American workers need a new trade philosophy, one that protects them and puts people first, not corporations.

International President Leo W. Gerard
Support the United Way

The United Way is building healthier and stronger communities by bringing together labor unions, businesses, nonprofits, civic and faith organizations, educators, government officials and others because every child deserves a good education and hope for financial stability in the future.

The AFL-CIO and the USW have a long, shared history of working with the United Way to achieve our common goals, and each year we ask our officers, locals and staff to join the fight to improve the lives of more than 50 million people the United Way helps every year.

Over many years, we Steelworkers have proven that nothing is impossible when we are united and speak with one voice, and the United Way has shown the same spirit of collectivism by mobilizing communities to create long-term positive social change.

Strong community partnerships are essential in building power for workers and our communities, so I’m proud to encourage you to join me and Steelworkers throughout North America in supporting the 2015 United Way campaign.

Since its 1887 founding, the United Way has made a huge impact by improving the lives of millions, and with our support, our communities will continue on the path towards lasting prosperity.

By working together, we can help those in need today while we continue to fight for justice for all.

In solidarity,
Leo W. Gerard
International President

Good People, Hard Work

The spring article on the Granite City Works, Good People, Hard Work, is excellent in all regards. The photo of Scott Mullen perfectly captures the essence of a hard-working man in a real industrial setting.

Fewer and fewer Americans know that this is what made the United States the strongest nation in the world. It is the making of a product – not the consuming of a product – that builds real wealth, character and pride.

My father worked in a factory that is now a Wal-Mart – a sad testimony to free trade agreements.

George Haux, associate member
Skaneateles, N.Y.

USW Helped Me Grow

After 41 plus years as a Steelworker in a fully integrated steel mill in Granite City, Ill., I retired a year ago in June. I now reflect on how blessed I was to have the people around me that I did all those years.

From my first day laboring in the blooming mill, to my many years in the hot strip millwright unit, to my many years as an elected representative, to my final years as a union safety rep, I was surrounded by people who taught me how to continue to grow as a person and how to be union.

I was provided and accepted a multitude of opportunities to serve in the union, and I appreciate the experiences.

God bless America and the United Steelworkers. Keep up the good work.

Don Ogle, Local 1899 retired
Granite City, Ill.

Sandpaper Mystery

In the last issue of USW@Work, member Lee Rowlett wondered about the spring cover photo showing a USW craftsman sanding a Louisville Slugger bat in a lathe using the wrong side of the sandpaper. He asked if that is how it is done.

That is correct. After the wood is sanded in the conventional way, the back side of the sandpaper will enhance the wood’s shine. Good observation!

Joe Mauceri, Local 4997 retired
La Mirada, Calif.

RG Steel

Like so many others, I wish Sparrow’s Point was still making steel. The plant was good to me, my family and the community.

My union, the USW, tried to save the jobs there by working through the company’s changes of ownership and bankruptcies, but to no avail. When RG Steel purchased the Sparrow’s Point mill in 2012, it was the fifth owner in ten years. RG Steel then filed for bankruptcy in May 2012.

RG Steel recently filed a motion for approval of a negotiated, structured dismissal of the bankruptcy case that will lead to funds being distributed to its creditors. While it hardly makes up for the hurt put on the workers and community, I see where my union kept fighting for me.

At this time it looks like about 4,000 former workers will receive checks of at least $1,500. Yes, in the bigger scheme of things, this is not all that much, but if it wasn’t for the persistence of our union, we would be getting zero.

Thanks USW. Everybody else walked away from Sparrow’s Point and RG Steel, but you keep fighting for your members.

David Boyd, Local 9477 retired
Perry Hall, Md.

Where Would We Be?

Thank you for the great story, USW Wins Relief on Chinese Tires. If it weren’t for our guys on top of everything, where would we be?

I am retired, 23½ years, and I really count on and rely on our boys fighting for us. I am now a barber in Geistown Borough (near Johnstown, Pa.) and I appreciate being informed and taken care of. My love, respect and thanks to all involved.

Joseph Chon, Local 2635 retired
Elton, Pa.
More than 2,200 USW members at 12 Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI) plants in six states are standing strong on picket lines after ATI locked them out of their jobs on Aug. 15.

The specialty steelmaker, based in Pittsburgh, initiated the illegal lockout after demanding that USW members vote to approve its last, best and final offer, a proposal that was filled with dozens of language changes, benefit cuts and cost increases that would amount to thousands of dollars a year in concessions for workers and their families.

“It’s outrageous that the company has chosen this destructive path, but it is clear that ATI intended to lock these workers out since day one,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “From the beginning, the company has bargained in bad faith to dictate the terms of an agreement.”

The lockout was the culmination of a months-long campaign by ATI’s management to force USW members to accept draconian demands. The company spent millions of dollars to bring in replacements for its skilled and experienced USW work force, paying the scabs as much as $2,500 a week, even though the union never threatened to strike and never conducted a strike authorization vote.

In fact, USW bargaining committee members voted on Aug. 10 to return to their plants to meet with rank-and-file members to discuss the company’s proposal and decide whether to hold ratification votes. Instead, the company interrupted the USW’s democratic process by locking its doors.

Planned well in advance

ATI began planning its lockout in January – before bargaining on a new contract even started – when management hired outside consultants to recruit replacement workers and forced union members to sit through captive-audience meetings aimed at intimidating them into accepting concessions.

Despite slow but steady progress at the bargaining table, and proposals from the USW that would have saved ATI millions of dollars, the company presented the union’s bargaining committee with a “last, best and final” offer on Aug. 6. ATI demanded that the USW accept the offer and recommend it for a ratification vote within four days.

The USW offered to continue bargaining and to continue working under the terms of the existing contract, which expired June 30, but ATI had other plans.

“We have taken the bargaining process seriously, and the company has instead chosen to engage in bad-faith bargaining and to derail our union’s democratic process,” said International Vice President Tom Conway, who chairs the ATI bargaining committee.

“We recognize that we are facing a difficult environment, but the way to address these problems is by working
together, not by creating arbitrary deadlines and issuing threats.”

**Support and solidarity**

The lockout sparked a huge turnout of USW members and supporters on picket lines as well as an outpouring of support from union members and allies across the country. Members also held a series of public events calling on ATI to end the lockout and bargain a fair contract.

ATI locals in Western Pennsylvania, Oregon, Ohio, New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts held rallies at their locations throughout July and August. Then, on Sept. 1, thousands of USW members and supporters came together for a massive march on the ATI headquarters in Pittsburgh.

Louis Chillinsky, unit president for Local 1138-6 in Latrobe, Pa., said ATI’s concessionary demands proved that more workers need to organize.

“Thank you, ATI. You gave us all a nice reminder of why we need unions,” Chillinsky said. “This is totally unnecessary, and it has disrupted all of our lives.”

Karl Brendle, president of Local 1046 in Louisville, Ohio, introduced his children to a crowd of cheering supporters while reminding them that the struggle for fairness at ATI was about more than just the next contract.

“This isn’t just about me and the people I work with, it’s about our children and grandchildren, and making sure they have a better life than we do,” Brendle said.

In September, USW activists traveled to New York City to confront ATI executives at the Gabelli & Co.’s Aircraft Supplier Conference. Organizers attempted to keep the location and time of the event a secret, but about 50 USW members found it and demonstrated outside.

Workers’ chants could be heard on the conference’s webcast, and one member even gained entry and confronted ATI Vice President Dan Greenfield directly about the cost of the lockout during a question and answer session.

In October, USW members marched again to ATI headquarters as the company was preparing to announce its third-quarter earnings. That day, workers delivered thousands of petitions calling on the company to end the lockout, which ATI’s own report showed had cost the company $50 million in the third quarter alone.

In addition to ATI, USW members are fighting demands for severe concessions as they bargain new contracts with U.S. Steel and Arcelor-Mittal. Those agreements were scheduled to expire Sept. 1, but the union and steelmakers agreed to continue operations as bargaining continues.

“This is a Steelworker fight, and we need to win it,” Conway said. “This is the last union you want to pick a fight with.”

Brendle, who has worked at his facility for 23 years, said that as a lockout seemed imminent, ATI began to draw lines outside plant gates to keep potential picketers away.

“They can draw as many lines as they want, but we’re not going to be intimidated,” Brendle said. “We’re not going to stop fighting for what’s right.”

Photo by Steve Dietz
The USW’s negotiations for new contracts covering 30,000 members at U.S. Steel and ArcelorMittal continued as USW@Work went to press. The union and the companies agreed to continue operations beyond the Sept. 1 expiration date.

USW members are working under the terms and conditions of existing contracts with the steelmakers. The extension agreements are subject to notice of at least 48 hours before termination.

“We believe that extending these discussions and continuing to push for fair agreements is in the best interests of USW members who work in basic steel,” said International Vice President Tom Conway. He chairs the union’s negotiations with U.S. Steel, which employs 17,000 members.

“We will continue to pursue settlements that preserve the decades of progress we have made at the bargaining table, while positioning the steel industry for future success.”

The USW kicked off negotiations with the two steelmakers in Pittsburgh in June as the industry was in the midst of a crisis.

A flood of unfair imports from China and elsewhere, along with a sharp decline in the price and production of oil and gas, has led to declining steel prices and global overcapacity. That “perfect storm” of market conditions prompted ArcelorMittal and U.S. Steel to idle plants and lay off workers by the thousands.

U.S. Steel announced this summer that it would shut down the blast furnace and other operations in Fairfield, Ala., months before a new electric arc furnace was scheduled to come online. The company also temporarily idled its Keetac and Minntac plants, both in Minnesota, and warned of layoffs at its Granite City, Ill., plant.

ArcelorMittal laid off about 200 Steelworkers when it shut down operations in Georgetown, S.C., and has announced its intentions to idle certain equipment in an effort to reduce the company’s North American footprint.

At the bargaining table, U.S. Steel and ArcelorMittal seemed determined to use the crisis as an excuse to gut contracts and slash workers’ benefits.

Both companies submitted proposals to the USW that included increased health care costs for active workers and retirees and major reductions in incentive payments, vacation pay and sickness and accident benefits.

Both ArcelorMittal and U.S. Steel sought to change language governing overtime rules, contracting out, SUB pay, severance pay and profit sharing. The two companies also sought to divide the USW membership by seeking lower, two-tier systems of compensation and benefits for new hires.

At press time, U.S. Steel and ArcelorMittal were still pushing many of their most onerous proposals even after months of negotiations.

“We want to bargain a fair agreement, but we also want to make sure that these companies do not take advantage of a temporary crisis to divide our union and weaken our collective bargaining agreements,” said District 1 Director David McCall. He chairs the union’s talks with ArcelorMittal, which employs 13,000 members.

“We did not cause this crisis, and gutting our contracts will do nothing to solve it,” McCall said.

Instead, what Steelworkers and their employers must do is work together toward comprehensive reform of the nation’s trade laws and enforcement system, said International President Leo W. Gerard.

“The current crisis in the steel industry is a perfect example of our broken trade laws and the devastating toll that this system is taking on our economy,” Gerard said. “In addition to stronger
laws, we need faster, more streamlined enforcement so that our workers can get relief before their jobs are gone and their factories are closed.”

**Rallying support**

The widening steel crisis led to a slower-than-usual pace at the bargaining table throughout the summer.

As the Sept. 1 expiration date approached and the two companies continued to demand deep concessions, USW members and their allies held a series of public solidarity events, mobilizing workers and their families by the thousands to demand fair contracts.

In addition to sticker days, yard signs and other visible demonstrations of support, USW members held rallies at each U.S. Steel and ArcelorMittal location in mid-August, and then followed those events with massive marches to the companies’ executive offices — in Pittsburgh, Chicago and Burns Harbor, Ind. — on Sept. 1.

Indiana state Rep. Scott Pelath told a crowd of 3,500 in Burns Harbor that he and other lawmakers would stand with them for as long as it takes to win a fair contract.

“It has been Steelworkers that have built Indiana,” Pelath said. “It has been Steelworkers that have raised the wage for everyone. It has been Steelworkers who make sure moms and dads come home at night.”

Pete Trinidad, president of Local 6787 at ArcelorMittal’s Burns Harbor plant, said USW contracts helped build the middle class in steel towns across the United States.

“The same companies that we helped to create are now attacking us,” Trinidad said. “We’re not going to stand for it.”

Outside the U.S. Steel headquarters in Pittsburgh, Dan Simmons, president of Local 1899 at the company’s Granite City, Ill., plant, criticized his employer for giving CEO Mario Longhi a raise and then demanding concessions from the rank and file.

“These proposals would take us back to the 1950s,” Simmons said. “We know what Mario makes, and those don’t sound like 1950s wages to me.”

District 7 Director Mike Millsap, who serves as secretary of the bargaining committees at both companies, said the USW’s solidarity will make the difference in the end.

“We will get through this by standing together, as we always have,” Millsap said. “We always last one day longer.”

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**Bargaining with Cliffs continues after extension**

The USW’s negotiations for a new contract covering 2,600 members at Cliffs Natural Resources were ongoing as USW@Work went to press, after the two sides agreed to an extension of the agreement’s original Oct. 1 expiration date.

Local issue bargaining with Cliffs, formerly Cleveland-Cliffs, got under way in July. As the two sides began discussing top-table issues in September, it became clear that the company had unrealistic expectations for major concessions on a number of cornerstone contract items, including health care, personal days and profit sharing. Cliffs also has proposed changes in sickness and accident and family leave benefits.

“This company has been successful thanks to years of hard work by USW members,” said District 11 Direc-

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**Photos by Tasos Katopodis**
A federal judge has tentatively approved a $31 million settlement between the USW and FreightCar America Inc. over the company’s unlawful termination of retiree medical and life insurance benefits.

The settlement, if given final approval by Judge Kim R. Gibson, will be used to provide medical care and other benefits for retirees and surviving spouses of retirees who worked at FreightCar’s manufacturing plant in Johnstown, Pa.

“We were happy to win the case. Any time you get back something that was yours and it was taken away, it’s a good thing,” said retiree Dennis Conahan, former president of Local 2635. “We appreciate the Steelworkers fighting for us. As usual, they did a good job.”

Gibson scheduled a final fairness hearing for Jan. 5 on the settlement, which would create an independent trust known as a Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA) to administer the funds.

The settlement was explained in mid-October at special meetings held in Johnstown for retirees, who engaged in spirited discussions over how the settlement money would be distributed.

Workers built railcars in Johnstown for more than 100 years from 1901 to 2008 when management closed the facility in an apparent attempt to avoid liabilities to its USW-represented workforce.

Bethlehem Steel manufactured railcars at the factory from 1923 to 1991, when the business was purchased in a management buyout and renamed Johnstown America Industries. It became Johnstown America Corp. in 1999 and FreightCar America in 2004.

The company had promised to provide lifetime benefits for its Johnstown retirees but reneged on that promise, most recently two years ago when it claimed it was not obligated to pay and terminated them.

On July 8, 2013, FreightCar asked a federal court in Illinois to declare it had the legal right to terminate retiree welfare benefits. The next day, the USW and a group of retirees filed a complaint in a Pennsylvania federal court asserting that FreightCar was violating its union contracts and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). The company terminated benefits on Nov. 1 that year.

**Settlement announced**

A class-action settlement to the litigation was announced on Aug. 19, a few days before a trial was scheduled to begin in Gibson’s Johnstown courtroom.

The settlement will cover some 650 FreightCar retirees, according to USW attorney Joe Stuligross. The number could rise to 1,000 when surviving spouses are included, he said.

For those retirees eligible for Medicare, the VEBA is expected to pay 70 percent of the cost of a comprehensive Medicare Advantage plan with prescription drug coverage.

For those retirees who are not yet eligible for Medicare, the VEBA is expected to pay 50 percent of monthly premiums for pre-Medicare health coverage with prescription drug coverage. Deductibles and co-payments will apply.

In addition, the VEBA will reimburse retirees and surviving spouses for certain amounts of past health care related payments incurred during the suspension of coverage. Cash death benefits, also suspended by the company, will resume.

**Litigation began in 2002**

The USW and retirees have been involved in on-and-off litigation with FreightCar over benefits since 2002, when the company first terminated retiree health and life insurance benefits.

In response to that termination, the USW and several retirees filed an ERISA class-action suit on behalf of those who retired from the Johnstown plant after the 1991 buyout and were at least 43 years old.

The next year, in 2003, the USW and another group of retirees filed a similar suit, but in that case the plaintiffs lost their benefits in 2003 and were younger.

The resulting settlement required FreightCar to make monthly health care contributions of $700 for households where a class member was not eligible for Medicare and $450 to Medicare-eligible households.

After FreightCar announced in 2007 that it was closing the Johnstown plant, the USW and a group of active employees who were close to becoming eligible for retirement benefits filed suit.

In 2008, a federal judge found that the company had unlawfully discriminated against 200 employees by laying them off in order to deprive them of pension benefits. The settlement extended benefits to those laid-off workers.

The settlements in those earlier cases allowed retirees and the USW to refile litigation in the event FreightCar ceased providing retiree health and life insurance benefits, which it did in 2013.
A federal judge has approved a mediated settlement to RG Steel’s Chapter 11 bankruptcy case that gives former workers, retirees and USW-related creditors 70 percent of $17.4 million in available cash.

The USW joined the multi-party mediation process last year to recover as much as possible for workers and retirees affected by RG Steel’s contentious bankruptcy case, which began in 2012.

The $12 million payout, part of a settlement approved Oct. 15 by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Kevin Carey, includes $6.3 million in severance and vacation pay due to about 4,000 former RG Steel employees.

RG Steel owners, the Renco Group and Cerberus Capital, contributed $14 million with another $3.4 million coming from insurers. The total was enough to pay only a small fraction of outstanding claims.

Yet the USW made clear during the year-long mediation that workers and retirees deserved the lion’s share of the settlement since union members and the USW’s various pension and health care funds were together by far the largest creditors in the case.

“It was the best and only opportunity in the case to provide any payment to our members,” said USW attorney David Jury, who was involved in the negotiations.

Bankruptcy protection

Renco, a holding company led by billionaire investor Ira Rennert, created RG Steel in March 2011 after purchasing steel-making facilities and other interests from Severstal US Holdings LLC for $1.2 billion.

Faced with falling prices, rising costs and ongoing legal disputes with Severstal related to the sale, RG Steel filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy court protection in May 2012. The company reported unpaid debt of $1 billion at the time.

RG Steel sold the majority of its assets and operations including the company’s largest mill in Sparrows Point, Md., and facilities in Wheeling, W.Va., and Warren, Ohio. Thousands of jobs were lost.

The bankruptcy estate is responsible for distributing payments to individual former employees, and has hired a firm to perform an audit and check current addresses.

If the number of expected recipients stays at 4,000, severance checks could total $1,500 before taxes. That payment could go up or down depending on the final number of recipients.

Recipients would include former workers and retirees from Sparrows Point, Warren and Wheeling, as well as a coke facility, Mountain State Carbon, in Follansbee, W.Va.

“The USW did a good job in making the best of a bad situation. It’s sad that it had to come to this, and unfortunate that this has affected so many hard-working people,” said David Boyd, a Local 9477 retiree who worked at Sparrows Point.

“But the union never gave up and kept fighting for what was right all the way to the very end.”

The settlement also includes payments of $2.4 million to a Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA) for workers at the Warren mill. A VEBA is a health reimbursement account.

Other USW-related payments include $990,790 to the Steelworkers Health & Welfare Fund to cover more than $6 million in claims; more than $814,000 to the Steelworkers Pension Trust; $445,590.31 to a VEBA for workers at Wheeling-Pitt, a predecessor to RG Steel; $480,000 to cover unpaid medical claims; and about $54,000 in severance for workers at an Allenport, Pa., mill that closed in 2008.

“This settlement doesn’t make up for the fact that so many people have suffered,” Boyd said. “But if we hadn’t had the union fighting for us, we could have ended up with nothing.”
USW members at Georgia Pacific (GP) have ratified new four-year master agreements that improve overall wages and benefits while avoiding steep cuts initially sought by management.

The two separate master agreements – one for GP mills and the other for its converter or box facilities – set terms for wages, health care and retirement benefits for nearly 5,700 USW-represented employees.

“The patient but tenacious solidarity of our local unions has resulted in two master agreements where USW members across the country will see continued improvement in their standards of living,” said International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees the union’s paper sector. “In this difficult environment, that is a monumental accomplishment.”

The pacts were approved by the membership on Sept. 11.

Both USW mill and box negotiating committees told their members that “without any hesitation, we can say that we left nothing on the table.” Both credited their success “to all locals standing and bargaining together.”

The master economic and security agreements provide a framework for separately negotiated local agreements that continue in effect until their respective expiration dates.

As those expiration dates approach, each local union will negotiate four-year local renewal agreements to address issues that are important to them but not covered by the master agreements.

Items covered in the master agreements are off the table in the local discussions. At the same time, items raised but not achieved by GP in the master discussions cannot be brought up again at the local tables.

The negotiations with GP were tough from the outset and took more than a year of on-and-off discussions to complete. In each agreement, USW bargaining teams persuaded GP that it could improve competitiveness by focusing on long term operational solutions rather than slashing employee benefits and wages.

In both agreements, the union was able to reinforce its priorities around safety and health, job and contract protection in the event of a facility sale, and preservation of seniority during job bidding processes, among other issues.

On the mill side, GP’s initial proposals included lowering wages for current employees and using temporary workers with limited benefits for up to one third of its work force, among other demands that would have harmed earnings and job security.

“We knew going into bargaining that we would be entering one of the most challenging negotiations since the 1980s, when the industry eliminated premium pay and demanded 365 days a year operations,” the USW’s mill bargaining committee wrote in a contract summary.

“And each local knew that the only path to finding a fair agreement for all sites was by standing and negotiating together in the same room with GP’s decision makers.”

**New challenges**

The threat of imports and new entrants into the tissue industry has created challenges in mills where workers sometimes make over $40 an hour. That led the mill bargaining committee to focus its energy on persuading the company to direct more money toward...
Unionsized workers at Huhtamaki plants in the United States are circulating petitions here and abroad that call on the Finnish paper packaging company to remain neutral in organizing drives and let employees decide for themselves if they want union representation.

The USW, which represents workers at four Huhtamaki plants in the United States, is assisting workers who are seeking representation at a non-union factory in Commerce, Calif. Employees there complain of harsh working conditions.

The organizing campaign has international support. The global trade union organization IndustriALL sponsored a networking meeting of unions from Huhtamaki plants around the world last June in which participating unions pledged to improve conditions for workers in countries where there are disputes and establish a dialogue with management.

Huhtamaki makes packaging for food and drink, including the burrito bowls for fast-food chain Chipotle, which requires its suppliers to adhere to global labor and social responsibility standards.

The USW conducted an informational picket at Chipotle’s stockholders meeting in Denver last May to urge the restaurant chain to tell Huhtamaki it should follow Chipotle’s code of conduct and respect its workers right to organize. Huhtamaki management responded by erroneously claiming the union will be at fault if the company loses a major customer.
The U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) has made preliminary injury determinations in two major trade cases that claim the American steel industry is being undermined by a tsunami of cheap imports from countries around the world.

In separate September rulings, the ITC determined there are “reasonable indications” that domestic companies are being harmed by unfairly cheap imports of cold-rolled and hot-rolled steel products used widely in manufacturing and construction.

In both cases, the domestic industry maintains it has suffered job losses, price declines and market share reductions because of large and increasing volumes of artificially low-priced and subsidized imports.

With the ITC rulings, the cases moved to the U.S. Commerce Department for determinations on whether foreign producers are undercutting American producers with illegal government subsidies and by dumping, the selling of products at less than their fair value.

The USW supports the cold-rolled and hot-rolled trade cases and has testified on behalf of petitions filed separately this summer with the ITC and the Commerce Department by AK Steel, ArcelorMittal USA, U.S. Steel and other domestic steelmakers.

Hot-rolled steel is formed to its final dimensions at a high temperature, typically over 1700 degrees Fahrenheit, when it can be shaped easily. It is pri-
The United States has won a World Trade Organization (WTO) challenge against illegal duties placed by China against an American-made specialty steel product, grain oriented electrical steel (GOES).

International President Leo W. Gerard commended the Obama administration for pursuing the case, saying China’s illegal actions cost American steelmakers $250 million in annual sales and robbed steelworkers of jobs.

“We the WTO exposed China for cheating on the rules by imposing illegal duties in an attempt to protect its state-owned steel industry and to block American entry of a high-end product in their home market,” Gerard said.

The WTO acted in late August after China refused to abide by a 2012 ruling that found it broke the rules for imposing antidumping and countervailing duties on U.S. exports of grain-oriented electrical steel. GOES is a high-tech, high-value specialty steel that is primarily used by the power generating industry in transformers and other large electric machines. It is produced in the United States by AK Steel and Allegheny Technologies Inc.

Anti-dumping cases in hot-rolled steel were filed against all seven countries, while charges of illegal subsidies were aimed at only Brazil, South Korea and Turkey. China was not one of the countries named in the hot-rolled case because imports from China are already subject to an anti-dumping order.

South Korea was the biggest hot-rolled steel exporter under review with its 2014 U.S. imports valued at $678.8 million by the Commerce Department. Australia shipped $143.8 million worth of hot-rolled steel, Brazil $146.3 million, Japan $359 million, the Netherlands $315.2 million, the U.K. $169.1 million, and Turkey $218.4 million.

China was the biggest cold-rolled steel exporter under review with its 2014 U.S. shipments estimated at $514 million by the Commerce Department. Brazil’s shipments were valued at $65 million, India $57 million, South Korea $206 million, Russia $54 million, Japan $143 million and the U.K. $132 million.

Final decisions in both cases are not expected until 2016.
With help from the USW, domestic manufacturers of uncoated paper won preliminary relief from unfairly dumped foreign imports that are responsible for the loss of thousands of American jobs.

In a case brought by the USW and four domestic paper producers, the U.S. Commerce Department established preliminary anti-dumping duties in August of up to 193 percent on uncoated paper imports from China, Brazil, Portugal, Australia and Indonesia.

Together, those five countries exported $690 million worth of uncoated paper to the United States last year. Uncoated paper is typically used for letterhead, envelopes and printed materials such as menus, real estate brochures and college booklets.

International President Leo W. Gerard said the Commerce Department’s decision will help to offset unfair and predatory trade practices that have hurt the domestic industry and devastated working families and their communities.

“Time after time, our competitors have targeted this sector and dumped and subsidized sales into our market,” Gerard said. “Since 2011, eight mills that manufacture this product have shut down as a result of dumped and subsidized imports.”

USW committed to fight

International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees the USW’s paper sector, said rulings so far in uncoated paper trade cases validate the union’s charges and will help to ensure that hard-working members can continue to earn a decent living.

“Our trade laws are designed to restore fair market conditions,” Geenen said. “China and other countries have been dumping products into our market to steal our jobs.”

“We won’t tolerate unfair foreign trade practices that hurt our families and the businesses in our communities,” he said. “We will never let up the fight for our members’ jobs.”

While commending the Commerce Department for its decision, Gerard called for new trade policies that don’t require that American industry and its workers be harmed before action is taken.

“While these trade cases are vital to helping level the playing field, we also need new trade policies, actively enforced by the government, that do not require injury before relief is provided,” Gerard said.

“Workers are sick and tired of Washington sitting on its hands while China and other countries cheat and target our market.”

The preliminary antidumping duties were imposed following investigations by the Commerce Department and the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC), which concluded that the U.S. industry had been materially harmed by imported uncoated paper products sold for less than fair value.

Dumping occurs when a foreign producer sells a product in the United States at lower than the cost of production or below the sales price in its home country.

Cash deposits required

With its Aug. 20 ruling, the Commerce Department instructed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to collect bonds or cash deposits in amounts equal to the announced margins pending final resolution of the cases later this year. Preliminary antidumping margins were set as low as 29.5 percent for Portugal and as high as 193 percent for China, a consistent violator.

The decision was the result of trade cases filed by the USW and four producers – Domtar, Finch Paper, Packaging Corporation of America and P.H. Glatfelter – on Jan. 21, 2015.

In addition to dumping, the petitions alleged that China and Indonesia illegally subsidized their producers and the sale of certain uncoated paper and should be subject to countervailing duties.

The ITC found evidence of harm to American producers. And on June 23, the Commerce Department found that China is subsidizing its producers by 5.8 percent to 126.4 percent, and Indonesia is doing the same, at levels ranging from 43.2 percent to 131.1 percent.

A final determination from the Commerce Department on the subsidies is expected by Nov. 3, although it may be delayed. The ITC is expected to make a final determination on whether the subsidies injured American producers in December.

“Every exporter from every country will now be facing cash deposit requirements of about 30 percent to over 300 percent so we should see substantial relief in the market,” Geenen said.
The USW is calling the paper industry in calling for the U.S. government to extend duties on coated free sheet paper from China and Indonesia widely used in office copy machines and commercial printing.

“The duties that are in place need to continue to ensure that we can maintain good jobs and fair market conditions,” said International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees the USW’s paper sector. “The market is under continuing pressure that puts production and jobs in jeopardy.”

Duties imposed on coated paper in 2010 at the request of the USW and paper makers will expire this year in the absence of corrective action by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC). The Commerce Department is required by a trade treaty, the Uruguay Round Agreements Act, to revoke antidumping and countervailing duties after five years unless it and the ITC determine through a “sunset review” that revocation would likely lead to resumption of dumping or subsidies.

“We are hopeful that this can be dealt with in an expedited manner so that the competitive threat doesn’t again lead to production and job loss here in the United States,” Geenen said. “Our members work hard, play by the rules and deserve to have the trade laws strictly enforced.”

The original decision to impose duties was made in November 2010 in a bipartisan, unanimous decision by the ITC, based on petitions filed in 2009 by the USW and three paper companies – NewPage Corp. (since acquired by Verso), Sappi North America and Appleton Coated LLC.

Jobs impacted

The petitions alleged that certain coated paper from China and Indonesia had been illegally subsidized by those governments and dumped, or sold below market value, in the United States. When the initial decision to impose duties was made in 2010, the coated paper industry had experienced capacity reductions and underutilization resulting in loss of jobs in paper mill communities across the country.

The petitions showed, and the Commerce Department and the ITC validated, that unfairly traded imports from China and Indonesia were a significant contributor to this underutilization of capacity, mill closures and resultant job losses.

The Commerce Department found that imports of coated paper from China were being dumped at margins ranging from 7.6 percent to 135.8 percent and were subsidized at margins ranging from 19.4 percent to 202.8 percent. Imports from Indonesia were being dumped at a margin of 20.1 percent and subsidized at a margin of 17.9 percent.

Fair conditions restored

Since duties were imposed, imports from both China and Indonesia dropped dramatically and fair market conditions were restored, said Mark Gardner, president and CEO of Sappi North America.

“That decision needs to be extended through this sunset review so we can compete based on the quality of our products and so that we can continue to invest in our mills, equipment and people as well as the sustainable manufacturing and procurement practices we implement and pursue.”

There is no question that, if the orders are lifted, serious injury to the domestic industry will follow, said Doug Osterberg, president and CEO of Appleton Coated.

“World markets in paper are under constant pressure, and dumping and subsidy orders have been a principal means of assuring the existence of a fair and competitive market in these products,” he said.
The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a sweeping 12-nation free-trade agreement that has been called “NAFTA on steroids” moved closer to a congressional vote in 2016 after officials completed negotiations in October on the proposed deal.

The trade pact, which includes the United States, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Vietnam and seven other Pacific Rim nations, faces strong opposition from the USW and other labor organizations and an uncertain future in a sharply divided Congress.

While supporters – including President Barack Obama – say the agreement will bolster jobs and wages for U.S. workers, critics have repeatedly pointed out that the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which served as a template for the TPP, had exactly the opposite effect.

“From what we have seen and what we know, at its core the TPP deal will simply continue today’s outdated, disastrous approach to trade,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “This TPP deal shouldn’t even be submitted to Congress and, if it is, it should be quickly rejected.”

Public Citizen, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, studied the effects of NAFTA and concluded that agreement resulted in a net loss of 1 million American jobs in its first 10 years and decreased wages for non-college graduates by an average of $3,300 per year. The agreement also led to the closure of at least 40,000 factories and an annual trade deficit of $181 billion with NAFTA partners Mexico and Canada.

The TPP, which would encompass 40 percent of the world’s economy, could have an even worse effect on American industry and its workers than NAFTA.

“You only have to look at the consistently dismal job numbers in manufacturing to understand what every manufacturing worker already knows,” Gerard said. “We have been on the losing end of trade deals.”

**Negotiated in secret**

The TPP will lead to a new round of offshoring of jobs by corporations looking to cut costs. The deal also contains weak labor and environmental standards, opponents say. Legislators from both ends of the political spectrum have voiced opposition.

Critics also point to the fact that the specific details of the TPP have been kept hidden from public view throughout the five years of negotiations. Workers and unions were virtually shut out of the negotiating process, which was dominated by corporate interests.

“In my experience, when there is such good news to share, there is no need for secrecy,” AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said.

Releasing the text of the deal well in advance of any congressional vote would be the single best way to prove that the deal will be good for workers, Trumka said.

Labor unions are not the only groups to voice opposition to the TPP. Civil liberties organizations and environmental groups including Greenpeace and the Sierra Club have criticized the deal’s lack of worker and environmental protections. Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have both said that they oppose the deal.

**Congressional vote**

The earliest Congress can vote on the TPP itself is Jan. 4, 2016, because 90 days must elapse between the end of negotiations and a ratification vote.

While the White House is pressing Congress to vote on the agreement by next spring, House and Senate leaders may postpone the vote until after the 2016 elections. Such a move would allow legislators to make their decisions with fewer personal consequences.

Congress voted in June to give President Obama “fast-track” authority
over the trade agreement, which meant that lawmakers can say “yes” or “no” to the TPP but will not be able to amend it.

The House approved fast-track authority with 218 votes, just barely enough to pass. The fast-track bill passed the Senate by a vote of 60-38, exactly the threshold needed to avoid a filibuster.

The pact’s fate in Congress appears to be uncertain given the opposition of trade unions and other critics who claim the deal will expose American workers to more foreign competition and cost jobs.

“Right now, I don’t think TPP can get through Congress,” said Lori Wallach of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch.

More of the same
While the final version of the agreement has yet to be made public, the TPP will do nothing to solve longstanding problems with U.S. trade policy that have led the nation into massive trade deficits and caused factories to close by the thousands.

The agreement does little to address currency manipulation, which artificially reduces prices for imported goods from China, Japan and other violators.

The TPP also is likely to contain lower domestic-content provisions for automobiles – an industry that employs thousands of USW members. That would mean more auto parts made in currency-manipulating, poverty-wage countries and fewer at U.S. factories.

The deal also would give multinational corporations the right to sue governments over laws and regulations that the companies don’t like and potentially collect millions from taxpayers to compensate for lost profits.

Ultimately, the agreement could prove disastrous for workers, manufacturers and the overall U.S. economy. And the problems it creates would only get worse if China, South Korea and other nations that regularly flout existing trade rules ultimately join the TPP agreement, as expected.

“Our producers and workers are already under siege from other nations’ massive overproduction and foreign currency devaluation,” Gerard said.

“The TPP may be the final blow to manufacturing in America.”

### Top 10 Unknowns About the TPP

The White House is characterizing the Trans-Pacific Partnership as the “most progressive trade agreement ever.” Unfortunately, the content has been kept secret from the public for some time.

Here are the AFL-CIO’s top unknown things about the TPP.

1. **How will the TPP raise American wages?** While there certainly are some U.S. companies that will benefit from the TPP, how will the TPP restore the connection between increased productivity and increased wages? By encouraging and rewarding more outsourcing of jobs, it is likely to put downward pressure on U.S. wages, as prior free trade agreements have done.

2. **How will the TPP ensure labor obligations actually are enforced?** Will it require a U.S. administration to initiate a case when another party’s labor rights violations are well known? Will countries like Vietnam and Malaysia be in compliance with the labor standards on day one? Existing trade deals allow too much discretion to delay labor rights complaints or ignore them altogether. From what is publicly known about the TPP, these and other critical labor issues remain completely unaddressed.

3. **How will the TPP fix our trade balance or create jobs when it contains no mechanism to control currency manipulation?** Addressing currency manipulation is probably the single most effective way the United States can create jobs, as it allows U.S. products to compete on fair terms in the global marketplace. The promised TPP tariff benefits could be undermined overnight if trading partners devalue their currency. Despite urging from Congress, all reports indicate no effective currency disciplines are included in the TPP.

4. **What mechanism will ensure a level playing field between foreign investors and American small businesses and their workers?** Foreign investors will have access to a private justice system – investor state dispute settlement – that allows them to bypass American courts and hold for ransom laws and regulations they think will interfere with their profits. This right creates an enormous influence that local businesses and workers simply won’t have.

5. **Will the TPP ensure all parties adopt climate measures at least as strong as those the United States implements—or allow for offsetting fees at the border?**

6. **How will the TPP adequately protect local and national control over public services?** If important public services, including schools, libraries, the Post Office and water systems aren’t completely carved out of the TPP’s obligations, American taxpayers may be stuck having to pay a ransom to wrest back democratic control over expensive, low-quality private contractors.

7. **Will the TPP adequately protect against unfair competition by state-owned and state-subsidized companies?** Such companies often operate at a loss simply to drive U.S. competitors out of business. They also may buy U.S. companies in order to take technology to their home country, leaving U.S. workers holding the bag. It’s not clear how small U.S. businesses will be able to use the TPP to fight back.

8. **Will the TPP ensure the United States “writes the rules” of trade?** For example, the reported weak rule of origin for automobiles ensures that China and other non-TPP countries will be able to benefit from the TPP without ever joining. That means China still can write its own rules. Americans need to know “who” is the “we” writing the rules, because it doesn’t appear to be working people.

9. **How will the TPP “help Americans buy American”?** The TPP will require many government purchasing decisions to treat bidders from the 11 other TPP countries with exactly the same preferences as U.S. bidders. Won’t this actually reduce the likelihood that Americans can use their own tax money to create jobs here in the United States?

10. **Will the TPP make medicines more expensive?** Will the drug pricing provisions give foreign pharmaceutical companies more leverage to force Medicare to cover their products and pay higher prices for them?
The closure of California’s Mountain Pass Mine, America’s only domestic source of rare earth elements, is an economic tragedy for 500 USW-represented miners with potentially dire ramifications for national security.

The mine, owned by Molycorp and operated by skilled USW members, was expected just a few years ago to be America’s flagship source of rare earth materials used in strategically important high-tech electronic and military equipment.

The closure shows a lack of respect for American workers and their families and illustrates yet again the tragic consequences of inadequate trade laws and China’s continuing currency manipulation, said District 12 Director Robert LaVenture.

“Much of what came out of the Mountain Pass mine is used in our defense guidance systems, cell phones and other electronic devices we sometimes take for granted,” LaVenture said. “With the mine’s closure, America has become dependent on China for these valuable rare earth minerals.”

The overwhelming majority of jobs at the mine and associated processing facilities will be lost, Molycorp spokesman Jim Sims said.

“China controls market
Molycorp struggled to ramp up production at Mountain Pass as prices plunged in a falling international market controlled by China. The company filed for bankruptcy court protection in August and said the mine would be mothballed by October.

The closure of the modern, recently upgraded Mountain Pass Mine can be viewed as a casualty of China’s method of targeting and then dominating an industry through a combination of overproduction and price manipulation to drive out competitors.

Retired U.S. Army Brigadier General John Adams, a former aviator and military intelligence officer, warned that China now controls 90 percent of the global supply of rare earth minerals, potentially jeopardizing U.S. national security.

“Our military relies heavily on rare earths produced at the Mountain Pass Mine,” Adams said in an op-ed published by The Hill, a political website read by White House officials and lawmakers. “And if they don’t come from the United States, chances are they will come from China.”

The Mountain Pass deposit was discovered in 1949. Molybdenum Corp. of America bought the mining rights, and for three decades, from 1965 to 1995, the mine was the world’s dominant supplier of rare earth minerals.

The mine, acquired by Union Oil in 1977, was closed in 2002 by then-owner Chevron, which cited low prices and environmental issues. It was sold in 2008 to privately held Molycorp Minerals LLC, which was formed to revive the mine.

Rare earth prices began to skyrocket in 2009 when China imposed import restrictions on its rare earth production. In 2010, users began to stockpile rare earths, which sent prices even higher, after Japan claimed China was holding up shipments over a territorial dispute.

Active mining resumed at Mountain Pass in 2010 and in 2011 the company began an ambitious expansion and modernization campaign known as Project Phoenix. Molycorp said the result was one of the “world’s most technologically advanced, energy efficient, and environmentally friendly rare earth production facilities.”

Adams said China’s “outright manipulation of the global supply chain poses a major strategic problem.” He said China has manipulated the market before and should be expected to do it again.

The general called for a national policy to address the U.S. dependence on foreign supply chains for rare earth elements and for a review of American stockpiling policies.

He also called on the federal government and the U.S. mining industry to collaborate in recapturing a larger part of the industry. He said the United States has significant deposits of rare earth minerals in California, Alaska, Idaho, Montana and Missouri.

“America’s approach to REE (rare earth elements) production has been haphazard, unfocused and minimalist,” Adams wrote. “In effect, our heads are buried in the sand. The end of production at Mountain Pass should serve as a warning: the time to shore up our defense supply chains is now, not when it’s too late.”
The White House has formally threatened to veto congressional efforts to lift the ban on crude oil exports, legislation opposed by the USW, because it threatens American refinery jobs and could increase consumer gasoline prices.

“Exporting crude will undermine America’s refining capability, negatively impact U.S. refining jobs, raise fuel prices for U.S. consumers and businesses, and make us more reliant on both imported crude oil and imported petroleum products,” International President Leo W. Gerard said in defending the ban.

Despite the threat of a presidential veto, the U.S. House of Representatives voted Oct. 9 to end the 40-year-old ban on oil exports. The vote by 235 Republicans and 26 Democrats fell short of the 290 votes needed to override a veto.

With the House vote taken, the debate shifted to the Senate, where the prospects for similar legislation are uncertain. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) hasn’t indicated when the issue might move to the floor.

In announcing its willingness to use a veto, the Obama administration said legislation to remove crude export restrictions is not needed at this time. “Rather, Congress should be focusing its efforts on supporting our transition to a low-carbon economy,” the White House said.

More than 30,000 USW members are employed in the domestic oil and refining industry. The USW represents workers at 63 refineries accounting for two-thirds of the domestic refining capacity.

The USW has public support on its side. An opinion poll conducted by Hart Research last year showed that 82 percent of voters – independents, Republicans and Democrats – oppose allowing oil and gas companies to export more U.S. oil and natural gas. State polls showed similar findings.

USW members press Congress

The big integrated oil companies engaged in exploration, production, refining and retail operations and their trade organization, the American Petroleum Institute, spent heavily on television, Internet advertising and studies to promote lifting the ban.

To counter that barrage of spending, USW members sent over 100,000 letters to House and Senate members asking them to not lift the ban, while the union lobbied Congress and used Internet-based social media to inform union members and the public about the issue.

Smaller companies engaged only in refining formed a coalition called Consumers and Refiners United for Domestic Energy (CRUDE) to keep U.S. crude oil at home, where it benefits consumers, businesses and national security.

Based on a report by energy experts, the USW said lifting the export ban could raise gasoline prices.

Whether prices at home change much or not, eliminating the crude oil export ban could provide a competitive advantage to energy-hungry China, Gerard said in testimony before the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee.

“Lifting the crude oil ban will further fuel China’s efforts to undermine U.S. manufacturing jobs in countless industries including steel, rubber and now refining,” Gerard said. “We need to take care of America first.”
GOING BIG
A Different
Working in the steel industry usually means thinking big: mountainous piles of ore, gigantic furnaces that smelt iron, coke and limestone, and rolling mills that pound and squeeze steel into I-beams, bars, sheets and other shapes.

The 104 members of Local 2632-22 at North American Höganäs in Hollsopple, Pa., however, practice a different kind of steel making, one that requires them to go small.

USW members melt metal, largely from scrap, and blast the resulting molten iron or steel with jets of highly pressurized water to produce powdered metals, grains of iron and stainless steel that are finer than sand and serve a wide variety of purposes.

“This is a sophisticated operation,” said International President Leo W. Gerard, who toured the plant this summer with District 10 Director Bobby “Mac” McAuliffe. “Looking from outside, you don’t quite know what’s going on, but you get inside and see that this is a mini-mini-mill.”

Höganäs’ customers often mold the powdered metals into specific shapes like automotive or construction equipment parts. Because there is almost no waste, using powdered metals is an efficient way to make irregularly shaped objects.

These pressed parts are also completely uniform. “They don’t have to grind or shape the pieces. They can get the exact form,” said Bob Hulburt, a production operator who has been at Höganäs for three years. “They have the exact part every time.”

A growing industry

Powdered iron made by Höganäs is used as nutritional supplements and mixed into foods such as breakfast cereal and bread. Höganäs is also working on applications like 3D printing and water filtration.

Other uses for powdered metals include welding, brazing, thermal coating, soft magnetic composites, and electro-photographic and chemical applications.

“I’m excited that we represent people in an industry like that,” Gerard said. “I can see it’s a growing industry, with the way that the world is evolving, and to me that was really an-eye opener.”
USW members at Höganäs work with just one 45-ton electric arc furnace for iron, which is relatively small compared to the 160-ton or 200-ton furnaces one might find at a full-scale steel mill. The melting unit for stainless steel is even smaller, just a 5.7 ton induction melt furnace.

Yet they are able to do a lot with these two furnaces, typically processing around 500 tons of iron and 15 tons of stainless each day. Lately, said Bill Kennell, the melting team leader and 9-year veteran of Höganäs, they’ve been adding hours to increase capacity and meet growing demand.

The metal also has the distinction of being almost entirely recycled. “It comes from all over the place – automotive plants, bushling (scrap) bundles. It’s all super clean,” Kennell said.

Once melted, the metal is hit with jets of high pressure water. This process, known as atomization, breaks the molten metals into tiny pieces.

This, too, is highly efficient. Bob Zahurak, the control room leader for atomization, said that Höganäs’ closed loop system recaptures the majority of the water used in atomizing. “What we lose to steam, we lose, but the rest goes back in the system,” Zahurak said. “We really don’t waste much of anything here. We recycle our stuff pretty well.”

The metal, which comes out of atomizing looking like black dirt, is then annealed, heated in a hydrogen-rich environment to remove oxygen, carbon and other impurities. It is then crushed and screened before being mixed and packed.

Hydrogen is extremely volatile, and the furnace, which is generally between 920 and 940 degrees Celsius, is heated by natural gas. As a result, annealing is a long, delicate process, typically taking between 24 and 36 hours “from black to pack.”

“Dealing with natural gas and hydrogen, you’ve got to watch a lot of things,” said Bob Krull, an annealing control room operator. “You have to control the process very carefully.”

By the time the refining process is finished, the workers have fine grains of grey metal dust, suitable for all sorts of applications.

One of four U.S. operations

The Hollsopple plant in western Pennsylvania is one of four operations the Swedish company runs in North America, all of which manufacture and distribute various powdered metals. Two of the others in nearby Johnstown, Pa., and Niagara Falls, N.Y., are also represented by the USW.

The Stony Creek facility operated as a traditional steel mill, first under
the ownership of Abex Corp., which manufactured railroad wheel castings, and then under Bethlehem Steel and other companies which used the facility to produce ingots over the course of the 1980s.

First Mississippi Corp. purchased the plant in 1989, and as First Miss Steel, the company entered the higher value, alloy and stainless steel ingot market.

When Höganäs acquired the building in 2000, the plant had been badly mismanaged, and the union work force, which was once as large as 150, was down to about 20 by the time the sale was finished.

A successorship clause ensured that the laid off First Miss workers were recalled when operations began more successfully at Höganäs. Conditions improved, but relations between the union and management remained strained.

Höganäs took an uncompromising bargaining position in the 2005 contract negotiations, and the local narrowly avoided a strike. “After negotiations, the company treated us even worse, and plant morale was at an all-time low,” Local 2632 President Jeff Riningger said.

**A true team effort**

In 2006, Höganäs replaced the CEO of North American operations with Avinash Gore.

“In my initial private meeting with him, he assured me that he would treat us much better,” Riningger said. “I thought, ‘Yeah, I heard this song before.’ He gave everyone an immediate raise to show his sincerity. Gradually, we began to trust him.”

Gore instituted a series of wage increases and benefits expansions – some even on top of the contract – to prove to the workers that they will share in any successes their hard work helps the company earn.

He also replaced managers who refused to come on board with his new, cooperative style. “He told us, ‘I can get another manager, but I can’t get another work force,’” said Zahurak, who also serves as a grievance committee member.

This newfound trust made it possible for the union and the company to work together on new operating procedures and ways to service customers.

Since then, profits, productivity and worker satisfaction have all steadily increased.

“I go to a lot of plants, and they tell me about a team effort,” said McAuliffe. “But I think they have two separate teams, labor and management. I think it’s different here. I think this is a real team effort.”
Rodney Mathias starts every work day by carefully slipping into a protective suit and donning double gloves, a hood, eye goggles and other related safety gear.

Fully suited, Mathias looks ready for a nuclear cleanup site or an infectious disease isolation room. Instead, he heads into the vaccine laboratory at Merck & Co., one of the world’s largest pharmaceutical companies.

A biological technician at Merck for some 16 years, Mathias is one of approximately 7,000 USW members in the United States and Canada who work in the pharmaceutical industry.

With roughly 30 individual bargaining units, USW members are engaged in a wide range of fields including research, manufacturing, maintenance, distribution, customer service and more.

“The USW represents skilled pharmaceutical workers in practically every stage of the industry, from the laboratory to factory floors and pharmacy counters,” said International Vice President Fred Redmond, who oversees the sector for the union.

At Merck’s site in West Point, Pa., where Mathias works, the USW represents some 1,800 employees. The site itself is massive, employing about 8,500 on an approximately 400-acre campus containing more than 100 buildings.

Mathias believes the union plays a big role in maintaining highly dedicated and experienced workers as well as guaranteeing strict adherence to safety protocols.

“You have a very stable work force. You have people who have incentive to work. The union definitely helps hold the
company accountable, especially for safety,” Mathias said.

**Saving lives**

West Point manufactures the majority of the company’s 13 vaccines and is the sole U.S. provider of the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine.

It’s easy to see why Mathias takes great pride in his work. He’s part of an extremely exclusive group of people who make the MMR vaccine that saves lives around the world.

“To me, that’s pretty impressive because I’m one of a few dozen people in the world who makes this vaccine,” said Mathias, who knows on a personal level how he and his co-workers save lives.

When some of his own nieces and nephews were vaccinated for Hepatitis B, Mathias was able to locate the batch numbers of their vaccines and confirm that he participated in manufacturing them.

**Rigorous safety precautions**

The work understandably has its pressures.

It can cost $1 billion to produce a vaccine from concept to customer. Because they are expensive and so vital to public health, everyone must follow rigorous procedures to ensure absolute effectiveness and safety.

“The stress (of making sure) that you adhere to all of the procedures is on the forefront of everyone’s mind because you’re dealing with products that go into people intravenously,” Mathias said. “Plus, you’re dealing with a couple million dollar product.”

The processing area must be completely devoid of any outside contaminants. There are intense daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly cleanings that make the space 100,000 times cleaner than the average hospital room.

“It’s a sound process,” Mathias said. “Statistical data shows that what we do is correct. So as long as you follow those procedures, then you feel confident that you’re making good product. You have to keep it focused all day every day.”

Paul Mercurio, recording secretary for Local 10-00086 at the West Point site, said the union brings benefits across the board, including helping to make its members more valuable and irreplaceable compared to workers at non-union Merck sites.

“Often when they try to make a drug or a vaccine somewhere else, they end up bringing the work back here to our site,” Mercurio said. “I think that speaks a lot about our union work force.”

**Solidarity, responsibility**

The Merck local was originally a part of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) union, which merged into PACE and later the USW.

Fostering solidarity and responsibility is important across the entire USW membership, and the pharmaceutical industry is no different. To Mercurio, this comes back to members having the best skills and their employers maintaining a commitment to keeping workers and their customer base safe.

“Having a well-trained work force that takes pride in its work is crucial for success,” Mercurio said.

Aside from technicians like Mathias, the USW has many other members in the pharmaceutical industry, including behind-the-counter pharmacists at Walgreens in Illinois and Safeway and Kroger in Colorado.

Steelworkers can also be found at Mylan, one of the largest generic and specialty pharmaceutical companies. Mylan’s manufacturing site in Morgantown, W.Va., employs over 1,400 USW members, who mainly produce drugs in pill form such as capsules and tablets.

Another substantial group of Steelworkers works for Express Scripts, formerly Medco, a Fortune 500 company that manages prescription benefits for 90 million people in the United States.

The USW represents around 1,800 Express Scripts employees in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington, Florida and New Jersey. From workers at call centers to technicians and pharmacists at mail order locations, there is a strong employee commitment to customers.

Colleen Wooten, USW staff representative for Express Scripts in North Huntingdon, Pa., believes being a part of the union, as opposed to working unrepresented in pharmaceutical retail, helps workers maintain focus.

“It’s more organized as far as workers’ rights go, that’s for sure,” Wooten said. “We’re also just more protected overall in standing up for patient care.”
More than 250 USW members who work in health care and public services spent a few days this summer sharing stories, learning from each other and building their collective strength to fight back against ongoing attacks on workers.

“The knowledge you all gain here doesn’t just belong to you,” International President Leo W. Gerard told the group, which met in Pittsburgh. “It belongs to all of the members of this union. Take it home, and put it to good use for them.”

Members heard from Gerard and International Vice President Fred Redmond, who urged them to take their fighting spirit and solidarity home and use it to energize fellow Steelworkers, from British Columbia to Southern California to Washington, D.C., to the Virgin Islands.

The USW represents about 45,000 health care workers and about 25,000 public service workers in North America. Budget cuts on the federal, state and locals level have put public employees in the crosshairs in recent years, Gerard said. And health care workers – particularly those who work at for-profit health centers – must constantly fight to put the needs of their patients over their employers’ desire for profits.

“We are facing very challenging times,” said Redmond, who oversees the USW’s health care and public employee divisions. “But we do our work with a sense of pride, knowing that the work we do benefits the many.”

James E. Daniels, vice president of Local 13-1 in Texas City, Texas, said working closely with community and religious organizations has helped municipal employees in his...
Building leadership skills

Attendees spent much of their time in small group sessions designed to build specific leadership skills. Health care workers signed up for one of three tracks: membership engagement, collective bargaining and politics in policy.

The membership engagement track included sessions on health and safety issues, contract negotiations, labor-management relations and grievances. The politics track helped members focus on safe staffing as a health and safety issue, and provided members with the tools to effectively lobby their legislators.

“This conference was different because rather than simply identifying issues, the teachers and experts helped us figure out how to use the power of our union to solve problems,” said Malinda Sholler, who works as a phlebotomist at Armstrong Memorial Hospital in Kittanning, Pa. “That’s what we need.”

Wanda Howard, vice president of Local 12160 in New Haven, Conn., a 26-year employee of the city’s regional water authority, said the conference provided her with the skills to bargain contracts, to build a communications and action network within a local union, and to form working relationships with local legislators.

Effie Eitel, a registered nurse and member of the voluntary organizing committee at Indiana University Health, a hospital system currently in the middle of a heated organizing drive, said she would give the conference “five stars.”

“I think the attendees were energized to be the best leaders they can be, in the safest and strongest way possible once they return to their locals,” Eitel said.

Daniels is looking forward to the next conference to meet with other USW members who work in public services. “That way, somebody else can hear what we’ve put into place,” he said. “And we keep moving forward together.”

Larry “Spiderman” Neff is a Steelworker who wrote a book chronicling his 27 years in a Bethlehem Steel mill in his hometown. The book, Rigger: A Memoir from High School to High Steel, is an autobiography and a coming of age steel story, filled with wit and humor.

In his book, Neff highlights the menial jobs he briefly held before beginning his beloved career in 1972 as a Steelworker, following his father and brothers into the mill near their home in Bethlehem, Pa.

What Neff couldn’t have foreseen in the late 1960s was that he would not only literally scale the heights of the mill as a rigger but that he would be one of the workers who would dismantle the behemoth factory after Bethlehem Steel closed it in 1999.

The book’s path is paved by tallying each of Neff’s near-death experiences as a rigger. Rigger crews did the jobs that were “too high, too hard, or too dangerous” for other departments to handle. They also had an earned reputation for being the bad boys of Bethlehem Steel.

Neff got the idea to start writing after attending a rigger reunion in 2011 where he and some steel buddies were sharing stories of their working years. When “Neffy” returned home that night and relayed those shenanigans from the good ol’ days to his partner, Jane, she suggested that he write them down.

Two and a half years and a publisher later, Rigger was released as an eBook. But since most of Neff’s audience would appreciate a hard copy version, the publisher, Blue Heron Book Works, printed the book on paper.

Rigger, the paperback, was launched at ArtsQuest’s SteelStacks, in Bethlehem on Sept. 8, 2014. The stacks are remnants of the mill, left over from the days pictured in the book. At that time, Bethlehem Steel was the second largest steel producer in the country and one of the world’s largest shipbuilding firms.

Now, the stacks serve as nothing more than an attraction to visitors of Sands Resort and Casino, which was built on the former Bethlehem Steel property in 2007 after the company declared bankruptcy in 2001.

Bathsheba Monk, Neff’s editor and publisher, described Rigger as a great contribution to the Bethlehem community and said the book launch was well attended.

“It was packed, and it was really amazing,” she said. “There’s a real need out there to hear the testimony to what happened there of people’s fathers and grandfathers. It’s been really successful.”

Rigger is sold at the ArtsQuest gift shop and visitor’s center, at the Moravian College book store in Bethlehem, on Amazon, on Barnes and Noble Booksellers’ website and is available in an eBook version for use with the Kindle app.
When USW members meet with other groups in their sector they often discover they have more in common with different locals or units than they realized. This proved true at conferences held this year for chemical and atomic workers.

Common employers prompted International Vice President Carol Landry, District 4 Director John Shinn and District 10 Director Bobby “Mac” McAuliffe to hold a chemical conference for those districts this past summer in Atlantic City.

“Our objective was to establish a baseline for our members in the sector and to discuss the challenges we face at the bargaining table and in health and safety,” Landry said.

Seventy members from 22 locals and units, representing almost 3,000 members in the chemical sector, participated in the conference, held on June 23-25, and reported on activities, bargaining challenges and successes.

In a session on collective bargaining, members identified trends and patterns in chemical contracts. They heard presentations on the global chemical industry and the USW’s chemical sector, learned about legislation affecting their jobs, and received training in health and safety, building union power and bargaining.

When Ron Bowser, president of Local 13300 at Occidental Petroleum’s Indspec plant in Petrolia, Pa., talked with other locals he discovered the company was seeking similar concessions including reducing overtime and the right to contract out bargaining unit jobs.

“We learned that everything happening to us wasn’t unique,” Bowser said. “Other locals deal with the same things.”

**International visitors**

Five weeks later, local leaders from Districts 1, 3, 9 and 13 who work for German companies BASF and K+S met with colleagues from the German chemical workers’ union, IGBCE, to learn about the challenges they confront in organizing and bargaining with multinational companies.

The IGBCE delegation included leaders of works councils at K+S and BASF. Participants identified common issues such as health and safety and the shortage of skilled workers. The meeting included a tour of the BASF plant in Geismar, La., hosted by Local 620.

“Communication is key,” said Local 9-562 member Eugene Dunegan from the BASF plant in McIntosh, Ala. “We need to continue this important dialogue with our German brothers and sisters at BASF.”

**Atomic workers meet in Hanford**

Every year the USW’s Atomic Energy Workers Council (AEWC) plans for one of its two annual meetings to be at a USW-represented nuclear site. This fall, the AEWC met in Richland, Wash., and toured the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Hanford Nuclear Reservation — the most contaminated nuclear site in the United States.

Local 12-369 hosted the meeting. Member Brian Ivey led a bus tour around the reservation. He described clean-up work done by USW members and showed visitors the construction of waste treatment plants.

Millions of gallons of highly toxic nuclear sludge thick as peanut butter are stored in large, underground tanks, some of which are leaking not far from the Columbia River. USW members operate remote equipment to clean the leaking tanks and transfer toxic material into new vessels.

**Help from DOE liaisons**

At the atomic council meeting, Landry, District 12 Director Bob LaVenture, local union leaders and staff members of the USW’s Tony Mazzocchi Center for Health, Safety and Environmental Education discussed various problems with DOE career staff and contractors.

Landry gave an overview of the USW’s efforts within the nuclear sector. Participants were updated on health and safety issues and received training on the Freedom of Information Act.

DOE liaisons David Foster, a former District 11 director, and Natasha Campbell discussed how they resolved some of the USW’s issues including the transition of employees from one contractor to another at two former gaseous diffusion plants so the workers did not lose wages or benefits.

District 12 Director Robert LaVenture and International Vice President Carol Landry pose with USW atomic workers during a visit to the Volpentest HAMMER Training & Education Center on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.
Lacie Little wanted to be a USW member because she loved nursing, respected her co-workers and sought the best for her patients.

When she became active with the USW organizing campaign at Indiana University Health Inc. earlier this year, she had high hopes that collective bargaining would improve working conditions and patient care.

The hospital tried to dash those hopes. It used a brutal tactic common among corporations intent on crushing organizing campaigns: termination. Indiana University Health fired Little and disciplined another worker involved in the organizing effort.

To an organizer less devoted to first-class patient care and to her fellow workers, firing might be a fatal blow. For Little, the retribution redoubled her drive.

Little started work at IU Health when she was just 19 years old. She earned bachelor’s degrees in psychology and biology. Then, while working as a secretary for the hospital system, she returned to college to get her nursing degree. She says she learned: “Nursing is caring for people. Great nurses care for their patients. They don’t just take care of them.”

In 2009, she launched her nursing career in the cardiovascular critical care unit. Every day, she challenged herself to treat her patients like they were her grandfather. Several years earlier, he had received devoted care in that unit, enabling him, Little believed, to die in dignity.

When Little began in nursing, the hospital system allowed nurses to provide the kind of care that helped patients get better and feel better as well. But that changed.

In the fall of 2013, the hospital corporation laid off 800 workers and instituted a management method described as “going lean.” What that meant to Little was that the hospital system set up its staff to fail at meeting goals like treating their patients like their grandfathers. And she was right. Last spring, the state Health Department issued a report saying the hospital was short staffed and that it adversely affected patient care.

Nurses sought USW help

Little says nurses began talking about being in moral distress. “People were leaving the hospital and going home and crying because they felt they did not take good care of their patients,” she said.

That’s when the union talk started.

Earlier this year, the IU nurses chose the USW to help them organize. Little and other nurses began asking co-workers if they were willing to sign a card petitioning for a union election.

Little was careful to get signatures only while she and her co-workers were on breaks. Even so, on her third day of doing this, IU Health Inc. officials accused her of getting on-duty nurses to sign and fired her.

By August, with help from the USW, Little won back everything but her job. The hospital issued a formal statement announcing that it had removed the firing from her work record and had awarded her a settlement. But it refused to consider rehiring her for seven years, long enough, it hopes, to prevent her from helping to form a union there.

Despite essentially rescinding the firing, the hospital got what it wanted. It struck fear into the hearts of other organizers and nurses. That, in addition to key organizers leaving for other jobs, has chilled the effort.

Little hasn’t given up the goal, however. She’s working for the USW now. And she’s determined to see the hospital system’s 3,900 nurses represented by the USW.

“Caring for our patients is the most important aspect of our jobs, and I think we as nurses are learning that to succeed with this, we must care for ourselves, too,” she said. “Having a union will do that. The USW will take care of us, so we can care for our patients!”
On her first assignment as a USW Emergency Response Team (ERT) coordinator, Vanessa Powell was called to help the family of a paper worker who had been severely injured at work and airlifted to a hospital in Atlanta.

As Powell walked through the door of the injured man’s hospital room, his father, a 42-year USW member, gave her a big hug. His son had suffered broken ribs, a punctured lung and a busted leg from a forklift accident.

“The father started to cry and said, ‘You know, I’m so proud to be part of an organization that would send someone to look after my son,’” Powell recalled of their meeting. “That meant a lot to me. It meant I am doing something that our members really appreciate.”

Powell, a U.S. Steel employee in Birmingham, Ala., is one of some four dozen USW members who volunteer to be part of the quick-moving ERT program that assists local unions and the families of workplace accident victims in times of grief and stress.

“I tell people it’s the most rewarding job that you never want to do,” said Mike Nicholas, an ERT volunteer from Local 105 in Bettendorf, Iowa. “We don’t want anyone to get hurt. We don’t want to see a grieving family.”

Program adopted in merger
The ERT program originated with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union (OCAW), a predecessor to PACE, and was adopted by the USW a decade ago in 2005 when the unions merged.

While the ERT focuses on member and family needs, it does not interfere with separate teams from the USW Health and Safety Department who are charged with investigating accidents.

The program has grown in 10 years from a small staff of three to 48 trained coordinators, including International Coordinator Allan McDougall, staff member Duronda Pope and the volunteers.

“I’ve seen a huge change,” said Bob Brown, a longtime volunteer from Local 2705 in Minnesota. “You could see things start to click as more people got involved. That has really helped.”

Since the merger, the ERT staff and volunteers have assisted members and their families in 877 workplace tragedies, including 423 fatalities and 454 serious accidents.

“We wanted to have a program of substance for a union of substance,” said McDougall, a former USW miner from Canada who credits support from the International Executive Board and district
Working with local unions

The goal of the ERT program is to work with the local union, be an advocate for the family and make sure their needs — whatever they are immediately after the accident — are met.

McDougall said the ERT coordinators rely on local union members to help them make the first contact with the family and appreciate when a local member comes along on that visit.

“We work with local unions in every case,” McDougall said. “Our bottom line is we never want to disrupt the relationship that the local had with the company before we arrived.”

Families are typically distraught and confused when confronted with an accident that kills or seriously maims loved ones. ERT coordinators are trained to evaluate their needs and provide services or referrals.

“Initially when responding to an accident, we assess what help the family requires. It might be lodging, assistance with benefits and workers’ compensation, or referrals to family or co-workers for counseling,” Pope said.

McDougall urged local unions to consider negotiating specific benefits for surviving spouses of accident victims in their collective bargaining agreements, as several have already done.

Each call is different. Still, the coordinators have a list of things to check, such as what insurance, retirement or other benefits does the member or family have? And do they need help activating them? Often though, a family needs help with the smaller things — walking the dog, locating a babysitter or dealing with household finances. A spouse may be so devastated by the events that they can’t write a check to pay a bill.

“We will help with that,” Pope said.

Offering comfort

In tragic circumstances, members and their families typically prefer to work through their problems with someone from the union rather than a company representative.

“Once they find out you are from the union, their whole attitude changes,” Nicholas said. “They are more accepting. It’s almost like they breathe a sigh of relief.”

Martin Nuno, a USW volunteer who works for Gallo Glass in Modesto, Calif., gives comfort, checks to see if the company is doing what it is supposed to do and offers to help in any way possible.

Local union officers need to know that if there is an accident in their workplace, it’s critical they make the call immediately so an ERT coordinator can be on their way.

“They trust us right away,” said Nuno, who explains he is a worker like them, a machinist who operates a CNC lathe at work. “They don’t know who we are except we are from the ERT, from the union. So, they calm down and pretty much open their hearts. Some start crying. You feel their pain.

“Most of the time, people are happy that the union is helping,” he added. “We are very lucky to have a union, especially the Steelworkers union with all different types of programs.”

The coordinator will seek outside help where necessary for counseling or other things. Sometimes organizations like the United Way lend assistance when, for example, workers’ compensation isn’t enough to make the rent.

Press employer for help

ERT coordinators typically press the employer for help with lodging and food for family members or with funeral costs even though those types of benefits may not be covered in a labor contract.

It can take some cajoling. In her first case, Powell said the paper mill executive she dealt with was at first reluctant to help family members who had traveled to be near their hospitalized loved one.

“So, I said, ‘if this was your wife taking care of you and your daughter was sleeping on a floor, wouldn’t you want her to have a hotel room so she could freshen up and lay down?’ ” Powell recalled.

Less than an hour later, the executive called Powell to say he was sending a gift certificate worth $1,000 for the family’s expenses during the ordeal.

Over the years, the ERT program has evolved from one visit near the time of the accident to include a series of follow-up contacts made over the course of a year.

“The first visit is the most difficult one for the families,” said Brown, the ERT volunteer from Local 2705. “We start to make real headway in the second visit and six months later we touch base again.”

While the ERT program is primarily for USW members, responding coordinators will not overlook the families of supervisors or contractors who are hurt or killed.

“We don’t just do it for our members,” said Nuno. “If there are people working with our members, even contractors, we call on them. We treat them just the same.”
USW Monitoring Alcoa Corporate Split

The USW is studying Alcoa’s plan to split into two companies – a commodity aluminum producer and a new metals products business – and will work to protect workers and retirees through the transition.

“The existing labor and benefit agreements remain intact and in force,” International President Leo W. Gerard said after the Sept 28 announcement of the pending split.

The master agreement between Alcoa and the USW covers approximately 6,000 employees at 12 locations, which produce alumina, primary aluminum, rolled products and aerospace extrusions. That agreement expires on May 15, 2019.

The USW also represents employees at nine locations in the United States and Canada that have separate labor agreements, including the newly organized Alcoa Howmet plant in Hampton, Va.

“The split into two companies and how assets and liabilities are allocated is of great interest to USW members employed at Alcoa, Alcoa retirees and their communities,” said International Vice President Tom Conway, chairman of the union’s bargaining committee at Alcoa.

“The union will be monitoring these developments and work to protect the employment security of active Alcoa employees, and retirement and health care benefits of retired employees.”

OSHA Moves Forward with New Beryllium Rules

The USW celebrated a victory decades in the making when the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced it was moving forward with proposed new rules on occupational exposure to beryllium.

Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels made the announcement in August, along with Richard J. Hipple, president and CEO of Materion Corp., and International President Leo W. Gerard.

“We applaud the release of this proposed rule,” Gerard said. “When it goes into effect, it will save not only the lives of USW members, but all workers exposed to beryllium.”

The USW represents thousands of workers who manufacture or use beryllium alloys and beryllium-containing products.

The substance has unique characteristics (it is an extremely hard, durable and lightweight metal) that make it useful in a variety of industries, including the production of aerospace components, sporting goods, dental alloys and electronics, as well as nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons.

But for workers exposed to the metal’s dust and fumes, especially those who are predisposed to lung diseases, beryllium poses a potentially lethal threat.

“Beryllium is a highly useful metal, but beryllium dust and fumes can cause severe, debilitating and sometimes fatal lung disease,” said Health, Safety and Environment Director Mike Wright. “This rule has been long in coming, but we can finally see the finish line.”

The USW has been involved in beryllium rulemaking since 1977, when OSHA first proposed a standard. If OSHA adopts the new recommended standards, it would mark the first official changes to OSHA rules governing beryllium since the workplace safety agency took shape in 1971.
Still Fighting at Sherwin Alumina

Local 235A in Corpus Christi, Texas, is continuing its effort to reach a fair contract settlement with Sherwin Alumina more than a year after the company locked its doors on 450 union members.

“This has been a difficult year, but the strength and solidarity of our members, along with the support of the community, has been remarkable,” District 13 Director Ruben Garza said. “Sherwin Alumina once made the claim that their workers were like family, but you don’t treat family like this.”

Sherwin Alumina locked out Local 235A members on Oct. 11, 2014, while demanding deep cuts in pay and benefits. The plant is owned by Glencore, a hugely profitable Swiss commodities giant that had a net income of $4.6 billion in 2013.

“We work hard, and we take pride in what we do,” said Local 235A Vice President Rey Hererra. “We aren’t asking for anything other than fair treatment. We want to share in the company’s success.”

Local Rejects Extension

Local 200 in Muscle Shoals, Ala., voted in August to reject a proposed contract extension with Constellium. The current agreement runs until 2017, but the aluminum producer, which employs 450 USW members, said it was planning to ramp up production to meet the needs of new customers and wanted to bargain new agreements first.

The existing contract remains in effect.

Cement Workers Renew Council

The USW’s newly revived 2015 Cement Council met in October at the union’s headquarters in Pittsburgh, the group’s first meeting since 2007.

The new committee, under the direction of District 12 Director Robert LaVenture, District 11 Director Emil Ramirez and District 10 Director Bobby “Mac” McAuliffe, represents 144 units and more than 6,250 members in the cement industry.

During the two-day conference, more than 60 delegates discussed industry trends and challenges. They reported on contract issues, health and safety concerns and contracting out. Members exchanged ideas on how to strengthen the council and participated in Rapid Response and Health and Safety training.

USW Members Ratify New Contract at Kaiser Permanente

Local 7600 members voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new three-year agreement with health care giant Kaiser Permanente. The agreement covers 6,000 USW members and 100,000 other members of the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions.

“Our locals have approved the most comprehensive contract in the history of our labor-management partnership,” said Hal Ruddick, director of the coalition, which includes 28 local unions.

The agreement includes across-the-board wage increases as well as improved health care benefits, stronger health and safety provisions, and more funding for training. The contract went into effect on Oct. 1.

“This contract is a significant step forward, both for USW members at Kaiser and for the patients who rely on them for quality health care,” said International Vice President Fred Redmond, who leads the USW’s Health Care Workers Council. “It expands opportunities for education and career advancement, as well as engaging union members more directly in health and safety issues.”

Kaiser Permanente, based in Oakland, Calif., is the largest managed health care organization in the country, with 38 medical centers and 620 medical offices in eight states.
Unions Call on DuPont to Improve Safety

The USW and the International Chemical Workers Union Council (ICWUC) released an open letter calling on DuPont and a spinoff company, Chemours, to address health and safety problems that have taken lives and threatened communities.

The USW represents more than 1,000 workers in DuPont and Chemours plants in Buffalo and Niagara Falls, N.Y., Edgemoor, Del., and Deepwater, N.J. The ICWUC represents 400 DuPont and Chemours employees in Parlin, N.J., and LaPorte, Texas. The LaPorte plant was the site of a Nov. 15, 2014, toxic gas release that killed four workers.

“We have close relationships on safety and health with many employers,” Gerard said. “But in the past DuPont has rejected any involvement by union safety and health professionals. We have the right to represent our members on safety and health. We can do that through OSHA complaints and labor board charges, but we would greatly prefer to do that by working together on the basis of mutual respect.”

Universal Stainless Labor Agreement

Local 7312-03 has ratified a five-year collective bargaining agreement with Universal Stainless & Alloy Products, Inc., covering employees at the company’s facility in Titusville, Pa. The contract maintains flexible work rules and profit-sharing incentives.

Caterpillar Must Allow USW Probe

A federal court has ruled that Caterpillar must allow a USW investigator into its South Milwaukee factory to investigate the cause of a deadly 2011 accident.

The USW’s right to represent its employees is more important than the mining equipment company’s claim of property rights, the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled.

The case stems from the September 2011 death of Jeff Smith, a crane operator and Local 1343 member who was killed when a 36-ton piece of equipment crushed him while it was being rotated by a crane.

The cause of the incident was never determined, according to OSHA, although Caterpillar paid $7,000 in fines for serious safety violations.

The USW will now conduct a full investigation, said Brad Dorff, president of Local 1343. “I feel as if justice is being served here, finally, after four long years,” Dorff said.

USW Seeks Health Plan Tax Repeal

The USW joined U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) in calling on Congress to rescind a federal excise tax on comprehensive health care plans.

Nicknamed the “Cadillac tax,” the policy forces working families to pay more for health insurance or reduce benefits because it imposes a 40 percent tax on the cost of some health plans. Brown introduced a bill in September that would repeal the tax.

“USW members are already seeing the effects of the tax at the bargaining table even though it does not go into effect until 2018,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “Our members are fighting employer proposals to avoid the impact of the tax by dramatically increasing the cost of deductibles and copays coming out of their pockets without corresponding wage increases.”

Brown’s repeal proposal has support from Democrats and Republicans, business and labor.

“This tax falls on the backs of working people because it hits average plans, not only those of the richest one percent. It is really a ‘Chevy tax’ rather than the ‘Cadillac tax,’” Gerard said.

Portsmouth Funding Saves Jobs

Local 689 members who work for a contractor at the former Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion site in Piketon, Ohio, received a temporary reprieve from layoffs when the Department of Energy (DOE) allotted money to continue clean-up operations at the site until Congress passes a final appropriations bill.

Fluor-BWXT Portsmouth, the lead site contractor for the cleanup work, received confirmation of the funding on Oct. 7. The company had planned to furlough between 325 and 500 workers in late October.

Adjunct Faculty Approves New Contract

Part-time professors at Point Park University in Pittsburgh who belong to the USW’s Adjunct Faculty Association have overwhelming ratified a first contract.

Point Park’s adjunct professors voted to unionize in June 2014 and began negotiating in December. The contract covers some 300 adjunct professors and was approved by a 93 percent margin, the USW announced on Nov. 5.

The contract includes pay increases and job security provisions.
Union Plus Offers Education Savings

Union Plus, the AFL-CIO’s benefit program for union members, offers help to families who are dealing with the exorbitant cost of higher education.

Union Plus grants scholarship awards, ranging from $500 to $4,000, to students attending two-year or four-year college programs, graduate school or a recognized technical or trade school. Recipients are selected based on academic ability, financial need, social awareness and appreciation of labor. Applications for the scholarships are now available. The deadline to apply is Jan. 31, 2016.

Discounts are available on textbooks as well as college and graduate school test preparation courses from The Princeton Review and college counseling from College-wise, a division of Princeton Review.

For information, visit UnionPlus.org/Education online to learn about benefits available through Union Plus Education Services.

How to Run for Office

A select number of USW members attended four days of intensive training this summer in Washington, D.C., on how to effectively run for political office.

The sessions focused on everything that goes into running a campaign, including identifying donors, winning local endorsements and earning press coverage, along with the importance of motivating volunteers for the campaign team.

Participants included Clint Bryant of Local 9036-3, Brandon Duncan of Local 727, Tyson Geiger of 207L, Jay Sexton of Local 105 and Jason Williams of Local 1138.

Promoting Racial Equality

International Vice-President Fred Redmond traveled to Brazil to participate in the 20th anniversary celebration of INSPIR, the Inter-American Trade Union Institute for Racial Equality.

Over 60 union leaders from Latin America marked the 20th year of trade unions’ efforts to eliminate race-based economic inequality in the Americas and to call for Colombians of African descent to be included in peace talks and post-conflict implementation there.

“The forces that are hurting the African-American community – rising inequality, the premeditated destruction of political rights and systematic state violence – are directly linked to a global movement of the right that you are experiencing in Brazil,” Redmond said. “Just as the attack is global, so our resistance must be globalized.”

Members Ratify Contract with Aleris

USW members who voted to form a union late last year have agreed to a first contract with Aleris Rolled Products, an aluminum manufacturing company in Buckhannon, W.Va.

The five-year agreement, which members ratified Sept. 28, covers about 50 production and maintenance workers. It includes wage increases, overtime procedures, subcontracting protections and other improvements to working conditions.

SOAR Chapter Honors Ron Gildow

SOAR Chapter 23-9 in Martins Ferry, Ohio, dedicated a memorial stone on Sept. 2 to the memory of its former president, Ron Gildow, who had also served as president of Local 1238.

The engraving on the memorial stone describes Gildow, who died on April 15, as a man of honesty, integrity and compassion. The well-attended ceremony was followed by a luncheon.

Pencils for Success

Members of Local 7-838, which represents 485 shop floor workers at Mueller Water Products Inc. foundry and factory operations in Decatur, Ill., helped to provide 160 students in foster care with new school supplies.

The local got behind a program called Pencils for Success run by one of the parents in the foster care system coordinated by the Webster-Cantrell Hall child welfare agency. The USW members went way beyond pencils and donated dozens of new backpacks stuffed with school supplies.

Holly Newbon, director of development at Webster-Cantrell, said children in kindergarten through high school went back to class with their heads held high. “These guys who donated all this have huge hearts, and I think the bottom line is that the children see there are other people out there who care about them,” she said.

Editor’s Note

In the last edition, retired Local 1010 member Joe Gutierrez’s name was missing from the caption of a photo showing a statue honoring Steelworkers from the former U.S. Steel South Works in Chicago.
BAD TRADE KILLS
GOOD JOBS

The USW fights for good-paying jobs everywhere possible – at bargaining tables, in Washington, D.C., in state capitals across the country and in our hometown communities.

Our brothers and sisters work in nearly every sector of the economy, where every day the results of trade – good and bad – are felt at work in American industry and by our families at home.

The fight for good jobs is a fight for a level playing field for skilled American workers who compete in a global marketplace against countries that cheat on trade laws and manipulate their currencies.

That’s why the USW has filed trade complaints in large industries like steel, paper and tires and in small industries including citric acid production to maintain jobs and market share.

We want new trading policies that work for American workers rather than multinational corporations, policies that create domestic jobs, promote rising wages, and reduce income inequality and our nation’s staggering trade deficit.

To follow the fight and see how you can help, go inside this edition of *USW@Work* to pages 12 to 19 and search our website, www.usw.org.

Here are helpful links to information on trade cases, union publications and the Rapid Response activist network:

Fighting for Fair Trade:  
http://www.usw.org/act/campaigns/fair-trade

USW@Work Trade Watch:  

Rapid Response:  
http://www.usw.org/act/activism/rapid-response

USW Blog:  
http://usw.to/41

Steelworkers YouTube Channel:  
http://bit.ly/1kgvWOP

Recent Trade Cases:  
http://usw.to/3V

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 _______