Our goal this summer is a labor agreement, but not at any cost. We are coming together at a difficult time – there is no denying that. But there's also no denying that we've been through situations like this before. We will get through this together.

International Vice President Tom Conway
Basic Steel Industry Conference meeting on 2015 contract talks
We Are the Union
When I hired into Inland Steel, it was the company against the union - them against us. We were the bad guys confronted with a class system in the mill that many company people bought into. Management deemed themselves better and in some cases that thought prevails today.

There is a complacency in the workplace today – a complacency that is destroying the very heart of our union. Put aside the fluff and words that mean nothing. Workers must remember that we are the union.

The middle class is quickly becoming a thing of the past. We, both union and company, must understand that we are in this together. Globalization is not just a word. We do not know the future. But we certainly know the past. The fight goes on and the union must remain strong. And the union is you and I.

Jose E. Gutierrez, Retired Local 1010
East Chicago, Ind.

Speak Out for Ourselves
Recently the fight against Fast Track legislation was at an all-time high.

I spoke to the guys I work with about Rapid Response and all of the work we do to keep good union jobs. When I explained Fast Track to them, they all volunteered to call their representative in Congress. I have never had a better response in such a short time.

Everyone felt their voices were heard. They understand now that we cannot just sit back and let others speak for us - we have to speak out for ourselves.

Jim Rodgers, Local 550
Paducah, Ky.

Baseball Family, Union Family
Thank you for sending me your magazine. It heartened me to read in your spring issue that USW members make bats for Major League Baseball.

I am 96 and am a big fan of the game. My father and I used to root for Los Angeles when we lived there. Now I root for the Washington Nationals. We did this by bargaining for pensions to provide income and quality, affordable health care for retirees. Employers now are trying to make us choose between one and the other by passing all cost increases on to us. Since our pensions are not adjusted upwards and most retirees already pay premiums and deductibles, shifting more of the cost to retirees will only further erode our pensions.

Margaret Meyer
Washington, D.C.

Remember NAFTA Mistake?
My family owned and operated Dodger Sportswear, which employed 400 people at six factories in two states. The 225 employees in Eldora, Iowa, that I had to lay off permanently after closing the business did not find replacement jobs in the area and either moved away or scraped by on lower-paying jobs.

This was compounded when nearby Dayco Industries closed and moved to Mexico. We lost another 200 jobs. That was followed by our hospital closing, when another 200 jobs disappeared. These lost jobs were all a result, directly or indirectly, of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Eldora has never fully recovered.

Today, we are poised to repeat the mistakes of NAFTA with the Trans-Pacific Partnership. This will create even more hardship for rural communities that don’t have a diverse economy. Have we forgotten? We need to think before we vote, and remember what happened the last time when all of those factories closed.

Steve Throssel
Eldora, Iowa

USW Bat Man Retires
I was reading the spring issue of USW@Work and I noticed the picture on the cover from the Louisville Slugger factory. In the photo, a worker is sanding a bat on a lathe, and it looks to me like he is using the sandpaper on the wrong side. Is this the way it is done? Thanks.

Lee Rowlett
Newburgh, Ind.

Editor’s Note: We were not able to reach the subject of the photo, Local 1693 member Danny Luckett, since he recently retired after a 46-year career producing the world’s best bats. We suspect, however, that he might have been using double-sided sandpaper.

Retirees Under Pressure
Corporations, including USW employers in a variety of industries, are doing everything they can to get out of paying for retiree health benefits. For generations, our union has fought to negotiate contracts that allow workers to retire with dignity and security.

We did this by bargaining for pensions to provide income and quality, affordable health care for retirees. Employers now are trying to make us choose between one and the other by passing all cost increases on to us. Since our pensions are not adjusted upwards and most retirees already pay premiums and deductibles, shifting more of the cost to retirees will only further erode our pensions.

The impact is even worse for many surviving spouses, who often take huge cuts in their incomes when their spouse passes away. Given the rate at which insurance costs have increased, many of their pensions could be wiped out in a few short years.

We cannot allow these companies to continue the trend of padding their bottom lines and rewarding their executives at the expense of the men and women who built their businesses.

Don Lutes, retired Local 1010
Griffith, Ind.
The USW members who work at U.S. Steel’s Granite City Works in southwest Illinois have seen more than their share of tough times.

They’ve seen their industry in crisis several times over the past four decades, seen the products they make threatened by unfairly traded imports from China, South Korea and elsewhere, and seen their mill idled for months at a time as a result. Still, the members of one of the oldest locals in the USW have managed not just to survive but to thrive.

“We must be doing something right,” said second-generation Steelworker and Local 1899 member Mike McCabe, who will mark 20 years at the plant next March.

One thing that the workers at the plant have done right for nearly 140 years is make steel, and do it as well as anyone in the world.

“We make so many different types of steel that nobody else seems to make,” said Local 1899 President Dan Simmons, whose local represents 1,450 mill workers.

Company town

Situated in western Illinois, just across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, Granite City is the epitome of a mill town. Many of the homes and businesses in the town of 29,000 were built specifically to house and serve the workers at Granite City Steel, which began manufacturing kitchenware in the 1870s.

Workers there were members of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, which joined with the Steel Workers Organizing Committee in 1942 to form the United Steelworkers of America, now the USW.

Granite City Steel later became part of National Steel, which declared bankruptcy in 2002 and was bought by U.S. Steel in 2003.

A few of the original company’s 19th-century buildings remain on the grounds of the U.S. Steel plant, which today is still the town’s largest employer.

Just down the street, the Local 1899 headquarters acts as an office and meeting hall as well as a shrine, not just to the long and storied history of the local union and its members but also to the life of George Becker, the late International President who called Granite City home.
Good people, hard work

A living testament to that history is Keith Buckingham, a 28-year employee who is one of four generations of his family to work at the Granite City plant. His father and grandfather worked there, and his nephew was recently hired as well.

Buckingham, who said at least one member of his family has worked at the plant since 1893, got his start as a union activist early in life, helping his family bring food to striking workers when he was a teenager.

When asked what has kept the Granite City workers going strong for four generations, Buckingham had a ready answer.

“Good people, hard work,” he said. “The people here would do anything they can to keep this place running.”

Over the years that has meant not just working hard on the job but, when necessary, taking the fight for fair trade and good jobs to the White House and the halls of Congress.

This April, Simmons and other activists from the three USW locals in Granite City – Local 1899, Local 68 and Local 50 – traveled to Washington, D.C., to push legislators to support fair trade and oppose “Fast Track” trade legislation. Similarly, in 2009, Simmons, himself a second-generation Steelworker, testified before the Congressional Steel Caucus seeking stronger trade laws and stricter Buy American provisions.

“These are awesome middle-class jobs,” said Local 1899 Vice President Phil Chism. “That’s why they are worth fighting for.”

Economic crisis hits home

Simmons’ 2009 trip to the Capitol came during one of the darkest times for USW members in Granite City. U.S. Steel had idled the mill for more than six months due to the economic crisis, the first closure in 130 years.

The shutdown was devastating, Simmons said, not only for the workers and their families but for other residents and businesses throughout the region that depended on dollars spent by Granite City workers.

“It was like a stone in the water. The ripple effect was huge,” Simmons said. “I was hearing from businesses four towns away wanting to know when we’d be back online.”

The 2008 shutdown lasted six months, and memories of it were still fresh in workers’ minds when U.S. Steel, facing yet another crisis triggered by unfair trade, issued 60-day notices in March 2015 that the plant would be idled yet again.

Simmons said that while the threat of another shutdown was troubling, he was confident this time around that the downturn would be temporary. He was right – U.S. Steel announced in May that operations would continue and that only about 80 workers would be laid off.

“We knew things would pick up,” Simmons said. “We could have been primed for the picking, but a lot of factors started to go in our favor.”

One of those factors was that the Granite City plant, rather than relying on one sector of the economy to sustain its business, produces a wide variety of
steel used in a diverse array of industries.

From rocks to docks

The Granite City site is a fully integrated steel plant, the longest-running mill of its kind in North America. That means that the entire steelmaking process takes place at the same location, starting with raw materials and ending with finished products – “from the rocks to the docks” as Simmons describes it.

That integration has allowed the Granite City workers to produce a wide variety of hot-rolled, cold-rolled and coated steel products that satisfy a diverse customer base, including the pipe and tube, construction, container, agriculture and automotive industries, among others.

The ability of the Granite City workforce to adapt to customer needs and turn out a wide product line contributed to the plant’s success, McCabe said.

“We can change grades on the spot,” McCabe said. “We can make whatever they want. We’re very flexible and customer friendly.”

That flexibility has made Granite City one of the most consistently profitable mills in the company, Simmons said. It also has allowed the company to continue to invest in the plant, even during difficult times for the rest of the industry.

Earlier this year, U.S. Steel announced that it would temporarily shut down one of Granite City’s two blast furnaces to install a new continuous caster, which is expected to be up and running by mid-August.

That decision, along with a number of retirements and other changes, could potentially result in many of the laid-off USW members in Granite City returning to work by this fall, Simmons said.

Steelmaking success

Granite City’s success story is one that some thought was unlikely when U.S. Steel purchased the plant 12 years ago. At the time, industry observers expected the company to shut down and liquidate the mill, but it was profitable enough that U.S. Steel instead began to invest millions in capital improvements.

“U.S. Steel said, ‘these people really know how to make steel,’” Simmons said.

Hard work by USW members has always been the key to keeping the plant going strong, Buckingham said.

“You work hard here,” he said. “But you feel like you did something valuable at the end of the day.”

McCabe said the influence the USW has had at the plant has been a “huge factor” in helping it survive tough times.

“I don’t even know if I’d be here without the union,” he said. “Who would be?”

That survival through good and bad times has meant everything to the residents of Granite City, a town that likely wouldn’t exist at all if not for the iconic steel mill and its dedicated USW workforce.

“You can’t go anywhere without bumping into someone who has family or friends who work at the mill,” Simmons said. “This is still a steel town, and it always will be.”
USW negotiators, representing about 30,000 production, maintenance, office and technical workers at ArcelorMittal and U.S. Steel facilities across the country, have begun bargaining new contracts with the two companies.

Bargaining committees for ArcelorMittal and U.S. Steel first met in Pittsburgh in June, where representatives from each facility had an opportunity to raise issues that they would like to address either in the master agreements or with local management.

Those early discussions helped to determine overall goals for the negotiations. Members then returned home for several weeks of bargaining to address issues specific to each local, such as scheduling, contracting out and training, among other concerns.

The committees then returned to Pittsburgh in July to begin work on the two master agreements, which expire on Sept. 1 and cover issues including wages, benefits, safety, pensions and health care.

The master contracts cover 17,000 hourly workers at 14 U.S. Steel sites. There also are more than 2,000 Steelworkers at U.S. Steel sites who bargain contracts separately and have different expiration dates.

In addition, there are about 13,000 USW-represented workers at 11 ArcelorMittal locations under the master agreement and at five non-master facilities with common expiration dates.

As USW@Work went to press, USW members at Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI) plants were still on the job, working under the terms of their expired contract while negotiations continued on a new agreement.

The USW contract with ATI, which expired on June 30, covers about 2,500 workers at 11 locations in Massachusetts, Ohio, Oregon and Pennsylvania.

In the weeks leading up to the contract expiration date, the specialty metals producer began to hire potential replacement workers and extra security in preparation for a possible lockout. But as the clock ticked down to midnight on June 30, the two sides agreed to continue working past the deadline.

“We stand prepared to continue to negotiate and to search for an agreement that works for both parties, but we will not be bullied or intimidated by tactics or threats,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

ATI’s initial contract proposal demanded 145 concessions, including plans to increase contracting out union work, cut overtime and holiday pay, increase health care costs and weaken the grievance procedure.

The USW called on the company to back down from its regressive demands and instead work to reach a settlement that is fair to both sides.

“The company’s current ‘scorched earth’ approach is neither productive nor effective,” said International Vice President Tom Conway, who chairs the union’s bargaining committee. “We look forward to further discussions that are fruitful as we are committed to both our solidarity and a fair settlement.”

Fran Arabia, president of Local 1196 in Brackenridge, Pa., said the USW has been willing to compromise throughout the bargaining process, but the company has seemed intent on busting the union.

“Every step, we have moved,” Arabia said. “We understand the world economy, the steel industry and its economics and we are trying to do what’s right for our members and the community.”

USW members are the most productive and efficient steelmaking workforce in the world... We will get through this together, as we always have.”
“Thanks to decades of hard work and solidarity by the members of this union, these are good jobs, the kind that support families and form the backbone of our communities,” said International President Leo W. Gerard, chairman of the Basic Steel Industry Conference. “We know we have a summer of hard work ahead of us, but we are determined to make sure that does not change.”

**Industry in crisis**

The USW is entering bargaining as the industry is mired in a crisis. North American steelmakers are facing declining market share brought on by a glut of unfairly traded imports and excess capacity around the world due in large part to a decline in oil and gas drilling. As a result, both companies have laid off workers and suspended operations at some facilities.

“We know that our industry is facing pressure, and that presents challenges to both sides,” said District 1 Director David McCall, who chairs the Arcelor-Mittal bargaining committee.

“However, we know just as well that USW members are the most productive and efficient steelmaking work force in the world and that the demand for steel has always been cyclical – meaning the market will change. We will get through this together, as we always have.”

USW members at steel plants across the United States have participated in the union’s Building Power training program, and formed committees to mobilize, inform and educate their brothers and sisters about the issues at the table and generate participation in a series of solidarity actions.

Bargaining committee members and Communications Action Team leaders will utilize traditional printed updates, as well as email, text messaging, web pages and social media to keep members up to date.

“We have long-term working relationships with these companies, and we know we have a future in this industry,” said International Vice President Tom Conway, who chairs the union’s negotiations with U.S. Steel. “We’ve seen tough times before, but we will not allow the companies to use this crisis as an excuse to attack the union.”
Acting on a complaint brought by the USW to protect American jobs, the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) has finalized duties against illegally subsidized Chinese tires dumped into the U.S. market.

International President Leo W. Gerard applauded the July 14 decision and said it was the first case under modern dumping and countervailing duty law to be filed solely by workers.

“The outcome in the USW’s pursuit of this case will not only help protect USW members and their families, but also will help protect the jobs and futures of tens of thousands of workers employed within the U.S. tire industry,” he said.

In addition to helping active workers, International Vice President Tom Conway said, the ruling will be particularly meaningful to tens of thousands of retired rubber workers who depend on profits from their former employers to fund Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Associations that pay for medical and drug benefits.

“This will keep them healthy and living longer,” Conway said of retirees.

The ITC decision makes final preliminary duties imposed last November and this January on Chinese-made passenger and light truck tires. The tariff amounts are based on antidumping and countervailing duty margins set by the U.S. Commerce Department on June 12.

In its ruling, the Commerce Department said exporters of Chinese-made passenger and light truck tires dumped products into the United States at margins of 14.35 percent to 87.99 percent. The department also found that the Chinese government supported those exports with illegal subsidies from 20.33 percent to 100.77 percent.

Under trade laws, Commerce determines whether dumping or subsidizing exists and, if so, the margin of dumping or amount of the subsidy. The ITC decides whether there is ma-
terial injury or threat of material injury to the domestic industry. Decisions from both must be affirmative for relief to be granted.

Leading the fight

“I am proud of our union for taking the lead to fight for our industry,” said International Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson, who chairs the union’s rubber and plastics industry bargaining council.

“We could not sit idly by as our industry once again loses market share, production and jobs to unfairly traded Chinese imports.”

Gerard noted that the USW has been successful in making positive changes to trade laws. But he said much more needs to be done to make sure U.S. laws are fairly and fully enforced.

“Increasingly, the question of whether our trade laws are actually going to be enforced is being left to the workers, as companies and our government are either conflicted or have different priorities,” Gerard said.

“We’re sick and tired of China’s approach to trade and breaking of the rules. Its entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) has done little to stop its cheating.”

The USW pointed to positive changes in the industry since the preliminary tariffs were imposed. The union had urged the ITC to finalize them by determining that the U.S. tire manufacturing industry was materially injured by China’s trading practices.

Goodyear, for example, revived a shelved expansion plan at a USW plant in Gadsden, Ala., as a result of the preliminary tariffs and brought on new workers.

David Hayes, president of Local 12L at the Gadsden plant, told the ITC at a hearing in June that Goodyear has hired 188 new employees there since last year and brings on new workers nearly every week.

Working full out

Goodyear jumped at the chance to expand its presence in the midrange of the market after the duties were imposed and launched a new product line that raised the daily ticket at Gadsden to 22,200 tires at the end of 2014. This April, Goodyear launched another new tire line under its Kelly brand, pushing up production to 22,700 tires a day.

“We are working full out every shift and management canceled our normal July 4 shutdown, which meant more money in the pockets of our members and their families,” Hayes said. “Sales of our new tires are through the roof.”

This is the second time the USW has turned to trade law for relief from unfairly traded Chinese tires. The Obama administration imposed high tariffs on Chinese tire imports from September 2009 to September 2012 after the USW filed a complaint under Section 421 of the Trade Act of 1974.

“We could not sit idly by as our industry once again loses market share, production and jobs to unfairly traded Chinese imports.”

International Vice President Stan Johnson

Those tariffs bolstered the domestic industry and saved jobs. But immediately after they lapsed, Chinese imports skyrocketed to pre-tariff levels, the USW said in its latest complaint.

In his testimony, Johnson said the safeguard duties against Chinese tires obtained by the USW in 2009 made all the difference until their expiration in September 2013.

When the union brought that case, China had more than tripled its exports to the United States from 2004 to 2008, leading to job losses, factory closures and a struggling domestic industry.

“When this commission recommended relief and the president acted to impose safeguard duties, the turnaround was remarkable,” Johnson said.

Bleeding stopped

Imports from China dropped from a peak of 46 million tires in 2008 to just 30 million in 2010, dropped again in 2011, and stayed below 32 million in 2012, the year the tariffs expired.

“The bleeding in the domestic industry had stopped,” Johnson said. “Workers were called back, investments were made, production increased and market share was being regained. In short, the tariffs have worked.”

When the safeguard duties expired, importers were so eager to re-flood the U.S. market with Chinese tires that some of them set up warehouses in the United States as free trade zones so they wouldn’t have to wait for tires to enter the port.

The impact of the safeguard expiration was dramatic. From 2012 to 2014, U.S. imports of tires from China jumped by more than 84 percent, Johnson said.

The importance of the trade complaints filed by the USW in 2014 has come into sharp relief since preliminary duties were imposed last November and this January, Johnson said.

USW companies canceled planned shutdowns, launched new tire lines, ramped up production, added hours and shifts, hired new workers and made investments in new and improved equipment.

In 2013, after the safeguard tariffs expired, the Michelin plant in Tuscaloosa, Ala., laid off workers and stopped backfilling jobs lost to attrition. By May 2014, production had dropped to 12,000 tires a day from 13,500 in 2013. Of 60 to 65 tire building machines in the plant, about one third of them were idle and unmanned.

Duties make a difference

Mark Williams, former president of Local 351L in Tuscaloosa, said the preliminary duties on imports from China made a difference. As imports fell, optimism returned to the plant.

“All 100 workers that were laid off in 2013 have been hired back, and we have hired nearly 100 more new workers on top of that,” Williams said. “The new BF Goodrich tires we make are in very high demand, with sales far above what was forecast.”

Michelin, seeing a positive impact from the temporary tariffs, has told the union it is planning 70 new tire launches over the next five years as long as the market holds.

“Our experience shows the domestic industry can regain production, make new capital investments and jobs and compete successfully when unfairly traded imports from China are subject to duties and not flooding our market,” Williams said.
The U.S. Commerce Department, acting on a trade case brought by the USW and four domestic paper makers, has set preliminary tariffs on illegally subsidized uncoated paper from China and Indonesia.

International President Leo W. Gerard called the June 23 preliminary ruling “an important step in the effort to restore fair market conditions” to the domestic paper market.

More than 2,500 workers have already lost their jobs from the unfair trade practices identified in the trade complaints, said International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees bargaining in the union’s paper sector. “Restoring fair trade is our goal,” Geenen said. “Our members work hard and play by the rules and deserve that the rules be effectively and aggressively enforced.”

In January, the USW joined Domtar Corp., Finch Paper LLC., P.H. Glatfelter Co. and Packaging Corp. of America in filing countervailing, or anti-subsidy, petitions on uncoated paper from China and Indonesia, and antidumping petitions on imports from China, Indonesia, Australia, Brazil and Portugal.

The Commerce Department decides whether dumping has occurred and if foreign competitors were illegally subsidized. The U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC), an autonomous federal agency, determines whether an industry has been harmed by the unfair trade. Both must rule affirmatively before duties can be finalized.

Subsidies uncovered

Some uncoated paper exporters, the Commerce Department found, received subsidies of as much as 126 percent of their costs in China and 131 percent in Indonesia. At the low end, Chinese subsidies were 5.82 percent; Indonesia’s were 43.19 percent.

International trade law forbids subsidies when goods are exported because such government aid suppresses prices in what is supposed to be a free market. Some countries, like China, routinely flout the rules.

In a preliminary ruling, the ITC found the domestic industry was materially injured by the underpriced imports.
Rapid rush of imports

While overall demand for uncoated paper has been declining slightly, the USW maintains a rapid rush of imports into the market and aggressive price cutting is to blame for the domestic industry’s current problems.

“This isn’t the first time they’ve targeted the U.S. market,” Geenen said of China and Indonesia. “Product by product they engage in predatory practices to benefit their producers and workers at our expense. We bring a case and win, and they shift production in an effort to dominate the sector.”

Since the illegal trade practices began, two U.S. companies that manufactured uncoated paper went out of business and a third stopped making uncoated paper. Two firms closed uncoated paper mills, and three others shut down four machines that produced uncoated paper.

Communities suffered. In March 2014, International Paper permanently shuttered a 43-year-old uncoated paper mill in tiny Courtland, Ala., which boasts fewer than 800 residents.

More than 1,100 workers lost their jobs. Gone with them were an annual $86 million payroll and $2.3 million in tax payments that schools and the town and county governments depended on every year.

The U.S. Labor Department certified workers at seven of those operations to receive Trade Adjustment Assistance after concluding that imports “contributed significantly” to the closures.

Imports drop after duties

American workers.

Becoming good jobs matter, the USW takes on trade cases big and small as part of its fight for an international trading system that would better protect North American workers.

The USW is well known for initiating trade cases against China and other countries to protect jobs in vital industries including steel, paper, tires and rubber, and raw materials such as rare earth metals.

But the activism doesn’t stop at large industries. The USW, for example, recently lobbied trade enforcement agencies to maintain tariffs on citric acid to protect jobs at a USW-represented facility in Dayton, Ohio.

Imports drop after duties

Citric acid, a relatively small industry in the United States, is a commodity chemical. More than 1 million tons are produced every year by fermentation. It is widely used as a soft drink flavoring and as a pH-adjusting agent in creams and gels, among many other uses.

There are three main producers in the United States, the Archer Daniels Midland Co., Cargill Inc. and Tate & Lyle Ingredients America in Dayton, where the USW represents production workers. There are also a few smaller manufacturers.

The USW joined producers in pushing for the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) to continue duties on citric acid made in China and Canada.

After a countervailing duty order was issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce in May 2009, citric acid imports from 18 Chinese companies dropped significantly.

The American industry and the USW argued that dumping would likely continue or recur if that order was revoked, and the ITC agreed.

The decision was a victory for the USW, which argued that the tariffs helped to preserve good-paying jobs at Tate & Lyle, where the union represents about 53 production and maintenance workers. By law the ITC must review tariffs every 5 years in what is called a “sunset review” case.

“It was not that long ago that the Dayton facility was in serious jeopardy due to the unfair imports,” Carl Vineyard, a USW staff representative, told the ITC. “During the period of the original investigation, the plant was losing money and capital investment was not justified.”

Vineyard said the plant provides good manufacturing jobs with relatively high pay. He estimated that the Tate & Lyle plant supports four to five other jobs for each of its own manufacturing jobs.

Good jobs in demand

Since the tariffs went into effect, workers have negotiated wage increases in Dayton, Vineyard said. The most recent agreement provided 2.5 percent wage increases for 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Highly desirable in Dayton, the jobs at Tate & Lyle routinely attract 200 to 300 applications for each open position, Vineyard said.

“These are jobs that provide a good living wage, wages that you can raise a family on, a wage that provides not just basic sustenance, but disposable income, money to purchase some of the extra things, things that our brothers and sisters produce right here in the United States,” he said.

Tate & Lyle and their employees did more than ask the U.S. government to impose duties to help protect the company and their own jobs.

“We worked together to improve efficiencies in our competitive position in the market,” Vineyard said. “The workers at the Dayton plant understand that they must do their part to make operations efficient and cost competitive.”
The USW is supporting U.S. steelmakers in a trade case that seeks to stop China, India, Italy, South Korea and Taiwan from destroying the domestic market for corrosion-resistant steel.

On June 3, six major steelmakers filed petitions with the U.S. Commerce Department and the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) seeking antidumping and countervailing duties against the five countries.

Antidumping duties are intended to offset the amount by which a product is sold at less than fair value, or “dumped,” in the United States. Countervailing duties are intended to offset illegal subsidies that are provided by foreign governments to their producers.

International President Leo W. Gerard called on trade authorities to act swiftly to defend the American workers whose jobs are threatened by these illegal import tactics.

“By any measure, USW members are the most productive and efficient steelmaking work force on the planet,” Gerard said. “We cannot allow these family supporting, community sustaining jobs to disappear because our competitors continue unfairly dumping their subsidized products on our shores.”

The USW represents about 35,000 workers who produce corrosion-resistant steel at facilities operated by three of the petitioners - U.S. Steel Corp., ArcelorMittal USA and AK Steel Corp. Other steelmakers participating in the trade action are Nucor Corp., Steel Dynamics Inc. and California Steel.

Specifically, facilities impacted by unfair trade include U.S. Steel’s Gary Works and operations in Clairton, Pa., and Fairfield, Ala. ArcelorMittal facilities include operations in East Chicago, Ind., Cleveland, Ohio, and Weirton, W.Va. Affected AK facilities include Ashland, Ky., and Mansfield, Ohio.

**Coated sheet steel**

Corrosion-resistant steel is sheet steel that has been coated or plated with corrosion- or heat-resistant metal to extend service life. Most of the products at issue are steel coated with zinc, aluminum or any of several zinc aluminum alloys.

Corrosion resistant steel is widely used in construction applications such as roofing, siding, hardware and bridge decks, guardrails and culverts. It is also used in the manufacture of automobiles, trucks, appliances, industrial equipment and agricultural equipment.

The industry action kicked off a lengthy investigative review.

The ITC, an independent quasi-judicial federal agency, must determine whether the industry is facing harm. The Department of Commerce will determine whether dumping has occurred and if foreign competitors were subsidized.

Both agencies must rule affirmatively before duties can be imposed.

Steel producers in the five countries covered by the petitions have massive capacity to produce corrosion-resistant steel and have been exporting large and increasing volumes of their unfairly low-priced products to the United States.

As a result, U.S. steelmakers report significant declines in production, shipments and profits. In their complaints, they blame dumping of products at artificially low prices and significant illegal subsidies provided to foreign producers by their governments.

Foreign steelmakers in the five named countries benefited from a wide range of subsidies not available to their American counterparts, the petitioners allege. They identified 48 subsidy programs in China, 88 in India, 12 in Italy, 43 in South Korea and 22 in Taiwan.

**System overhaul needed**

Unless the U.S. government imposes duties to counteract the illegal subsidies and dumping, the American industry believes that the devastating price declines they have been experiencing are likely to continue.

The entire investigative process will take approximately one year, with final determinations of dumping, subsidization and injury likely occurring next summer.

Citing global overcapacity in steel and continued abuse of the trading system by foreign companies and their governments, International Vice President Tom Conway called for major overhaul of U.S. trade enforcement.

“For decades, American workers have paid the price of failed trade policies and inconsistent enforcement of flawed trade agreements,” Conway said.

“Congress and the administration need to take responsibility for changing the system that has cost more than 1 million manufacturing jobs and shuttered thousands of factories, mainly in industries that employ USW members.”
A groundswell of grassroots activism by USW members injected new energy into the labor movement, shed new light on trade issues and nearly derailed the effort by Congressional leaders to push through Fast Track trade legislation.

And while the House and Senate eventually passed the Fast Track bill, rank-and-file union members can be proud of the work they did to make their voices heard, work that proved labor still has the power to affect the debate in Washington, D.C.

“At the beginning of this process, few of the elite, free-trade orthodoxy expected Fast Track to face the kind of backlash from voters and progressive politicians that it eventually encountered,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “They assumed that it would pass with little problem, but the voices of workers calling for fair trade echoed across the globe.”

Those voices included USW active and retired members who participate in Rapid Response, Women of Steel, Next Generation and the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR).

The nationwide outcry led legislators in both houses of Congress to initially block the bill to grant President Barack Obama the authority to negotiate trade deals that Congress may vote up or down but not amend.

However, with last-minute arm-twisting and promises of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for displaced workers, House and Senate leaders eventually were able to secure enough votes to push the bill through both chambers.

Those votes cleared the way for approval of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed trade agreement between the United States and 11 other nations along the Pacific Ocean. The TPP would be the largest free trade deal in U.S. history, covering countries that produce 40 percent of the world’s gross domestic product.

Workers are skeptical

Obama and advisers have said the deal – which would lower tariffs, establish new rules governing intellectual property, broaden an extra-judicial procedure for mitigating disputes between nations and multinational corporations, and establish new labor and environmental standards – is important to maintain the United States’ economic influence in the face of increasing competition from China.

But workers, as the protests against Fast Track showed, are justifiably skeptical of such trade agreements given the experience with the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

In its first 20 years, NAFTA led to a $181 billion U.S. trade deficit, the related loss of 1 million net U.S. jobs and growing income inequality, according to a report published by the organization Public Citizen.

“Today’s trade system has left too many behind as corporations and the wealthy have harvested the profits,” Gerard said. “It’s clear we need a new approach to trade. Our current policies are outdated and ineffective.”

A new approach must include stronger rules to prevent overseas competitors from dumping products at below-market cost. It must also stop foreign governments from illegally subsidizing their own producers and put an end to currency manipulation that artificially inflates the prices of American-made goods. In addition, enforcement of these rules must be accelerated so that workers and companies don’t have to suffer job losses and factory closures before action can be taken.

“Our trade negotiators and those from other nations are now on notice that the TPP needs to promote the interests of working families rather than continuing to undermine them,” Gerard said. “The labor movement and our allies showed unprecedented unity in this fight. With the solidarity we demonstrated during this struggle, there is hope for change.”
WHEELING-NISSHIN: COATING WITH USW

Dale Weisenborn (retired)

Photos by Steve Dietz

Jeff Huff

Keith Bodnar

Photos by Steve Dietz
Dip it and ship it. That’s a simple, shorthand explanation of what USW members do at Wheeling-Nisshin Inc., a producer of corrosion-resistant steel in Follansbee, W.Va.

The wholly owned subsidiary of Nisshin Steel of Japan employs 117 members of Local 1280 to produce hot-dipped, coated steel products used in a wide variety of markets and industries.

“It’s a good place to work,” said Local 1280 President Forrest Wietfeld, now in his fifth term.

The job of producing quality coated steel products in a competitive marketplace like the United States is, of course, much more complicated than the phrase “dip and ship” implies.

The company purchases coils of steel from different suppliers and applies coatings such as molten zinc, aluminum and magnesium onto the steel before it is rolled back up and delivered to customers.

Common end uses include appliances, automotive products and products for the construction industry including metal buildings, roofing, architectural panels, doors and frames. Other uses include heating, ventilation and air conditioning duct work, bakeware and highway safety equipment and products.

The company produces seven products in Follansbee: Aluminized type 1, Aluminized type 2, Aluminized 409ss, Galvalume, Galvanize, Galvanneal and ZAM, made with a zinc, aluminum and magnesium alloy.

If done correctly, Wietfeld said, the proprietary process used by Wheeling-Nisshin bonds the coatings to the ferrous, or iron, materials in the steel.

“It doesn’t get coated like paint,” he said. “Basically, we’re heating the steel, changing the molecular structure of the steel so when it goes through hot dip it bonds like an alloy.”

When Wheeling-Nisshin was first established in 1986, the intention was to create an international joint venture between Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Corp., and Nisshin Steel Co. of Japan. At that time, there were no Japanese-owned or partially owned steel companies in the United States.

The company said it chose Follansbee because the property was available and close to steel suppliers and there was a skilled blue-collar work force in the area.

Wietfeld, an employee of Wheeling-Nisshin since 1988, said the local was chartered a year or two after he hired on and negotiated its first contract soon afterwards.

“We have good labor-management relations,” he said. “I can walk over and see the VP and chairman anytime I want, knock on the door, sit down and have a conversation. It’s kind of the way I think it should always be.”

There have been occasional difficulties negotiating contracts, and the dismal economy has led to sporadic short-term layoffs since 2009.

“We’ve never had a strike,” Wietfeld said. “We’ve turned down a couple of contracts, two in our history, and the ones that ended up passing just needed to be massaged here and there.”

In 1986, ground was broken on former Wheeling-Pittsburgh property in Follansbee for the company’s first hot-dip coating line, the aluminizing and galvanizing line, or AGL. The line began operations in 1988.

The second line, the first in the country to specialize in light-gauge products, was completed in 1993. It added Galvalume to the company’s product offerings.

In 2008, Nisshin Steel acquired all of the outstanding shares formerly owned by Wheeling-Pittsburgh, which had struggled through the years with bankruptcies and takeovers.

Later in 2008, the Russian steelmaker Severstal acquired Wheeling-Pittsburgh’s holdings for $1.25 billion from Esmark Inc., which had taken control of the steelmaker in 2007.

In 2012, Wheeling-Nisshin invested $28 million to introduce ZAM, a sheet steel product made with zinc, aluminum and magnesium. The mix of metals is said to make ZAM resistant to scratches and more long lasting.
USW members and allies from unions around the world stepped up their campaign to shed light on the Swiss mining conglomerate Glencore and its consistent pattern of abusing workers.

In June, members of Local 235A in Corpus Christi, Texas, traveled to Houston to enlist the help of the Swiss government to pressure the company to end its nine-month lockout of the local’s 450 members at Sherwin Alumina, which is owned by Glencore.

The workers delivered a letter from International President Leo W. Gerard to Houston’s Swiss consulate calling on the Swiss government to pressure Glencore to uphold traditional Swiss values of respecting workers and supporting unions.

The letter delivery was part of a widening campaign by IndustriALL, the global coalition that represents 50 million workers in 140 countries, to put an end to Glencore’s anti-worker behavior.

“Switzerland has a long history of respecting the dignity of workers and supporting collective bargaining. However, Glencore’s behavior abroad tarnishes Switzerland’s good name and reputation,” Gerard wrote.

“Glencore is displacing communities, seeking unnecessary cuts from its unionized work force worldwide, driving down living standards for workers and destroying communities and cultures.”

Anti-union campaigns

In addition to the Sherwin lockout, Glencore has been accused of launching anti-union campaigns against mine workers in South Africa and Colombia, subjecting workers at Peru’s Antamina mine to health and safety hazards and refusing to re-hire union workers at Australia’s Collinsville mine.

Local 235A members have been out of work at the Sherwin Alumina plant since the company locked them out on Oct. 11. The USW has repeatedly offered to return to work and continue bargaining, but Sherwin has refused.

The delivery of the letter to the Houston consulate was the first in a series of similar events. USW members later delivered copies of Gerard’s letter to Swiss embassies in Atlanta, Boston, Los Angeles, New York, Ottawa, San Francisco, Vancouver and Washington, D.C., while members of other IndustriALL unions delivered letters to embassies in Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Peru and South Africa.

“Switzerland has a good reputation for respecting workers rights and collective bargaining. However, Glencore’s actions abroad are giving the country a bad name and its behavior would not be tolerated in Switzerland,” said Glen Mpufane, IndustriALL’s director of mining.

The consulate and embassy visits followed a trip to Switzerland in May by Local 235A members. There they met with IndustriALL allies, political leaders and human rights activists and delivered a message of solidarity at the Glencore annual meeting.

Meanwhile, the USW vowed to continue to pursue unfair labor practice charges against Sherwin regarding the lockout. The union filed an appeal with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) general counsel in May after NLRB Region 16 decided not to issue a complaint against the company concerning the legality of the lockout.
The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has certified the USW as the exclusive bargaining representative for production, maintenance and warehouse workers at a Chinese-owned copper tubing producer in Alabama.

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

The company appealed. A three-member NLRB panel heard the company’s case and rejected its objections to the workers’ organizing drive. The election was certified on May 28.

“The state of Alabama promised the company $120 million in tax breaks over 20 years, so we want to ensure that these are good jobs and Golden Dragon employs local workers,” District 9 Director Daniel Flippo said.

Flippo said the company showed where it stands on the issue when it originally brought a team of workers from China to assist in running the facility, located near the Wilcox County community of Pine Hill.

“The Golden Dragon work force has voted to have a voice in their workplace, and we will stand up and fight back with them to help them gain the dignity and respect they deserve,” Flippo said.

During the organizing drive, workers expressed concern over workplace safety, fairness, job security, discipline, wages and the cost of health benefits.

Fentre Graves, a USW organizer who helped with the campaign, said employees were pleased with the results. The union has made a request to begin bargaining and is prepared to defend the win if the company continues to resist with further appeals, she said.

“We will fight for the Golden Dragon workers,” she said. “One day longer, one day stronger!”

Anti-union campaign
Well over 65 percent of the work force signed union cards at the start of the election drive, but that initial support was eroded by an anti-union campaign supported by Republican Gov. Robert Bentley, who urged workers to vote no.

The $100 million plant was a poster child for Bentley’s campaign to bring jobs to the state. It was supposed to be an example of how companies could be lured to the South where right-to-work (for less) laws are the norm.

The factory opened in May 2014, welcomed to one of the poorest counties in Alabama with a generous package of incentives that included tax abatements, infrastructure improvements and training funds.

The factory has an annual production capacity of 60,000 tons of copper tubing, which will be used mainly by the air conditioner and refrigerator industries.

Flippo congratulated workers at Golden Dragon on their hard-fought victory.

“Workers need a strong voice with management to ensure that they are treated fairly on the job,” he said. “Union contracts have proven to be effective tools to improve occupational health and safety as well as promote and enforce civil rights and fight harassment, prejudice and other common forms of on-the-job discrimination.”

The union has filed a charge with the NLRB against the employer, seeking to reinstate a union supporter, Joseph Boykins, who was discharged during the campaign.

“We ran a good, clean campaign,” Boykins told local news reporters. “I’m happy that people had the courage to put it through.”
After 143 days on the picket line, members of Local 13-1 at Marathon Oil’s Galveston Bay refinery in Texas ratified a new contract and a back-to-work agreement covering some 1,200 strikers.

Local 13-1 was one of the first locals to stand up to the oil industry when the USW called a selective unfair labor practice strike last February, the largest walkout by U.S. refinery and chemical plant workers in 35 years. And it was the last local still on strike when it ratified the new agreement on June 23.

“It has been a tough ordeal, but they all stood strong,” Local 13-1 President Lee Medley said of his members, who ratified the new four-year agreement on June 23. Employees were scheduled to clock into work beginning on July 6.

None of the local’s members crossed the picket line during the long dispute, said Larry Burchfield, a Local 13-1 member who is on the National Oil Bargaining Policy Committee.

“This solidarity and sovereignty will be with us for years to come,” he added.

In May, the local’s members rejected Marathon’s “last, best and final” contract offer, which the union maintained would have eliminated 150 jobs and minimized safety standards.

Safety is an especially sensitive topic at the Galveston Bay plant, located in Texas City. The standards were improved after 2005, when an explosion at the facility, then owned by BP and called the Texas City refinery, killed 15 and injured more than 170 others.

At the Galveston Bay refinery, Marathon had wanted to reduce the number of full-time union health and safety representatives from eight to two. The contract settled on six positions and related facilities in California, Kentucky, Texas and Washington, and expanded twice before a tentative four-year agreement was reached March 12 with Royal Dutch Shell, the lead bargainer for the industry.

At its peak, the unfair labor practice strike involved nearly 7,000 USW-represented workers at 12 refineries and three related facilities that account for about one-fifth of domestic refinery capacity.

Although the agreement with Shell set a national pattern on wages, benefits and safety for some 30,000 workers at over 230 facilities, it did not immediately end all of the work stoppages. Talks then turned to local issues at nine of the striking plant sites.

**Strikes still on in April**

Some 3,000 USW members at five facilities were still engaged in strikes by the end of April. From the Midwest to the Gulf Coast, they staffed picket lines through all kinds of weather as union negotiators pressed for a fair resolution of issues ranging from the right to bargain over corporate policy to the number of union health and safety representatives.

Of the five, Local 13-1 members at Marathon Petroleum’s South Houston Green Power Cogeneration plant were the first to return to work. They were followed by LyondellBasell Industries’ Houston refinery; BP PLC’s Whiting, Ind., refinery; the BP/Husky Energy joint venture refinery near Toledo, Ohio, and Marathon’s Galveston Bay refinery. All eventually obtained the national pattern.

The 42 unfair labor practice strikers at the Marathon cogeneration plant, who had walked the picket line since the strike’s beginning on Feb. 1, reached a tentative agreement on April 28 that included the national pattern and contract language covering drug and alcohol policy and fatigue. The contract was ratified on May 2.

Once BP accepted the longstanding right of Local 7-1 in Whiting, Ind., to bargain over company policies, language that existed in the previous contract, a tentative agreement was reached on April 30. Members ratified the contract May 11 and began returning to work May 18.

Over 400 members of Local 13-227 walked picket lines at LyondellBasell Industries’ Houston Refinery beginning on Feb. 1 to press for the continuation of premium pay for excessive overtime.

The company issued its last, best and final offer on April 11, but the union members overwhelmingly voted it down because the proposal eliminated premium pay. After the rejection, LyondellBasell implemented its offer and asked strikers to cross the picket line and return to work.

The USW filed unfair labor practice charges over LyondellBasell’s refusal to bargain in good faith by prematurely declaring impasse in the talks, refusing to bargain over mandatory subjects and unilaterally changing terms and conditions of employment in the absence of an impasse.

Eventually, the USW and LyondellBasell returned to the bargaining table, and the members ratified a new agreement May 7 that included double-time provisions for excessive overtime.

**BP/Husky workers return**

On May 30, shortly after 350 strikers at the BP/Husky refinery in Toledo, Ohio, offered to return to work while continuing to bargain, Local 1-346 negotiators reached a tentative agreement with the company.

The local’s members ratified the contract on June 3 and began returning to work on June 8. The company dropped demands to remove some workers from the bargaining unit and to eliminate active grievances and pending arbitrations.
Members of Local 13-1 at the Marathon refinery in Galveston Bay, Texas, rally at the corporate office in Texas City. Photo by Scott Weaver.
Some 300 USW members in the health care and public sectors were learning to use collective strength to improve bargaining results as part of annual conferences that were getting under way just as USW@Work went to press.

The USW Health Care Workers Council and the Public Employees Conference planned to hold joint plenary sessions and social gatherings when they met in Pittsburgh on July 13 and 14 at the Sheraton at Station Square hotel.

However, they scheduled separate workshops and leadership training sessions for each sector geared to their specific issues and challenges, particularly as related to bargaining.

“Both sessions are important opportunities for our health care and public sector members to learn together and to share experiences,” said International Vice President Fred Redmond, who oversees the membership councils.

“Both sectors are facing challenges in the workplace and at the bargaining table. The goal of the conference is to not only discuss problems but to discuss solutions and strategies.”

**Bargaining and action**

The Public Employees Conference was set to focus on bargaining and action. Topics included how to prepare for contract negotiations, how to analyze public budgets, what the Affordable Health Care Act means at the bargaining table, the best ways to approach arbitration and grievances, public pension myths and realities, and what has worked in past fights to protect bargaining agreements from cuts and attacks.

Bargaining is rarely easy, particularly in the public sector where taxpayer-funded employers increasingly say no to workers’ requests. With that in mind, the public employee conference called on Joseph Twarog, a highly experienced union negotiator and a chief bargaining instructor for the AFL-CIO.

Twarog was scheduled to teach a series of workshops designed to strengthen bargaining skills and walk members through a tough municipal bargaining exercise.

Workshop topics included how to analyze public employer claims that they have no money, making information requests that can get results and tips for handling the table effectively.

**Common challenges**

For health care workers in the United States and Canada, the meetings offered members opportunities to reflect on common challenges and to learn how to use collective strength to overcome them.

At the last conference, members requested longer breakout sessions and more time with program facilitators so the curriculum was revamped to accommodate that.

Health care members were asked to register for one of three leadership track training sessions in membership engagement, collective bargaining and politics in policy.

The membership engagement track focused on building power around health and safety issues, contract negotiations, labor-management relations and grievances.

In collective bargaining, instructors covered the legal requirements and responsibilities of bargaining and the topic of how to convince the boss that union proposals are in their best interest.

The politics and policy track helped members to frame discussions on safe staffing as a health and safety issue, to conduct effective conversations with elected representatives and to plan a lobby day.
Workers from the Huhtamaki packaging plant in Commerce, Calif., continue to build support from near and far in their effort to fight for better treatment from their employer.

In May, workers from the Commerce plant attended the annual meeting of fast food giant Chipotle in Denver and urged the company to support the workers by putting pressure on Huhtamaki, a major supplier of packaging for Chipotle products.

In June, Commerce workers joined union members from Huhtamaki plants around the world in Finland to establish a global labor network. The meeting included workers from plants in the United States, Australia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Russia, Sweden and Turkey.

With the support of the USW and the AFL-CIO, workers at Huhtamaki’s Commerce plant, located southeast of Los Angeles, have attempted to organize to improve working conditions, raise wages and strengthen their voice on the job.

Many workers there barely make above minimum wage and are often forced to work in nearly 100 degree heat. Huhtamaki has largely ignored the workers’ concerns.

“Chipotle says it holds itself to a higher standard – this is a company that prides itself on creating ‘Food with Integrity,’ ” Duane Calloway, a 7-year employee of Huhtamaki, told Chipotle shareholders.

“If that’s true, Chipotle should insist that those same standards apply to suppliers like Huhtamaki.”

**Global packaging maker**

Huhtamaki, a Finnish conglomerate that produces cartons and containers for food and other consumer goods, has 15,000 employees at 61 facilities in 30 countries, including 3,500 workers at 21 facilities in the United States. Workers at four of those plants are members of the USW.

Last spring, the USW and the AFL-CIO released a report on Huhtamaki that demonstrated how the company’s expansion strategy in the United States was based on creating low-wage, precarious employment while threatening the job security and living standards of unionized employees.

The report can be found by visiting usw.org and searching for “Huhtamaki.”

In 2014, Huhtamaki paid nearly half a million dollars to an anti-union firm to prevent workers from organizing.

“Huhtamaki should use these resources to pay us fairly, so we can afford basic costs like child care,” said Levi Ross, a machine operator and a member of the elected worker committee in Commerce.

Ross joined participants at the global network meeting to share stories about Huhtamaki’s union-busting activities, including holding captive-audience meetings and retaliating against union supporters by altering schedules and denying time off.

**More pressure promised**

Participants in the global network, organized through the IndustriALL Global Union, agreed to a common set of goals, including fighting for better working conditions and developing a constructive relationship with management at all of the company’s plants.

Huhtamaki Vice President Sami Pauni delivered a brief presentation from the company, but left the meeting when delegates raised questions about the company’s union-busting activities.

“I came all the way to Finland hoping to have a serious dialogue with the company,” Ross said. “I feel like they turned their back on me and the workers in Commerce.”

The global network promised to continue to put pressure on the company until all of its workers’ concerns are addressed.

“This meeting was only the first step in the fight to restore the rights of the workers and trade unions at Huhtamaki’s plants,” said Jyrki Raina, IndustriALL general secretary. “The struggle will continue as long as the owners of the company will not agree to respect the workers’ rights and start a serious dialogue with their unions.”
The USW campaign to organize adjunct professors is moving forward with contract talks set to begin at one Pennsylvania university and a favorable National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) bargaining order at another.

The Adjunct Faculty Association of the USW (AFA-USW) is preparing to begin negotiations this summer for a first contract at Robert Morris University (RMU) in suburban Pittsburgh.

“We’ll be getting to the table to start negotiations very soon,” said organizer Jeff Cech, who noted that RMU did not appeal the result of an election in March and is “completely willing to start bargaining.”

Patricia Droz, who served on an organizing committee of RMU instructors, said the desire for economic security was a big motivator for those who voted yes.

“I would like a benefits-bearing job, and I’d like some path to full time, should I stay at Robert Morris,” she said. “And this is what my colleagues, my part-time colleagues, have been bemoaning as well. They want these things.”

With their vote in March, RMU adjuncts became the third faculty group to vote for the AFA-USW. Part-time instructors at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh chose the union in 2012. Adjuncts at Point Park University, also in Pittsburgh, joined last summer.

**Management appeals**

Recognition at Duquesne, where the administration argues it is exempt from the NLRB’s jurisdiction because of its Roman Catholic identity, has long been delayed by management appeals.

On June 5, however, a regional National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) office in Pittsburgh ruled that adjunct professors at Duquesne may form a union with the AFA-USW. Duquesne immediately announced its intention to appeal.

The NLRB decision followed a three-day hearing held in April to determine whether the board would require Duquesne to abide by the results of a June 2012 election.

In May 2012, a month before the vote was held, Duquesne and the USW entered into an election agreement, but the university quickly withdrew, asserting its religious exemption from the board.

The Pittsburgh NRLB office denied Duquesne’s motion to withdraw from the agreement. When the vote was held in June, the university’s adjuncts overwhelmingly cast ballots for the union.

Duquesne filed a motion to vacate the election that September. The appeal languished before the national NLRB until the board adopted a new two-pronged jurisdictional standard in cases involving religious colleges and universities. That standard came from a case involving Pacific Lutheran University.

Under the new standards, a school must hold itself out as providing a religious educational environment to be exempt from NLRB oversight. The school must also hold out that its faculty members perform specific roles in maintaining that environment.

The NLRB regional director in Pittsburgh found that Duquesne met the first criteria established under Pacific Lutheran but did not meet the second part of the test.

Organizing campaigns are also underway by the AFA-USW in western Pennsylvania at the Community College of Beaver County and in eastern Ohio at Youngstown State University.
A history of truancy kept Charles Strothers from graduating from high school. He earned his GED certificate but said he still “ran the streets” of Pittsburgh for more than five years.

Eventually, Strothers, the second oldest of seven children, was arrested, as were all five of his brothers.

“There’s no reason for it. I was hanging around the wrong people, I guess,” he said. “You have to find a better way.”

Strothers found one through the Breaking the Chains of Poverty (BTCP) program, a partnership between the USW and the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) that provides training and educational opportunities for unemployed or underemployed people seeking to turn their lives around and find rewarding careers.

“Too many people don’t get a good shake in life and giving people a second chance to get a good shake in life and be able to meet their dreams and aspirations is important,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “It’s important for the Steelworkers to be there to help them.”

With help from the APRI and the USW, Strothers, a BTCP program graduate and single parent, became a successful apprentice electrician with IBEW Local 5 in Pittsburgh.

“We have been able to provide people not only with the skill set, but with the motivation and the opportunity to contribute to society,” International Vice President Fred Redmond said. “It allows us to help people help themselves. That is the key.”

Labor Secretary honors grads

The BTCP program has been so successful in helping people climb out of poverty in Western Pennsylvania that it caught the attention of U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez, who showed up to honor the program’s most recent graduates at the USW headquarters in Pittsburgh.

“Education is the great equalizer,” Perez told the group before presenting them with their graduate certificates. “Education can punch your ticket to the middle class.”

Perez said the BTCP program falls directly in line with the priorities of his Labor Department, as well as those of the Obama administration – making sure all people, regardless of their backgrounds, receive equal opportunities to improve their lives.

The Pittsburgh chapter of the APRI works with the Housing Authority of Pittsburgh and the group Growth Through Energy and Community Health (GTECH) to promote family-supporting jobs, union membership and economic progress for minorities, the poor and the underemployed.

The USW began its partnership with the APRI Education Fund and launched the BTCP program in 2009. This program has helped to train more than 200 individuals and has placed 62 percent of them in jobs.

I was homeless before

“I was homeless before,” said BTCP graduate Beetesha Kearney. “Breaking the Chains of Poverty has been an integral part of moving me forward and changing the path that my life had been on.”

Graduate Michael Jordan, who was in his 50s when he came to the program, got a later start than most. Jordan said he’d been working in warehouse and janitorial jobs but was not satisfied.

“Through Breaking the Chains, I was able to get a career – not just a job, but a career,” Jordan said. “It’s never too late. You just have to have the determination.”

Gary Holmes, one of the program’s newest graduates, spoke on behalf of his classmates at the graduation ceremony, telling the crowd that his group was grateful for the opportunity to remake themselves.

“I knew I wouldn’t get many more opportunities to change my life,” he said. “Thank you.”
Oliver Montgomery, retired director of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) and a lifelong labor and civil rights activist, died on June 6. He was 86.

“Oliver dedicated his entire life to racial equality and worker’s rights,” said SOAR’s current director, Jim Centner. “He was a tireless advocate who improved the quality of life for our active and retired members.”

Montgomery retired from the International Union in 1999 after leading SOAR, the union’s politically-active retiree organization, for five years, and serving 24 years as a research and financial analyst.

A third-generation steelworker, Montgomery was born in Youngstown, Ohio, on May 31, 1929, and followed his father, grandfather and other relatives into the city’s steel mills.

He joined Local 2163 in 1948 when he hired in at Youngstown Sheet and Tube Co. (YS&T). In 1950, he transferred to Local 1942, which represented workers at YS&T’s Brier Hill facility.

**War veteran**

A Korean War veteran, Montgomery worked his way through college while rising through the union’s ranks. He served Local 1942 as a shop steward, grievance chairperson, job evaluation chairperson, education chairperson, workers’ compensation chairperson and Civil Rights Committee secretary, among other positions.

A founder of the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Credit Union, Montgomery served as its vice president until he joined the USW’s Research Department in 1969. He was named to head SOAR in 1994 by the late International President George Becker.

In addition to his Steelworker career, Montgomery became an influential leader in the civil rights movement. He worked with Cesar Chavez, A. Philip Randolph and Martin Luther King Jr. helping to organize grape and lettuce boycotts for the United Farm Workers, and serving the Negro American Labor Council as an organizer, national vice president and national secretary.

In 1972, Montgomery helped to found the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU). He served as an executive council member and president of the Pittsburgh chapter.

In a eulogy, CBTU President Emeritus William Lucy called Montgomery a man of courage.

Hundreds of USW members, retirees and other progressive activists rallied in Cleveland in support of Social Security, Medicare and other programs designed to provide security for retired Americans.

The spring rally was organized jointly by the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR), the AFL-CIO, the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) and Cleveland-area retiree groups.

The event was intended to coincide with a meeting – held a block away – of the White House Conference on Aging, one of five regional forums aimed at shaping future government policies toward senior citizens.

SOAR President Bill Pienta told the rally that lawmakers in Washington must not force seniors to pay the price for a short-sighted political agenda by forfeiting benefits they’ve worked for their whole lives.

“We must increase and expand the benefits of Social Security and improve the annual cost of living adjustments,” he said. “We can pay for this by scrapping the cap on wealthy individuals and asking them to pay contributions on all their earnings.”

**Retirees rally in support of Social Security, Medicare**

Rallying in Cleveland for Social Security and Medicare

Photo by Steve Dietz

**Former Soar Director & Labor and Civil Rights Activist**

OLIVER MONTGOMERY DIES
Under current rules, Americans only pay Social Security taxes on their earnings up to $118,500.

The rally in Cleveland included dozens of retired and active USW members as well as Rapid Response activists and members of the union’s Next Generation program.

“Like hundreds of thousands of other working men and women, he served his country. He served with distinction and honor. And like many, his daily racial experiences contradicted his sense of right and wrong,” Lucy said.

“It was his union, the United Steelworkers, though that gave him hope that one day workers, in general and workers of color specifically, would have a level playing field, where service and sacrifice would be the key to a better life for them, their families, their communities and our society.”

As an activist, Montgomery organized marches, demonstrations and boycotts. He was involved in the Nelson Mandela Free South Africa Movement and chaired the Labor and Industry Committee of the Youngstown Branch of the NAACP during the 1960s.

As a resident of the Pittsburgh suburb of Penn Hills, Montgomery served as the president of the local branch of the NAACP for over a decade. His commitment to community service earned him a Who’s Who in Black America 1970-1972 Award.

As a retiree activist, Montgomery served as a member of the senior advisory committee of the Democratic National Committee and as a board member of the National Council of Senior Citizens. He was also active with the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.
The 2016 presidential election is more than a year away, but Republicans have already made it clear that they intend to make silencing workers one of their top priorities if they win the White House.

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, already a front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination, launched attacks on the workers of his state immediately after taking office in 2011 and promised to do the same on a national level should he make it to the Oval Office.

After squashing union rights for Wisconsin’s public sector workers in 2011, Walker upped the ante upon winning a second term, signing a right-to-work (for less) law this spring that allows freeloaders to reap the benefits of union membership without paying dues.

Though supporters herald such laws as promoting “freedom,” they are actually designed specifically to destroy the power of unions by starving them of financial resources. A national right-to-work (for less) law could devastate the labor movement.

While Ohio Gov. John Kasich, another likely 2016 presidential candidate, has said his state “doesn’t need” a right-to-work (for less) law, his stance echoes what Walker and Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder said before they each ultimately supported the union-busting policy.

An attempt by Kasich to limit collective bargaining by firefighters, police officers and teachers was reversed by Ohio voters.

National bill proposed

Another Republican presidential candidate, Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, proposed a national right-to-work (for less) bill in February. The Koch family, which has long supported state-by-state efforts to pass right-to-work (for less) laws, is the third-largest contributor to Paul’s presidential campaign.

And while a national bill could pass the House and Senate this year, it would be unlikely to survive a veto from President Barack Obama. A Republican victory in the 2016 presidential election, however, would dramatically increase the chances of such a bill becoming law.

The result would be bad news for workers, their families and their communities. Workers in right-to-work (for less) states earn nearly $6,000 less per year than workers who do similar jobs in other states, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

In addition, workers in these states are less likely to have employer-sponsored health insurance and pensions and are 50 percent more likely to be injured or killed on the job.

“Right-to-work (for less) laws don’t just harm unions, they reduce wages and benefits across the board. They weaken the bargaining power and the purchasing power of all workers and, as a result, they have a harmful effect on the economy as a whole,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “Unless you are a millionaire or a billionaire, right-to-work (for less) laws are bad news for you.”

The legislation, reintroduced in the Senate by Durbin on June 10, seeks to empower the voices of small donors in the political process and counteract the rush of big money election spending allowed by the U.S. Supreme Court’s Citizens United ruling in January 2010.

The Citizens United ruling tossed out a ban on corporate independent election expenditures and gave a green light to big-money interests to spend unlimited amounts on politics.

“Five years ago, the Citizens United ruling effectively gave corporations and the wealthy few a blank check to influence politics and politicians in our country,” Durbin, D-Ill., said. “Unless we curb the growing influence of big money in politics, our democracy is in serious trouble.”

Durbin said he sponsored the bill to ensure that the political system values the voices of everyday people not just the people who write the biggest checks.

The Fair Elections Now Act would enable more Americans to participate in the electoral process by establishing a $25 “my voice” refundable tax credit.

Small contributions of less than $150 would then be matched with limited public funds at a rate of six-to-one for Senate candidates who agree to turn down big money.

Citizen-funded campaigns

Sarbanes (D-Md.) said his similar legislation would promote “citizen-led, grassroots-funded campaigns” and “empower average Americans to fight back against the influence of big money in politics.”

The Every Voice Center, a national nonpartisan organization advocating for changes to campaign finance laws, collected 41,000 signatures urging Congress to pass the legislation.

“In contrast to the daily stories of presidential candidates parading themselves in front of billionaires, the Fair Elections Now Act will empower everyday people in congressional elections,” said William Roberts, the federal legislative director of the Every Voice Center.

The USW joined dozens of public interest and civil rights groups and labor unions in endorsing the bills, saying they would encourage candidates to raise small-dollar campaign contributions from the people they represent in their own states and districts, instead of big donors.

“We need a government that is of, by and for the people — not bought and paid for by special interests,” a joint letter said. “That is why we endorse the Fair Elections Now Act in the Senate and the Government by the People Act in the House as the solutions that will best allow people to hold Congress accountable.”
International President Leo W. Gerard joined labor and political leaders from across the United States in launching a nationwide, grassroots campaign to fight income inequality.

“It’s going to take hard work, lifting the floor for working people,” Gerard said. “The truth is that the economy is doing extremely well for the select few at the very top, but is not doing nearly as well for the rest of us. Too many Americans are still struggling to stay afloat.”

To help solve that problem, the group, led by New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, on May 12 in Washington, D.C., unveiled the “Progressive Agenda to Combat Income Inequality,” a 14-point plan to fight poverty and improve the quality of life for working families.

“The system is rigged to benefit those at the top and to leave everybody else behind,” de Blasio said.

The Progressive Agenda seeks to reverse that trend with an ambitious set of goals, including expanding the right to organize unions, raising the minimum wage, providing sick and parental leave to all workers, reducing student loan debt, expanding early childhood education, ending tax breaks for corporations and the very wealthy, and opposing trade deals that decimate American manufacturing jobs.

Unfair trade a factor

Gerard said that a series of unfair trade deals has been a major contributor to the growth in income inequality over the past several decades.

“I challenge any member of Congress to show us a trade deal that gave us a net increase in jobs and a net increase in wages,” Gerard said. “They can’t find it.”

Labor leaders who joined Gerard in launching the campaign included retired CWA President Larry Cohen, AFSCME President Lee Saunders, AFT President Randi Weingarten, and NEA President Lily Eskelsen-Garcia.

The group urged union members and other activists to go out into their communities and talk to their neighbors and friends about the fight for a more balanced economy.

“Street by street, county by county, city by city,” Saunders said. “Mobilize, organize, educate.”

Talk, however, isn’t going to change anything on its own, de Blasio said, urging union members and their allies to vote – every chance they get – for candidates who actively support workers.

Progressives, he said, “can’t change policies in the current political environment. We’ve got to change the basic political debate.”

AFL-CIO issues Pay Watch

As supporters of the “Progressive Agenda” were taking aim at income inequality in Washington, the AFL-CIO was shining a spotlight on another major contributor to the problem, namely the huge gap between executive salaries and the pay of everyday workers.

In its annual “Pay Watch” report, the national labor federation revealed that in 2014, the gap between the average compensation for CEOs at the 500 largest publicly traded companies and the average pay of their workers grew to a ratio of 373 to 1. That means that, on average, a CEO earns in less than one day what one worker earns in a year.

In 2014, CEOs of the 500 largest public companies received an average of $13.5 million in total compensation – an increase of 15.6 percent from the previous year, according to the AFL-CIO.

“Pay, bonuses and stock options for executives continue to skyrocket,” Gerard said. “Meanwhile, pay for most workers has stagnated. This is an insulting and demoralizing situation for the working people of this country, and it has to change.”

De Blasio said it will take grassroots political activism from workers across the country to change the situation.

“We need to reward work again, not wealth, work,” he said. “That’s a change that will have a profound effect on this country. It’s time to put people ahead of profits and value work over wealth.”
In a move International President Leo W. Gerard called a win for workers and a win for the economy, the White House plans to make millions more Americans eligible for overtime pay in 2016. The Obama administration announced on June 30 that it intends to increase to $50,440 the salary under which employers must pay time and a half to salaried workers who put in more than 40 hours a week.

Today, the overtime threshold covers only 8 percent of salaried workers. In 1960, by comparison, the threshold covered over 60 percent of salaried employees.

“This overtime rule change is long overdue,” Gerard said. The rule change will replace current regulations requiring overtime pay for salaried workers only if they make less than $23,660 a year, which is below the poverty line for a family of four.

“Right now too many Americans are working long days for less pay than they deserve,” Obama said in announcing the rule change. “That’s partly because we’ve failed to update overtime regulations for years.”

Under current rules, salaried employees – even those with few supervisory duties – can be declared managers and denied overtime pay if they work 45, 50 or 60 hours a week.

“They are cheated out of just reward for hard work. They lose time with their families. And their long hours of uncompensated labor deny the unemployed jobs,” Gerard said.

“Putting more money in the pockets of hard-working employees has the added benefit of stimulating the economy because workers quickly spend that money,” he added.

Update labor standards

The rule change would update labor standards introduced in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938, legislation that included a national minimum wage and time and a half pay for hourly and certain salaried workers after 40 hours of weekly work.

Salaried workers were covered under the FLSA to preempt the possibility that some employers might just label someone a salaried worker to avoid paying time and a half. The threshold, however, wasn’t regularly adjusted for inflation and has been raised only once since 1975.

Gerard said the administration intends to link the new threshold to the inflation rate to ensure that workers won’t wait for a decade again before receiving fair pay for hard work.

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a nonprofit think tank that champions making higher wages a national priority, estimated that the proposed rule change would guarantee overtime protection for at least 5 to 11 million more workers.

Raising the overtime threshold is one of the key items that EPI believes must be accomplished to promote wage growth, which the think tank contends should be an urgent national policy priority.

Wages for the vast majority of American workers have stagnated or declined since 1979 – and wage stagnation’s reach has expanded in recent years to include workers with college educations.

Over the same period that wages of most workers have stagnated, income in the economy as a whole increased and productivity rose by 64 percent.

In short, the potential has existed for adequate, widespread wage growth over the last three-and-a-half decades, but these economic gains have not trickled down to the vast majority,” EPI said in a statement.

Public comment

The proposed changes will be open for public comment before being put into effect in 2016. As a rule change, the proposals don’t have to go through Congress, where conservatives would likely try to kill them.

Retailers, restaurants and the National Association of Manufacturers lost no time in criticizing the overtime expansion, saying the proposal would limit advancement opportunities for workers and cost employers billions of dollars.

“The likes of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and fast food CEOs will whine that businesses can’t pay workers more, no matter how many hours a week they work,” Gerard said. “Workers should point out that every year, corporations find tens of millions to hand over to CEOs demanding excessive pay increases.”
Retired Director Harry Lester Passes

Harry E. Lester, a former international director of the United Steelworkers who led an employee buyout of the former McLouth Steel Co., died on April 18. He was 85.

Lester was born in Bud, W.Va., in 1929 before the stock market crash that caused the Great Depression. He wrote about growing up with a colorful extended family in an autobiography, “The Boy from Bud.”

He moved from West Virginia to Detroit as a young man and found work at Ford Motor Co. and later McLouth Steel. An active USW member, he rose through the ranks to become director of District 2, which covers Michigan and Wisconsin.

He joined Local 2659 at McLouth in 1954 and held several positions with the local including shop steward, vice president and president. He was appointed to the union’s staff in 1969.

Lester was first elected director of the former District 29 in 1981 and was reelected in 1985, 1989 and 1993. He was appointed District 2 director when that district was created in 1995, was reelected and served until he retired in 2006.

As a director, Lester in 1988 engineered an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) at McLouth, then an integrated steel company that operated plants in Detroit, Trenton and Gibraltar, Mich. The ESOP transferred 85 percent of the company’s common stock to employees. He served for a time as a company director.

“He was a very tough, resourceful guy who was totally dedicated to the best interests of working people,” said Bruce Miller, a Detroit labor lawyer who worked with him.

Lester also helped to steer the international union through health and safety reform while working to increase living standards for members and protect pension plans.

He chaired contract negotiations with National Steel, where he helped to bring about one of the first cooperative partnerships in the country, and also led negotiations at Dow Chemical, National Standard, Quanex and Stauffer Chemical.

Retired Director Homer Wilson Dies

Homer Wilson, retired director of District 9, died on April 30 at his residence in Alabama after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease. He was 81.

“Labor lost a great fighter and a friend,” District 9 Director Daniel Flippo said of his predecessor, a lifelong member of the Democratic Party who was devoted to working class people.

The son of a sharecropper, Wilson joined Local 4801 in 1952 when he went to work at the Continental Can plant in Auburndale, Fla. He was active for 20 years in the local as a griever and a grievance chair before serving as local president.

After an appointment as staff representative, Wilson served as a sub-district director of the former District 36 for 11 years prior to his election as district director in 1993.

Wilson served as director of District 36 until 1995, when District 36 was incorporated into District 9. He was appointed director of District 9 in May 1996 to succeed the retiring former Director Joe Kiker, and was elected to full terms as director in 1997 and 2001 before retiring in 2003.

District 9, headquartered in Alabama, covers seven southeastern states and the Virgin Islands.

Wilson participated in negotiations in the container, steel and aluminum industries. He also coordinated the District 9 Political Action Committee (PAC) program.

Michigan Workers Collect for Charity

Members of Local 2-21 in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula collected more than 3,200 pounds of food and more than $3,300 in cash donations during a marathon 48-hour food drive in June.

The event was held to gather much-needed supplies for local food banks and raise money for the Salvation Army and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.
Possible Buyer Emerges for Georgetown Mill

A Florida business owner who tried twice before to purchase the Georgetown, S.C., steel mill said in May that he was interested in acquiring and continuing to operate the mill.

Joseph G. Wortley, of Boca Raton, Fla., emerged as a potential buyer after ArcelorMittal announced that it would shut down the 46-year-old plant this August. A flood of unfairly traded steel imports that have led to a major decline in market share for American steelmakers made the mill unsustainable, the company said.

Wortley said he believed the mill could still be profitable due to its capacity to produce high-quality wire rod.

Montana Miners Seek Contract

Some 900 members of Local 11-0001 at Stillwater Mining Co. in Montana continued to work under an expired contract after rejecting a tentative agreement that would have altered incentive pay.

The vote to reject the tentative agreement was held on June 10. Local President Scott McGinnis said negotiations were actively continuing as USW@Work went to press.

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.

A four-year contract expired at the end of May.

USW members have expressed frustration that Stillwater proposed a pay cut when it recorded a $23 million profit for the 2015 first quarter and granted a substantial salary increase to CEO Mick McMullen in 2014. The company blamed slumping prices for platinum and palladium for its cost cutting.

The vote to reject the tentative agreement was held on June 10. Local President Scott McGinnis said negotiations were actively continuing as USW@Work went to press.

Alcoa Workers Join USW

Some 460 workers at Alcoa’s Howmet Castings & Services plant in Hampton, Va., are now members of the USW after voting in June to unionize.

The vote was the third attempt by the USW to organize Alcoa Howmet in Hampton. Votes in 2005 and 2012 were unsuccessful.

Virginia is a right-to-work state. Alcoa Howmet is upgrading the facility with help from local and state grants to produce lightweight jet engine blades. The company plans to spend $25 million on the project.

USW Backs Health Care Ruling

The USW applauded a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in June that upheld a major provision in the Affordable Care Act that provides federal subsidies to help Americans buy insurance.

“The union has fought to expand access to health care for many years and will continue to do so,” the USW said in a statement. “We support this decision and will oppose future attacks that aim to roll-back access to health care.”

Lockout Ends at Century Aluminum

About 540 members of Local 9423 at Century Aluminum in western Kentucky were back on the job after voting to ratify a new contract on June 11, ending a month-long lockout.

The new five-year agreement runs through March 2020 and includes pay increases and fixed insurance premiums.

The Kentucky plant is controlled by Swiss commodities giant Glencore, which has locked out 450 USW members at Sherwin Alumina in west Texas since October.

Renco Trial Scheduled

A federal judge ruled that a U.S. Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. (PBGC) lawsuit accusing billionaire Ira Rennert’s Renco Group Inc. of trying to evade pension obligations of its RG Steel unit should go to trial.

In March, U.S. District Judge Richard Sullivan of Manhattan rejected requests by both sides to decide the case in their favor, and scheduled the trial to begin on July 6.

The PBGC sued Renco for $97 million, claiming it sold a 24.5 percent RG stake to Cerberus Capital Management LP mainly to escape the obligations of underfunded pension plans.

The PBGC had been preparing in 2012 to terminate RG’s pension plans, but agreed not to after Renco assured it would not imminently cut its ownership stake in RG to below 80 percent, the level at which it would retain the pension liabilities. Instead, the PBGC said Renco did just that four days later with the Cerberus deal.

The steelmaker filed for bankruptcy in May 2012, and the PBGC took responsibility for its pension plans six months later.

Steelworker History on Display

The Heritage Discovery Center, a museum in Johnstown, Pa., is hosting an exhibit on the city’s once booming steel industry that was organized by two retirees from Local 2635.

Tom Leslie and Don Coslow collected artifacts from steelworkers and their families for the exhibit now on display at the center’s Iron and Steel Gallery at 201 6th Ave. in Johnstown.

Richard Burkert, president of the Johnstown Area Heritage Association, said the exhibit, which opened last February, has become a popular attraction.

“These guys are really proud of what they did.” Burkert said of Leslie and Coslow, the project’s curators. “We see this as being a long-term exhibit.”

The former Bethlehem Steel Johnstown Works, initially known as Cambria Iron, closed in 1992. It employed 16,000 at its peak in 1953 and once extended for 12 miles. Some of its buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
Steelworker Cast in Bronze

There’s a new statue in Chicago honoring generations of steelworkers who toiled for more than a century at the now defunct U.S. Steel South Works, once one of the world’s largest steel mills.

The statue, designed by local artist Roman Villarreal, depicts a steelworker wearing goggles, carrying a lunch bucket and surrounded by family. It was dedicated by the Chicago Park District on May 9 at the entrance to a new Steelworker’s Park being developed on 16 acres of the former mill site.

At its peak before World War II, the South Works employed more than 20,000 people. It was downsized in the 1970s and permanently closed in 1992.

Members of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) attended the dedication.

Shown from left to right, are: Roberta Wood (SOAR), Beatrice Lumpkin (SOAR), Chicago City Treasurer Kurt Summers, Scott Marshall (SOAR), Chicago Federation of Labor Secretary-Treasurer Bob Reiter and Victor Storino (SOAR).

Tentative Deal May End Crown Strike

The USW and Crown Holdings have reached a tentative agreement aimed at ending a 22-month strike at a beer can manufacturing plant in Toronto, Canada.

The tentative agreement, reached July 8 with the assistance of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, must be ratified by the striking workers to take effect. Details were withheld pending a vote scheduled for July 18-19.

“I commend the members of Local 9176 and their negotiating committee for the incredible solidarity and character they exhibited throughout this prolonged struggle,” said Ontario Director Marty Warren.

Warren also thanked the many unions, community groups and residents who provided financial and moral support to the affected families.

USW Notified of New Postal Address

The U.S. Postal Service has advised the USW that the following postal address must be used to make sure that mail to the International headquarters in Pittsburgh is processed correctly: USW Headquarters, 60 Blvd. of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.

USW-made Pyrex Marks Centennial

Pyrex bakeware, made in Pennsylvania by members of Local 53G, is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

Corning Glass began making Pyrex in 1915. Its potential for cookware was discovered by a researcher who took home glass being developed for railroad lanterns and his wife baked a cake with it.

Owned by World Kitchen LLC since 1998, Pyrex has been made in the river town of Charleroi since 1936. About 300 Local 53G members produce some 50 million bowls, measuring cups, pie plates, casserole dishes and other glass pieces every year.

Sand Sculpture Honors Steelworkers

A sand sculpture depicting the Steelworkers’ contribution to the history of the Pittsburgh region was on display this year at the city’s annual Fourth of July regatta.

The sculpture, by Florida-based Sandsational Sand Sculpting, started as a compacted cube of 150 tons of sand. It stands 13 feet tall, and took 12 days to build.

The project featured life-sized sculptures of steelworkers doing general factory maintenance and pouring steel into molds. Using sand and water, the sculptors created realistic depictions of workers’ bulging, muscular arms, rolled sleeves, oversized gloves and utility overalls.

The sculpture started as a block of compacted sand that was then sculpted from the top, working down.
Union Plus Scholarships Awarded

Five students from USW families were among those awarded scholarships this year from Union Plus, the AFL-CIO sponsored benefits program. Individual awards ranged from $500 to $4,000.

Margaret Buchele, of Toledo Ohio, whose father James Buchele is a member of Local 912, was awarded $500. She plans to study engineering at the University of Toledo.

John Ertl, of Hartford, Conn., a member of Local 134-L, Unit 37, was awarded $4,000. A repeat scholarship winner, Ertl, a graduate of Cornell University in industrial and labor relations, is pursuing a master’s degree in union leadership and administration at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His father John is a member of Local 2-0445.

Shayna Flint, of Pottstown, Pa., whose father Jason Flint is a member of Local 9462, was awarded $4,000. The National Honor Society member plans to become a college advisor or counselor.

Ethan Frederick, of Beaver Falls, Pa., whose father James Frederick is a member of Local 9305, was awarded $4,000. He plans to study actuarial science.

Kaden Littrell, of Canton, Kan., whose father Jarod Littrell is a member of Local 558, was awarded $3,000. A 2014 scholarship recipient, Kaden studies marketing and entrepreneurship at Kansas State University.

More than 5,000 applications were received from AFL-CIO union members, their spouses and dependent children. Awards totaling $150,000 went to 106 students nationwide.

USW-Made Picnic

Can you spot the USW-made products on this July 4 picnic blanket? Check your answers at right.

##USWMade

1. Reynolds Wrap foil
2. Vanity Fair napkins
3. Chinet paper plates
4. Morton Salt
5. Pyrex glassware
6. Cucto knife
7. Solo cup
8. Corelle plate
9. Chinet cups

Can you find all the USW-made products on this July 4 picnic blanket?
Have You Moved?
Notify your local union financial secretary, or clip out this form with your old address label and send your new address to:

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

Name ______________________________________
New Address ______________________________________
City ______________________________________
State _________________________   Zip _________