Union Plus is helping to make the dream of homeownership a reality for union members who have served in the armed forces by offering them a $1,000 grant that can be used toward a down payment.

Union Plus, a benefit program established by the AFL-CIO for members and retirees of participating unions, said its Union Plus Mortgage Veterans Grant never needs to be repaid.

“There are over two million union veterans in this country. They give so much and their families deserve to live in a great home,” Union Plus President Leslie Tolf said.

To be eligible for the grant, members must be an active or retired member of a participating union and be a veteran of the United States Armed Services.

To learn more, go online and visit UnionPlus.org/Mortgage.

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The lab in Columbus, Mont., employs 46, including 35 hourly workers represented by the USW.

The local reached the goal with the help of a collective bargaining agreement that in 2011 implemented safety inspections, safety projects and a task risk-analysis program, McGinnis said.

Stillwater is the only U.S. producer of platinum group metals (PGMs), including platinum, palladium and rhodium, and the largest producer of PGMs outside of South Africa and the Russian federation.

The company has mining operations in Stillwater and East Boulder with concentrating plants at both mines. It operates the lab, a smelter and a refinery in Columbus.

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Union Leader Gerald Johnston Dies

Gerald P. Johnston, a labor leader and officer who served with the USW, PACE and the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU), died on Nov. 25, 2014, in Middletown, Ohio. He was 77.

At the time of his retirement on Dec. 1, 2012, Johnston was a special assistant to International President Leo W. Gerard. He also served as a co-director of District 1 after the 2005 merger of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) and the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union (PACE).

Johnston began his career in the paper industry in 1958 at Diamond International Corp. in Middletown. He was president of an independent employees union and led it into the UPIU in 1972.

In 1973, the UPIU named Johnston as an international representative to service local unions in Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia and Ohio.

He was elected vice president and regional director of UPIU in 1986, an office he held for 20 years. The UPIU merged with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International (OCAW) in 1999 to form PACE.

From 1955 to 1958, before he went to work in the paper mill, Johnston pitched for the Cincinnati Reds organization. An injury ended his baseball career.

Former PACE Officer Kenneth O. Test Dies

Kenneth O. Test, a longtime officer of PACE who got his start as a paper worker and retired as a district co-director of the USW, died on Nov. 12, 2014. He was 69.

Test was born in Allentown, N.J., and began his career at the Peter J. Schweitzer Co., a cigarette paper manufacturer in Spotswood, N.J.

A millwright, Test served his home local, United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU) Local 1482, as president, recording secretary, financial secretary, steward and trustee.

He was appointed a UPIU representative in 1984 and in 1996 was elected vice president and director of UPIU Region 3, which encompassed Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey.

Test remained a vice president and director after PACE was created by the 1999 merger of UPIU and the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) union. He became a USW co-director after the 2005 PACE merger and retired in March 2014.
**Novelis Interfered with Election**

Novelis blatantly interfered in a USW representation election for 600 workers at its Oswego, N.Y., aluminum plant in February 2014, according to a federal judge who ordered the company to bargain with the union.

Judge Michael A. Rosas found on Jan. 30 that Novelis committed labor law violations so severe as to “erode the majority support” for the union, causing the USW to narrowly lose the election. The judge also ordered a wrongfully demoted worker returned to his position with back pay.

“This ruling is a victory not just for the workers, but for the entire Oswego community,” District 4 Director John Shinn said. “No worker should face threats, intimidation and manipulation in response to a good-faith effort to gain a voice in their workplace.”

Novelis Oswego workers sought to join the USW after the company imposed benefit cuts. The USW also represents workers at Novelis plants in Indiana, West Virginia and Ontario.

**International Solidarity with Crown Workers**

IG Metall, the German metal workers union, protested Crown Holdings’ union busting against USW members in Canada at a November trade show in Nuremberg, Germany.

Crown was exhibiting new packaging innovations at the show when four members of IG Metall, holding a USW banner, passed out leaflets in German and English addressing Crown’s approach to union busting in Toronto, where the profitable company has forced a strike by 120 members of Local 9176.

Members of Unite, USW’s partner in Workers Uniting, engaged in a similar action at another trade show in London.

**Verso to Sell Mill, Power Plant**

Verso Paper Corp. has agreed to sell its Bucksport, Maine, paper mill and power plant to a Canadian scrap metal recycler for $60 million.

The announcement came two months after the company announced it was closing the Bucksport mill and laying off some 500 members of Local 1188.

**AK Steel Contract Settled**

Members of Local 1915 have ratified a new three-year agreement with AK Steel’s wholly owned subsidiary AK Tube LLC.

That contract covers about 100 hourly production and maintenance employees at AK’s Walbridge facility near Toledo, Ohio. The new agreement took effect on Jan. 22.

**N.J. Hospital Workers Join USW**

The USW has 432 new registered nurse members at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital-Somerset in New Jersey. Nurses there voted in December to join the union.

The successful vote capped off a three-month campaign to organize the Somerset RNs. They join about 1,200 colleagues who work at the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, N.J., and are members of Local 4-200.

**AK Contract Ratified in West Virginia**

Local 2911 members have ratified a new four-year labor agreement with AK Steel covering 215 employees at the company’s Mountain State Carbon coke plant in Follansbee, W.Va.

AK acquired Mountain State Carbon in September 2014 as part of its $700 million acquisition of Severstal North America’s steelmaking facilities.

The new agreement takes effect on March 1.

**U.S. Attorney Receives Award**

International President Leo W. Gerard presented U.S. Attorney David J. Hickton with the A. Philip Randolph Award for his support of the APR Institute’s “Breaking the Chains of Poverty” Program.

APRI partners with the USW and other groups to recruit and train men and women in green jobs and prepare them for employment in the building trades.

Since the program’s inception in 2009, 184 Pittsburgh residents have completed the training and over 100 have been placed in jobs.
Training at Solidarity Picnic

Locals 371 and 1369 in Monticello, Miss., combined a solidarity picnic for members with a District 9 internal organizing program called “It’s Wrong Not to Belong.”

The district cited the locals and their members, who work for Georgia-Pacific, as examples of what can be done with determination and solidarity. Local 371 reported it has obtained 100 percent union membership while Local 1369 is working to also reach that goal.

District 9 Director Daniel Flippo, Assistant to the Director James Carvin, Sub-District Director Emory Barnette and Staff Representative Randy Burkett attended the event.

NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES COVERED BY A UNION SECURITY CLAUSE

All USW represented employees covered by a union security clause have the right, under NLRB v. General Motors, 373 U.S. 734 (1963), to be and remain a nonmember subject only to the duty to pay the equivalent of union initiation fees and periodic dues. Further, only such non-member employees have the right, under Communications Workers v. Beck, 487 U.S. 735 (1988), to limit payment of union-security dues and initiation fees to certain moneys spent on activities germane to a union’s role as collective bargaining representative. This latter statutory right is embodied in the USW’s Nonmember Objection Procedure.

The Procedure is available to any USW represented employee who is subject to a union security clause but who is a non-member and who objects to his or her union security fees being expended on nonrepresentational activities. Paragraph 1 of the Procedure states:

“1. Any individual, who is not a member of the United Steelworkers and who is required as a condition of employment to pay dues to the United Steelworkers pursuant to a union security arrangement but objects to supporting ... political or ideological expenditures by the United Steelworkers which are not necessarily or reasonably incurred for the purpose of performing the duties of an exclusive collective bargaining representative shall have the right upon perfecting a notice of objection to obtain an advance reduction of a portion of such individual’s dues obligation commensurate with expenditures unrelated to collective bargaining as required by law.”

An eligible employee who objects to the USW expending monies for nonrepresentational activities such as charitable or political activities may choose to perfect a notice of objection under Paragraph 2 of the Procedure, which states:

“2. To perfect a notice of objection, the individual must send an individually signed notice to the International Secretary-Treasurer during the first thirty days following either the individual’s initial date of hire into the USW represented unit or an anniversary date of such hiring: provided, however, that if the individual lacked knowledge of this Procedure, the individual shall have a 30 day period commencing on the date the individual became aware of the Procedure to perfect a notice of objection; and, provided, further, that a member who resigns membership shall have the opportunity to object within the 30 day period following resignation."

Objectors are not USW members and have no right to vote in union elections or to be a candidate, no right to participate in union meetings or activities, and no right to vote on contract ratification.

Upon perfecting properly a notice of objection, the objector is entitled to an advance reduction of a portion of his or her union security obligation commensurate with expenditures unrelated to collective bargaining, as required by law. International Secretary-Treasurer Stanley W. Johnson has determined, based upon expenditures for the calendar year 2013, that the reduction percentage under the Procedure is 11.62% (21.53% if organizing expenditures were to be included).

There are court decisions holding that organizing activities are non-representational activities. The USW does not agree with those rulings. However, without intending to waive its position that its organizing expenditures are not subject to objection and without intending to waive its right to assert its position if there is a challenge to the reduction percentage, the USW has deemed it expedient to apply the 21.53% figure to most current and future objectors. Therefore, an objector will be charged 78.47% of the regular dues amount. Each objector will be given a detailed breakdown between representational and non-representational activities with a report by an independent auditor.

The Procedure contains an appeals system under which challenges to the reduction percentage determination must be filed within 30 days of the Notice of Determination and are to be decided by an impartial arbitrator appointed by the American Arbitration Association. Disputed amounts are escrowed pending appeal.

While a notice must be individually signed and timely mailed, there is no form for a notice. Processing is faster, however, when the notice contains the objector’s name, address, local union number, and employer.

"11 Any right of a resignee to pay a reduced amount under this Procedure may or may not be superceded by the resignee’s check-off authorization."
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@Work**

USW Membership Department,
3340 Perimeter Hill Drive, Nashville, TN 37211

Name ____________________________
New Address ____________________________
City ____________________________
State ____________________________ Zip _________

See page 04.