If there’s going to be NAFTA negotiations, we have to look at the historical debacle that it’s produced for workers. Workers in all three countries have been on the short end of the deal.

International President Leo W. Gerard
July 21, 2017
Rexnord Again Fleeing Union

I just finished reading your article about Rexnord in the spring edition of the magazine. It certainly sounds like a re-run of Rexnord’s record in Chico, Calif.

My husband worked for this company for 17 1/2 years and expected to work another three years to retirement when he was informed Rexnord had been sold to Babcock Industries, a British-owned company.

The British sold off every piece of equipment they could not use and completely closed the company. Once again, Rexnord was fleeing the union.

Do not look for Rexnord to have any compassion for the loyal employees they have used for so many years. You can be sure Rexnord will close and not have a second thought as to what they have done to all the families who gave their loyalty to Rexnord.

Karoline Harman, Chico, Calif.

No More Business as Usual

I am one of the 400 plus Steelworkers who used to work at Alcoa Wenatchee Works until 18 months ago. It is shameful that hardworking Americans are out of their jobs, and Congress is only interested in preserving business as usual for Alcoa. It is pathetic that people at the top will not speak out about what has happened to unionized labor in America!

Harold Collins, East Wenatchee, Wash.

Say No to Comp Time

Republicans in Congress are at it again, trying to take away what I think is one of the bedrock principles of our country’s labor laws, and I hope my friends in the union movement are paying attention.

This bill would take away time-and-a-half overtime pay and turn it into “comp time.” On the surface this might sound like a good option for people who value extra time off. But people need to take a closer look at what this would really do.

Instead of giving you for your extra work right away, this would let your boss hang on to wages you have earned and pay you later when (and if!) you are able to use your comp time. All in all, it’s a terrible deal for workers and a good deal for management. It takes away overtime rules that our brothers and sisters fought for generations ago.

These attacks on workers are not going to stop. It is time to show the power of unity, stand up for ourselves, and make our voices heard. Please call your senators and congressional representatives and tell them to say no to comp time!

Chris Frydenger, Local 7-838 Decatur, Ill.

We Need Affordable Health Care

Republicans in Congress have been attempting to wipe away Medicaid and Social Security for years. Now, with Trump in the White House, this vicious attack is closer than ever to being launched.

Cutting health care and repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) does not just affect the elderly and the poor. It affects us all. Future generations will suffer from worse physical and mental health outcomes, and in rural America, where the health care job sector has overtaken the once booming manufacturing sector, hospitals will be forced to cut many of the jobs that were created over the past few years thanks to the ACA.

In my home state of Ohio, we are already suffering from high mortality rates and minimal access to medical facilities. Repealing the ACA and possibly replacing it with something like the Republicans’ Better Care Reconciliation Act would cause even more damage to our vulnerable communities.

As a union, we cannot stand by and allow it to happen. We must push our senators and representatives to maintain funding to Medicaid, Social Security, and other programs that keep Americans healthy and employed.

Tim O’Daniel, President, Local 1014L Akron, Ohio

Defend American Steel

I spent my career as a Steelworker at the ArcelorMittal Coatesville plant in Pennsylvania, where armor for our modern aircraft carriers is made. I’m so proud of my time there, which included 25 years in the melt shop.

Originally founded in 1810, Coatesville is the oldest continuing operating steel mill in the United States. The financial bedrock of the local community, it also equips the military with steel plate, alloy and other materials used to keep our troops safe.

But now Coatesville is in danger. A flood of unfairly traded steel imports from places like China and Russia is putting the plant at risk and jeopardizing our national security.

I can tell you firsthand that American Steelworkers are ready and willing to compete against anyone in the world. But they work in a free market and play by the rules. They can’t compete with the Chinese or Russian government!

It was an honor to make the steel used by our military. I’d hate to see Coatesville fall victim to unfair trade, which might mean our military would have to turn to China or Russia for steel.

Please join me in telling President Trump and Congress to stand up for our nation’s defense and defend American-made steel and aluminum.

Dave McLimans, President, Chester County Labor Council
The USW members who work at the Mardi Gras Casino and Resort in West Virginia offer an object lesson in the importance of organizing workers in the growing service economy.

In a region where manufacturing, mining and chemical production once dominated the local work force, the 350 members of Local 14614-F8 hold family-supporting jobs as dealers, cashiers, clerks, bellhops, housekeepers and other jobs at the hotel, casino and dog-racing track just outside of Charleston, W.Va.

“That’s all because of our union,” said unit President Delthadawn Shamblen, who works as a blackjack dealer. “That’s because we are Steelworkers.”
The first USW members at the site were racing tellers, organized not long after the facility opened as a dog track in the 1980s. Over the years, as the state’s gambling laws evolved, Mardi Gras also expanded to include slot machines, table games and a luxury hotel.

USW members were essential partners in the political efforts that made that expansion possible, said Ron Brady, who has been president of amalgamated Local 14614 since 2006.

A decade ago, when West Virginia began to consider expanding its gambling laws to include table games, the casino’s owners initially resisted efforts to ensure that the new workers hired in the process would become USW members. As a result, without the union’s support, those early efforts failed.

“They had to have our help to make it happen,” Brady said. “The union worked hard to create these jobs and to make sure they would be good jobs. And it benefitted the whole state.”

Making a difference

Today, the only employees at the site who are not USW members are security guards and food and beverage service workers.

Having started at the casino in a nonunion job as a security guard, Robert Hughes has seen firsthand the difference that the USW makes in his and his co-workers’ lives.

Now, Hughes is responsible for supplying dealers and cashiers with chips, moving them back and forth from tables to the casino’s cages.

Besides providing higher wages and better, more affordable health and retirement benefits, the USW provides far better working conditions, Hughes said, particularly at a workplace like Mardi Gras, which operates continuously 365 days a year.

“If we have problems, the union is there to get them resolved,” said Hughes, who once worked the overnight shift at the facility but now enjoys a regular 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. schedule as a result of his seniority.

“Having the union makes a big difference,” Hughes said.
Maintenance worker Steve Rhodes has seen that difference his whole working life, having been a USW member at a now-closed chemical plant in the area before coming to work at the casino 15 years ago.

“I’ve been a Steelworker all my life,” said Rhodes, who handles deliveries and works to set up events both at the hotel and at off-site locations. “Our wages wouldn’t be nearly what they are without the union.”

Rhodes, who has helped to negotiate several contracts as a member of the unit’s bargaining committee, said USW members at Mardi Gras enjoy significantly higher wages and lower out-of-pocket health care costs than workers at the nonunion casinos and hotels in West Virginia.

“I’d hate to be without the union,” Rhodes said. “Living wages are so important for service workers.”

**Anti-union legislation**

Shamblen, the unit president, has worked at the facility for 24 years, starting as a teller at the dog track and working her way up to becoming a blackjack dealer.

“The workers at Mardi Gras are higher paid than any other gambling facility in the state,” she said.

Despite those obvious benefits of union membership, the passage of right-to-work (for less) legislation in West Virginia in 2016 has presented a challenge to the unit, which deals with a young workforce and near-constant turnover.

Shamblen holds a regular, contractually mandated orientation for new union hires during which she asks workers to sign union cards.

“We have a lot of young people who come to work for us, and some of them don’t know much about the union,” she said. “But it’s a really good opportunity for us to explain to people why the union is so important.”

“(Before right to work), it was easy,” she said. “Now, we have to work at it, but people really do understand why the union makes a difference.”
Steelworkers who build nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers for the U.S. Navy in Newport News, Va., overwhelmingly ratified a new contract that improves wages and preserves affordable health insurance.

The 52-month contract covering some 9,700 Steelworkers at Newport News Shipbuilding was approved by a 93 percent margin on July 13, less than a week after Local 8888 announced a tentative agreement with the company. The contract will run until November 2021.

“We knew going into these negotiations that we were in for a tough fight,” said International Vice President Fred Redmond, who chaired the union’s negotiations with the shipbuilding company for the third consecutive time. “We prevailed because we were prepared and never wavered from our objectives.”

The negotiations were clouded by the stalemate in Washington, D.C., over the federal budget, uncertainty about future contracts with the Navy and rampant inflation in health care costs, Redmond said.

A division of Huntington Ingalls Industries, Newport News Shipbuilding is the largest industrial employer in Virginia, the sole designer, builder and refueler of U.S. Navy aircraft carriers, and one of two providers of Navy submarines. It employs about 20,000 people overall.

The contract for USW members includes a $1,200 signing bonus and improved wages and pensions. It features language that bolsters promotional opportunities and preserves quality, affordable health insurance for union members and their families.
New money in contract

In addition to the $1,200 signing bonus, USW-represented members will receive a first-year wage increase of 1.2 percent. In 2018, wages will jump by 2.6 percent and will rise by another 3 percent in both 2019 and 2020. All told, members should receive about $15,000 in new money over the life of the contract, according to a contract summary.

“Everything is changing for the better: more money, better health insurance and other benefits,” said Gloria Raynor, who has worked at the shipyard for more than 16 years and has been a union member from the start. “If it wasn’t for the union, the company would take advantage of us. The union speaks for you when you can’t speak for yourself.”

Leading up to the negotiations, the company tried to tamp down expectations by signaling to the union that it had no money for raises in the first year of the contract and would seek to lower its health care costs.

At the same time, local union members expected pay raises. They saw the company making record profits, talking about hiring up to 3,000 new workers and undertaking a major facility expansion to boost speed and efficiency of carrier and submarine production.

Arnold Outlaw, the local union president, said the bargaining committee “held strong” and was supported at every step along the way by Redmond and “our outstanding international staff.”

“We resisted company efforts to deny our members a pay raise in the first year of the contract,” Outlaw said. “We looked out for our members stuck in certain pay grades. We rolled back health insurance premiums, and indeed, we rocked the boat with this contract.”

Rock the boat

Thousands of shipyard workers wore “Rock the Boat” buttons, which sent a message to the company that union members were paying attention and stood behind their bargaining committee.

The buttons were a popular part of Local 8888’s decision to significantly ramp up communications to shipyard members, many of whom were going through their first contract bargaining.

As negotiations were underway, rank-and-file members received e-blasts, text messages, web stories and social media posts about the talks and efforts made by their bargaining committee.

In May, with serious bargaining looming just a few weeks away, Outlaw addressed shareholders at the company’s annual meeting, telling them the union expected a fair contract that recognized contributions made by the workers and secured the future for families and retirees.

“We resisted company efforts to deny our members a pay raise in the first year of the contract. We looked out for our members stuck in certain pay grades. We rolled back health insurance premiums, and indeed, we rocked the boat with this contract.”

The weekend before shareholders met, Vice President Mike Pence christened a new submarine at the shipyard – the eighth Virginia-class sub to be built by members of Local 8888. The local’s members also built the $13 billion aircraft carrier Gerard R. Ford, which was commissioned on July 22 by President Trump.

“The men and women at Newport News have honed their skills and learned their trades year after year, decade after decade, ship by ship,” Outlaw said. “They do difficult, hard work in freezing temperatures and sweltering heat, determined to get the job done right. The culture of excellence they helped to create can only thrive if the value of their work to this company and the nation is properly recognized.”

Bargaining barbecue

As the contract neared its expiration date, the local held a “bargaining barbecue” to update members on the contract discussions and build support and show solidarity. The company put up a notice telling supervisors they were not allowed to grant leave time for any hourly employee to attend the event.

Despite the company’s attempt at blocking attendance, members poured out of the shipyard after their shifts ended and some came before the second shift started. Hundreds of people signed up to receive bargaining alerts and volunteered to help. Rock the Boat buttons were seemingly everywhere during the barbecue on t-shirts, caps and backpacks.

Outlaw fired up the crowd when he said, “This company has made a lot of money off of our sweat, and we want our fair share, not excuses!”

Redmond described bargaining “as tough and slow moving.” He said rising health care costs were a major roadblock, with the company wanting to shift more of the burden onto hourly employees.

When the bargaining was finished, the USW negotiators were able to forestall immediate increases in employee health care premiums, meaning their wage increases wouldn’t all be eaten up by insurance costs.

The agreement rolls back employee health insurance premiums to 2016 rates at the beginning of 2018. Future insurance premium increases will be capped at 5 percent.

Mary Fellows, a shipyard worker for five years, said she voted for the contract in part because of a change in the health care plan that makes dependent children of union members eligible for maternity benefits.

“This new benefit will help members in that situation,” she said.

Jason Haas, a sheet metal worker with 13 years in the yard, said he appreciates the good contracts negotiated by the USW but believes too many people take the union for granted.

“Without the union,” he said, “the company could make whatever rules they want.”
Nearly 5,000 USW members working for Packaging Corp. of America (PCA) ratified separate master contract agreements covering the company’s mill and converter operations.

The mill agreement, which covers some 2,500 members at seven PCA locations, was approved in May. The converter agreement, covering 2,250 members at 24 locations, was ratified June 30.

“Our efforts at PCA demonstrate the success of our National Paper Bargaining program and underscore the power of coordinated bargaining and solidarity,” said International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees collective bargaining for the U.S. paper industry.

Both agreements provide stability for the future. They contain long-term protection of the most important benefits, including medical insurance and retirement plans, and the highest annual wage increases in the paper industry.

“We secured the best-in-industry health care plan through the life of local agreements under the master and made best-in-industry wage gains,” said bargaining council chair Leeann Foster, an assistant to International President Leo W. Gerard.

The agreements also include important safety gains and improved language on organizing to ensure that any unorganized sites that PCA may acquire do not threaten the economic security of other locations.

When it purchases nonunion facilities, the company has agreed to allow the USW access to employees during an organizing campaign. If the union succeeds in organizing any such facilities, they will be integrated into the master agreements.

“We have the right to be on site in a cafeteria, in break rooms or other like areas during an organizing campaign, and the master agreement will automatically apply to those we organize,” Foster added. “We also made big safety improvements.”

Safety issues

The union and company agreed to work together to empower workers to raise safety concerns and to stop work if and when it is necessary, Foster said.

A “right to act” mechanism will be developed at each location for circumstances where an employee believes assigned work involves a substantial risk of harm requiring immediate action.

The company has also committed to continue the USW/PCA Safety Roundtables, including participation in the USW Health, Safety and Environment Conference.

In general, the master agreements with PCA lock in beneficial economic and security terms and allow for local union bargaining at certain intervals tied to varying expiration dates of local agreements.

The master process, instituted after the merger with PACE in 2005, has overall led to better deals in the paper sector and at PCA, the bargaining committees said in contract summaries distributed to members.

The goals in both the mill and converter negotiations were to secure industry-leading agreements that enhance economic security of USW members and further unify PCA and sites once owned by Boise. Both bargaining committees said they had reached those goals.

PCA purchased Boise Inc. in 2013. The combined company is the fourth-largest producer of containerboard and corrugated packaging products in the United States, and the third-largest producer of uncoated free sheet paper for office and home use in North America.

Contract highlights include wage increases of 2.5 percent in every year for both contracts. The mill agreement includes arbitration of wage rates for new or changed jobs and wage retention for two years in some shut-down situations.

Both agreements lock in the most important features of the current health care plan, regardless of what happens to the health care industry nationally.

While there are minor changes explained in the summary sent to employees, net out-of-pocket costs will remain comparable to the cost of the current plan. In any case, none of the changes will take place until the Jan. 1 after current local agreements expire.

The mill agreement covers PCA employees at mills in Counce, Tenn.; DeRidder, La.; Filer City, Mich.; International Falls, Minn.; Jackson, Ala.; Tomahawk, Wis.; and Valdosta, Ga.

The master agreement for the converter locations covers PCA employees at two dozen locations.

The box locations include: Akron, Ohio; Arlington, Texas; Ashland, Ohio; Burlington, Wis.; Colby, Wis.; Garland, Texas; Grandville, Mich.; Jackson, Tenn.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Lancaster, Pa.; Liverpool, N.Y.; Marshalltown, Iowa; Mascot, Tenn.; Middleton, Ohio; Milwaukee; Minneapolis; Newark, Ohio; Newberry, S.C.; Plymouth, Mich.; Richmond, Va.; Salisbury, N.C.; Vincennes, Ind.; Wallula, Wash.; and Winter Haven, Fla.
The future is looking bright for USW members at Corning Inc.’s glass factory and production development center in Harrodsburg, Ky., where scratch-resistant Gorilla Glass for Apple’s first iPhone was born a decade ago.

Apple is behind the optimism. The multinational technology company awarded Corning $200 million to benefit the 65-year-old Harrodsburg factory, located in a rural region of Kentucky that, until Gorilla Glass came along, was best known for rolling green hills, horse farms and bourbon.

Corning Harrodsburg is the first beneficiary of Apple’s new Advanced Manufacturing Fund, through which the company hopes to invest $1 billion in U.S. companies to foster skilled jobs and new innovation in American manufacturing.

“I am very, very excited. It is great news,” said Local 1016 President Mark Curtsinger, a glass melting operator who doubles as a production troubleshooter when needed. “There may be more jobs coming our way because of it.”

Without being specific, Corning said the Apple investment will extend advanced manufacturing capabilities at Harrodsburg to meet the needs of next-generation mobile consumer electronics. This will support ongoing state-of-the-art glass processing at the facility, which plays a dual role as a factory and a technology center.

Workers at Harrodsburg perfect new products and manufacturing procedures for glass formulas developed by Corning’s global research and development center in Corning, N.Y. Those processes are then typically exported to larger Corning sister plants where smartphones and other electronic gadgets are assembled. Besides Kentucky, Gorilla Glass is made in Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

Continued innovation
Apple Chief Operating Officer Jeff Williams traveled to Harrodsburg with Wendell Weeks, Corning’s chairman, chief executive officer and president, to announce the news to Harrodsburg’s 400 plus employees. Williams called Corning a great example of a long-standing supplier that has continued to innovate.
“This partnership started 10 years ago with the very first iPhone, and today every customer that buys an iPhone or iPad anywhere in the world touches glass that was developed in America,” he said. “We’re extremely proud of our collaboration over the years, and we are investing further with Corning, who has such a rich legacy of innovative manufacturing practices.”

A specialized toughened glass, Gorilla Glass has been a part of every iPhone since the original version of the gadget was introduced in 2007 by the late Apple CEO Steve Jobs. The glass is now in its fifth generation.

In late 2006, while preparing for the launch of the iPhone, Jobs became irritated with a scratched plastic screen on a prototype phone that he carried in his pocket with coins and keys.

“He said, ‘We need glass,’ ” Apple COO Williams related while in Harrodsburg. “And I said, ‘Within three to four years, technology may evolve …’ He said, ‘No, when it ships in June it’s got to be glass.’ ”

Corning had experimented with similar products in the 1960s, but never found a sustained market for them. Apple’s iPhone and dozens of other products eventually provided one.

Corning and Weeks got involved, and when the iPhone launched that June the screen was made of scratch-resistant Gorilla Glass, beginning a mutually beneficial relationship for both companies.

“It helped set the tone for iPhone,” Williams said.

**Smartphone boom**

The smartphone boom that exploded in 2007 led to an overhaul of the plant in 2010 and provided new jobs for USW members in the depths of a severe economic downturn.

In the decade since the first iPhone, Corning estimates its partnership with Apple has created and sustained nearly 1,000 jobs across the company in research and development, manufacturing and other functions, including over 400 jobs in Harrodsburg.

The funding from Apple will cement for the foreseeable future Harrodsburg’s designation as Corning’s “glass-melting technology center of excellence,” Weeks told employees.

“We could have deployed this technology in any number of locations worldwide, but we chose Harrodsburg because of the legacy of this plant and talent of our people,” Weeks told an audience of workers, business leaders and media. “We are truly blessed to have employees who are talented, flexible and dedicated.”

The praise from the top was noticed by rank-and-file employees.

“It was a big morale booster,” Curtsinger said, adding that the union, which represents some 240 production and maintenance workers, is a positive influence at the plant. “We have a very good relationship with management here,” he said.

Judy Devine, a 20-year employee from Danville, Ky., about 10 miles from Harrodsburg, believes Apple’s investment decision says a lot about the facility, Corning’s oldest, and the people she works with on the factory floor.

“People here respect their jobs,” she said. “Everyone tries very hard to do good work and, evidently, we have made a good impression on Apple. They are putting a lot of faith and trust in us.”

Devine has worked in other manufacturing settings and said she has no desire to work anywhere else.

“My only regret is I didn’t come here sooner,” she said. “I’m proud of the work we have accomplished and will accomplish.”
Family affair

Harrodsburg is small enough that there are lots of personal and family connections at the Corning factory. Curtzsinger’s parents, for example, met at the plant, and his father worked there for 38 years. Now, he and his brother, an electrician, carry on the tradition.

Glenn Logue is in his 29th year at Corning and applauds the Apple investment. After a year in college, he started out in the melting department at Harrodsburg before moving to the mason shop with stints in the tank and electrical shops.

“I’ve been here almost 30 years, and as far as I’m concerned it’s the biggest thing that has happened to Harrodsburg,” Logue said. “It’s a good thing for working people. It’s good for the community. It ensures that Corning is going to be around for a while. It’s good all the way around.”

As the factory develops more sophisticated products with Apple’s financial assistance, Louisa Adams, a 26-year employee who works as a sheet glass operator, is optimistic it will continue to provide good jobs to new generations of workers from in and around Harrodsburg.

“We have employees from a lot of surrounding counties. It’s great for the area,” she said. “We’re a flourishing business, known for technology and research and the development of quality standards. I think that’s why we have the longevity that we do.”

Most experienced site

Founded some 65 years ago, the Harrodsburg plant is the company’s most experienced American production site. It has continually evolved with the times, as has Corning, which was founded in 1851.

When it first opened in 1952, the Harrodsburg factory produced what were then cutting-edge technologies—high-quality optical glass for binoculars and periscope lenses, aerial photography and photo-chromatic lenses.

When that business began to lose ground to plastics, Harrodsburg retooled and became an early leader in the development of liquid crystal display (LCD) glass, a major component in televisions and computer monitors.

Key to much of Corning’s success in LCDs and other technologies in the last few decades is a patented breakthrough technology called fusion draw, which produces exceptionally clean glass that is flat and dimensionally stable.

The process is used in specialty products like Gorilla Glass, which is chemically strengthened, and Willow Glass, a remarkably thin, rollable material that may one day end up in flexible smartphones.

After pure sand and other inorganic materials are melted in a large tank, molten glass is delivered to a heated collection trough with a V-shaped bottom called an isopipe.

The molten glass flows evenly over the edges of the isopipe, forming two thin sheets of streaming glass, which meet at the bottom of the V shape and fuse into a single sheet that is smooth on both sides. The glass is air cooled and drawn by rollers. Made this way, the glass is free from flaws and therefore stronger.

Harrodsburg is the only U.S. facility that has fusion draw capability.

Marty Walker, a fusion melting operator who followed his grandfather into the factory, works with Corning engineers and the company’s research and development team. To him, the Apple investment means “new designs, new products, new types of compositions and new types of glass.”

“I’m proud to work with the Corning extended family,” he said.
The Hecla Mining Co. is facing prosecution by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for alleged unfair labor practices that caused a work stoppage by some 250 USW members at the Lucky Friday silver mine in Idaho.

A consolidated complaint was issued against Hecla by the NLRB’s Seattle-based Region 19 on June 19. A hearing is scheduled for Sept. 19 when the NLRB will begin its case against Hecla for multiple unfair labor practice allegations.

USW-represented miners walked off the job for the first time in 30 years over alleged unfair labor practices on March 13 at 5:30 a.m. They dig deep underground for silver, lead and zinc in the Lucky Friday mine.

The miners, members of Local 5114, exchanged tools for picket signs announcing the ULP strike and demanding a “Fair Contract Now” from Hecla, which is based in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Lucky Friday, one of the deepest silver mines in the United States, began operations in 1943 near the small town of Mullan. The union was organized in the 1950s.

District 12 Director Bob LaVenture praised Local 5114 members for their solidarity and their diligence in keeping track of management’s misdeeds, which formed the foundation of the USW’s NLRB case against Hecla.

“We are strongest when our membership is fully engaged and participating in the process of collective bargaining,” LaVenture said. “Members who are not on the negotiating committee can still play an important role, acting as our virtual eyes and ears by providing vital information.”

The NLRB’s complaint notes that employment terms and conditions were implemented without prior notice to the union and without affording the union an opportunity to bargain. It also documented managers threatening adverse consequences for members who had participated in lawful union activities, among other things.

As long as it takes

Andrew Thompson, a miner with 11 years of experience at Lucky Friday, told *The Spokesman-Review* that he had never before seen the company so unwilling to budge in negotiations.

“The company claims to be bargaining with us, but bargaining has nothing to do with forcing things on us,” Thompson said. “Implementation is not bargaining.”

There’s a deep history of mining in the area known as the Silver Valley, so the community has been generally supportive. Other unions in the region and across the country and in Canada and Mexico have offered their help.

“There’s a deep history of mining in the area known as the Silver Valley, so the community has been generally supportive. Other unions in the region and across the country and in Canada and Mexico have offered their help.

“We’re holding up fine,” said Local 5114 President Phil Epler, who like other members of the local, has found a temporary job. “We’re taking care of our own, and we’re in it for as long as it takes.”

Hecla claims it is trying to cut costs
at an expensive mine, while the local union members accuse the corporation of trying to bust the union and undermine the safety of miners who toil underground.

The company’s proposals have included changes in health care benefits, shift and vacation scheduling, and bonus pay. But the key issue appears to be management’s desire to change a bid system for jobs in the mine that it calls old fashioned and outdated. The union, however, said the system is “tried and tested” and can be found in many of the 126 different mines where the USW represents workers.

Some areas of the Lucky Friday mine are more seismically active, or dangerous, than others. With a new shaft that can take miners two miles underground, miners want to keep the right to bid for a dangerous job, or not, and choose their teammates.

“The first line of safety is your partner,” Epler said. “They want complete control of who works where and when. In my opinion, they’re trying to basically bust the union.”

**Building solidarity**

In the spring, after the strike was underway, a delegation of Local 5114 members brought the labor dispute to the attention of a Lucky Friday customer, a Teck Resources smelter in Trail, B.C., where workers are represented by Locals 9705 and 480 in USW District 3.

The delegation distributed handbills and met with Teck locals to discuss the unfair labor practice strike at Lucky Friday and to build solidarity within and between the locals. They also participated in a solidarity event hosted by Local 2009 in Langley, B.C.

On May 17, a Local 5114 delegation attended Hecla’s annual shareholders meeting in Vancouver where they were joined by close to 50 union brothers and sisters from Canada, plus members of Los Mineros from Mexico. Together, they rallied outside Hecla’s meeting to show international solidarity and demonstrate the power of unity.

LaVenture and several members of Local 5114 attended the annual meeting. Despite efforts to limit or downplay discussion of the unfair labor practice strike, Hecla’s top executives were forced to answer for management’s poor handling of the negotiations.

Before the March 13 stoppage, union members had worked for 11 months under the terms and conditions of a previous six-year contract. When that contract expired in April 2016, a federal mediator joined the discussions.

Talks with the mediator present broke down in February. Local 5114 members voted on March 12 to begin the strike the next day by an overwhelming margin of 230 to 2.

On Wednesday, Aug. 2, members of Local 5114 will rally with supporters and march in solidarity outside the company’s corporate offices in Coeur D’Alene, where they will deliver petitions signed by hundreds of union sympathizers and business owners from northern Idaho.
The USW’s growing campaign to organize university faculty won another hard-fought victory in June when adjunct instructors at Robert Morris University outside of Pittsburgh overwhelmingly ratified their first contract.

The agreement, which covers about 430 members, includes a 20 percent increase in average compensation over its 3-year term, retroactive through the spring of 2017. Some of the lowest-paid adjunct faculty will receive pay increases as high as 29 percent.

Members voted by a 19-to-1 margin to approve the contract.

“This recognition from the administration is a long time coming – and I should know since I’ve been teaching here since 1981,” said Shiv Sharma, a Robert Morris adjunct who served on the union bargaining committee. “Now, as members of the Steelworkers union, we’re finally getting the support from the university that we need to help our students succeed.”

In addition to pay increases, the Robert Morris contract provides significant improvements in job security, due process, sick leave, shared governance and academic freedom.

The contract increases the number of courses adjuncts can teach each year, as well as offering a fee for courses that are cancelled at the last minute when the work of preparing the courses has already been done.

**Job protections**

The agreement provides unparalleled job protections. Rather than course assignments being made unilaterally by department heads, the contract requires them to preserve the course loads of existing adjunct faculty and to assign additional courses based on seniority.

With their new agreement, Robert Morris adjunct faculty members joined hundreds of adjuncts at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, who signed their first contract in 2015.

“Adjunct faculty are the backbone of higher education today, and we’re proud to have helped them win a level of security and respect far more appropriate to their calling as teachers and scholars,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “We commend both sides on their diligent work over many months to find responsible solutions grounded in the shared commitment to Robert Morris University’s students.”

The Robert Morris victory was just one part of the wider USW campaign to organize faculty at colleges and universities across the Pittsburgh area, as well as adjunct instructors at two schools in Northeastern Ohio, Kent State and Cuyahoga Community College (CCC).

**University of Pittsburgh**

At the University of Pittsburgh, commonly known as Pitt, the USW has been actively working for about 18 months to organize both full-time and part-time professors, as well as graduate employees, into separate units that would total more than 7,000 members.

“Everybody at Pitt needs this union because our working conditions impact the learning conditions of our students, the quality of our research, and frankly, the strength and position of Pitt as a world-class institution,” said Hillary Lazar, a Pitt graduate employee. “It’s past time for us to leverage our collective powers and to start working together to build a more equitable university for all.”

Adjunct instructors at Pitt are paid about $3,400 per course, which amounts to just above the minimum wage for about 25 hours of work per week.

In Ohio, the USW has been working for two years to organize about 1,100 adjunct instructors at CCC in Cleveland. The campaign at Kent State, about 40 miles to the southeast, has been active for about six months and covers nearly 1,400 instructors.

**Duquesne University**

The first Western Pennsylvania institution the USW organized is still engaged in a legal battle. Adjunct instructors at Duquesne University, who voted to join the USW in 2012, are still fighting for union recognition as the university engages in a series of appeals.

After initially agreeing to abide by the outcome of an NLRB election, Duquesne changed its mind and has since argued that its status as a Catholic university means that it is not bound by NLRB rules.

In April, the NLRB rejected that argument and ordered the university to the bargaining table, but Duquesne has said it will appeal that decision.
USW members were in talks for new contracts to cover more than 12,000 tire and rubber workers at Goodyear and Bridgestone-Firestone as USW@Work went to press.

Those agreements, which expired at the end of July, cover 7,500 USW members at Goodyear plants in Topeka, Kan.; Fayetteville, N.C.; Danville, Va.; Gadsden, Ala.; and Akron, Ohio, as well as 4,500 Bridgestone-Firestone workers in Akron, Ohio; Des Moines, Iowa; Russellville, Ark.; La Vergne, Tenn.; Warren County, Tenn.; and Bloomington, Ill.

Bargaining also was under way this summer at the Sumitomo tire plant outside of Buffalo, N.Y. That factory, formerly a Dunlop facility run by Goodyear, employs 960 USW members.

Building on successes

Goodyear, Bridgestone-Firestone and Sumitomo employees have been working under four-year agreements that took effect in August 2013. Talks for new contracts opened in mid-June and were expected to continue through the summer.

The committees entered bargaining with goals to build on gains made in the existing agreements, including wage and retirement plan improvements, while preserving affordable health care for members and their families and addressing two-tier contract structures.

“We will look to continue to close those gaps,” said Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson, who oversees the union’s Rubber/Plastics Industry Conference (R/PIC) and leads the Bridgestone-Firestone bargaining committee.

Titan agreement ratified

Meanwhile, members of Local 164 in Des Moines, Iowa, Local 745 in Freeport, Ill., and Local 890 in Bryan, Ohio, voted overwhelmingly in May to ratify new contracts with Titan Tire that fought off a number of the company’s concessionary demands.

The USW opened negotiations with Titan in the fall of 2016 with goals of increasing wages, enhancing pension benefits and updating contract language to improve members’ working conditions.

The company came to the table attempting to freeze wages, increase out-of-pocket health care expenses, cut retirement benefits and significantly alter contract language governing other benefits.

The five-year agreement with Titan maintains affordable, quality health care benefits and includes profit sharing, lump-sum payments and wage increases in the final three years of the agreement, as well as a number of other language improvements.

“The key was the solidarity of the members at Titan,” said District 7 Director Mike Millsap, who led the Titan bargaining committee. “We never wavered in our fight to build on the progress we’ve made together. We were not going to turn back the clock.”

Fighting unfair trade

Like so many USW-represented industries, the rubber and plastics sector faced relentless pressure over the past three years due to unfairly dumped and subsidized imports, particularly from China. The union has fought back by filing trade cases and taking other steps to curb the imports.

“Bargaining is always a challenge, but especially in this environment, with China and other overseas competitors consistently trying to chip away at our market,” said Vice President Tom Conway, who leads the Goodyear bargaining committee.

Overall, the USW represents about 18,000 workers in the tire industry and about 12,000 more in other rubber, plastics and related industries. Contracts with other tire and rubber companies, including Continental/Veyance and Yokohama, will expire in 2018.
TRUMP PLEDGED TO DEFEND AMERICAN JOBS

WILL HIS ADMINISTRATION FOLLOW THROUGH?

President Trump promised during the 2016 election campaign to help U.S. workers by imposing tariffs on imported steel. But a decision on the issue ran behind schedule this summer as opposition surfaced.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross was preparing an investigative report on imports to meet a self-imposed June 30 deadline, but his department held back in July as the U.S. Department of Defense undertook a 60-day review of how imported steel impacts national security.

The USW continued to press for action as USW@Work went to press.

“Steel is literally the backbone of this great nation, ensuring our military might and our ability to respond to potential attacks,” International President Leo W. Gerard told an investigative Department of Commerce panel.

While steel used for defense and national security is a small part of overall shipments, a viable American steel industry is crucial for its production domestically and to prevent the United States from depending on foreign-made steel in times of crisis.

Gerard encouraged the administration to adopt a broad definition of national security that would include the domestic industry’s viability and domestic infrastructure.

“The steel sector is not monolithic,” he said. “Basic materials, iron and steel products, silicon metal, manganese and chromium used in making alloys, are all important to our national security.”

The military uses specialty steel alloys and products for
vehicles, ships, aircraft and infrastructure projects that require specific production skills. As a result, the USW argues, a robust and healthy steel industry should be considered necessary to guarantee military supply chains in the event of conflicts.

“We need to revitalize the sector to meet today’s growing needs and to ensure that we have the surge capacity, should it be needed,” Gerard said. “That means having not only the productive capacity in our mills, but the skilled work force necessary to man the operations.”

Steel’s versatility

The American steel industry produces products used for defense and non-defense applications. Plate mills at the USW-represented ArcelorMittal plant in Burns Harbor, Ind., for example, supply steel used in John Deere tractors, which harvest food, and in tanks and other military applications.

Gerard believes the investigation should include steel pipes and tubes used to deliver drinking water. “Water is a national security commodity, and we need the capacity to protect our communities and ensure we have the ability to respond to our domestic needs,” he said.

Another example is grain-oriented electrical steel, which is critical to producing power transformers, switchgear and distribution transformers that deliver power to the nation.

“Product after product has been under attack by our trading partners – all important in some way to our national security,” Gerard said. “Other countries will first worry about their own needs. We want the ability to meet our needs quickly, without having to worry about supply lines and security.”

Trump asked the Commerce Department in April to investigate whether foreign steel imports threaten national security. His administration invoked Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, rarely used legislation that gives the president broad powers to adjust imports, through tariffs or other means, if excessive imports are found to threaten U.S. national security.

George W. Bush was the last president to consider using the tools in the 1962 trade law. But his administration’s investigation into imports of iron ore and semi-finished steel determined that national security was not threatened, and he imposed no penalties.

Chinese steelmaking capacity and production

Thorough probe promised

While the trade act gives the Commerce Department 270 days to complete its required investigations, Trump asked Ross to accelerate the process, which sparked the initial pledge to complete the report by the end of June.

“We will conduct this investigation thoroughly and expeditiously so that, if necessary, we can take action to defend American national security, workers, and businesses against foreign threats,” Ross said at the probe’s outset.

If the Commerce Department investigation concludes that steel imports pose a threat to national security, the president will have 90 days to decide whether he agrees and another 15 days to decide what action to take.

Critics of the Section 232 investigation claim broad tariffs on imported steel could lead to higher domestic prices, which could hurt automakers and other steel users. They also fret that such action could spark international trade disputes, and that other countries could retaliate by barring U.S. exports for national security reasons.

Officials in the Trump administration have debated raising tariffs on imported steel or opting for a hybrid model that would require buyers to pay duties on foreign-made steel once a quota is reached, according to trade publication reports.

China’s overcapacity

The steel industry can trace many of its problems to low prices resulting from massive overproduction in China, home to more than half of the world’s steelmaking capacity.

Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing, calls China’s “massively subsidized and grossly over-scaled steel industry” an “existential threat to our own domestic makers” while Gerard argues that the U.S. industry is under attack from “unfair, illegal, predatory and protectionist policies” with China the main offender.

Currently, Chinese-made steel is limited in the United States by successful trade actions supported by the USW. Yet China’s huge overcapacity in steel and other industries has driven down prices in countries around the world.

“The dumping of steel from one country into another makes the second country have excess capacity, which they then dump, and then the country they dump into continues the saga,” Ross has explained.

Gerard cautioned that Canada, where the USW has a strong and growing membership, should be exempted from any potential action taken as a result of the Commerce Department investigations.

“From a national security perspective, Canada is one of the few countries always there for us,” Gerard said. “Our security relationship with Canada is truly unique. We share an uncontested border. We have our intelligence-sharing agreement.

“We have the North American Aerospace Defense Command – NORAD – that has existed for more than 60 years that was the initial line of defense for North America during the Cold War. Canada is an ally, a friend and a trusted partner.”

That being said, the USW is pressing the Trump administration hard for significant action to ensure countries like China abide by international trade law, which would level the playing field for American steel companies.
The Trump administration’s Section 232 investigation into aluminum imports must take a broad view of the country’s national security interests if it is to successfully address the industry’s current crisis.

That was the message International President Leo W. Gerard delivered to U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross this summer in testimony supporting the administration’s efforts to level the playing field for American aluminum producers.

“This sector is currently under attack in global markets, and this investigation should consider the proper, targeted and proportional response necessary,” Gerard said. “True national security involves several interlocking spheres. Direct military and law enforcement demands are a crucial aspect, but America’s critical infrastructure is as well.”

Section 232: different rules

While the United States and employers across every manufacturing sector have filed hundreds of cases in the fight for fair trade, most of those actions require an industry to suffer harm by way of lost jobs and shuttered factories before remedies can be implemented.

Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, however, does not require proof of harm in the same sense. Instead, that rule allows the Department of Commerce to investigate to determine the effects of imports on U.S. national security.

The department announced its investigation on April 27. It must report its findings to the president within 270 days, and the president then has 90 days to determine, based on those results, what actions to take. Those actions could include increased tariffs on aluminum imports.

The Commerce Department is conducting a similar Section 232 investigation into the national security implications of steel imports.

The U.S. aluminum industry has faced a growing crisis in the past decade, a problem driven largely by a dramatic increase in Chinese production. That increase in production, much of which has been illegally subsidized by the government, has yielded massive excess capacity and a flood of unfair imports into the United States and elsewhere, driving down prices, killing jobs and devastating communities.

Falling prices, lost jobs

In just the past eight years, China’s aluminum capacity has grown 130 percent, equal to 22 million tons. That has led to global prices falling by more than one-third.

Meanwhile, U.S. production has declined from 2.7 million tons in 2007 to 800,000 tons last year. Thousands of American workers have lost their jobs. An industry that had 14 primary smelters in operation only a few years ago now has five, with only one of those running at full capacity.

Alcoa, however, announced in July that it will restart three of five potlines next spring at its Warrick aluminum smelter near Evansville, Ind. The smelter at Warrick closed in March 2016. Two of the five potlines will remain idle. The restart will add about 275 jobs.

“We have the most productive, efficient workers in the world,” said International Vice President Tom Conway, who oversees the union’s bargaining in the aluminum sector. “We can compete against anyone that plays by the rules, but we can’t compete against governments.”

Perhaps most relevant to the Section 232 investigation is this: There is only one facility currently operating in the United States capable of producing the type of high-purity aluminum required for a number of military applications.

That location, the Century Aluminum smelter in the small town of Hawesville, Ky., is in danger of shutting down. The smelter “could easily be the next to go,” said Billy Hughes Jr., who oversees reduction services at the Hawesville site. Hughes was one of several aluminum industry executives to offer testimony to the Commerce Secretary in support of the Section 232 case.

An economic engine

Losing the smelter would be devastating to USW members like Cheryl Husk. She has worked at the plant for 21 years and serves as the recording secretary for Local 9423. For her and for many in the town of 1,000, the smelter isn’t just an essential part of U.S. national security, it is the main driver of the local economy.

“The pay is good, we have good benefits, and we’ve got good health insurance so that when something does happen, you don’t have astronomical medical bills that put you in debt,” Husk told the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), an organization that the USW helped to establish in 2007.

“If something doesn’t change we are going to lose these jobs, and not just right here in my county, but at all the
smelters in the United States.”

A shutdown at Hawesville could mean the U.S. government would have to turn to foreign suppliers to fulfill the needs of its own military.

The type of high-purity aluminum produced at the plant is used in an array of military and law-enforcement products, from armor plate to aerospace and naval platforms, aircraft like the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, as well as unmanned aerial vehicles.

In addition, aluminum is essential to the production of weapons systems, satellites and other intelligence-gathering equipment.

“This investigation comes at a perilous time for the American aluminum industry,” Gerard said. “Having only one domestic producer of a material critical to so many military systems is an unacceptable risk.”

**Essential infrastructure**

Equally important as first-line defense materials, though, is the nation’s critical infrastructure, which also relies heavily on aluminum, Gerard said.

The Department of Homeland Security has identified the manufacturing sector as one of 16 economic sectors essential to U.S. national security. Within that sector are 12 core industries, one of which is aluminum.

“All 16 of the critical infrastructure sectors are highly interdependent and part of a cohesive manufacturing ecosystem,” Gerard said in his testimony. “The aluminum sector is part of that cohesive interdependence and must be maintained if America’s critical infrastructure is to be secure.”

Ross said that Century could probably meet the country’s needs during peace time, but not necessarily during a heightened military conflict.

“At the very same time that our military is needing more and more of the very high-quality aluminum, we’re producing less and less of everything, and we only have the one producer of aerospace-quality aluminum,” the Commerce Secretary said.

The decline in U.S. production, in progress for a decade, reached a crisis point about two years ago.

“The aluminum industry really tanked in 2015,” Husk said. “That’s when we had the biggest part of our layoffs. Before the layoffs, we had 550 hourly workers, and now we’re down to about 200.”

Husk said that loss of jobs has already had an impact on the local economy, with workers losing their homes and businesses shutting down. She said the Section 232 action could turn the tide and help to save and perhaps restore jobs at the smelter.

Alcoa Corp. will restart three of five potlines at its Warrick Operations aluminum smelter near Evansville, Ind. The process to restart the three lines, with 161,400 metric tons of annual capacity, is expected to be completed next spring. The smelter at Warrick closed in March 2016. Two of the five smelting potlines will remain idle. The Warrick location employs about 1,250. The restart will add about 275 jobs.

**ALCOA PLANS PARTIAL RESTART OF ALUMINUM SMELTER**

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A New NAFTA?
USW, Allies Urge U.S. to Put Workers First

The Trump administration must prioritize the interests of American workers as the United States takes up the task of renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) this summer.

The USW delivered that message to the White House in July when the administration announced its objectives in remaking the much-maligned trade deal with the U.S., Canada and Mexico that began in 1994. The idea of a new version of NAFTA was one of Trump’s central campaign promises.

International President Leo W. Gerard described NAFTA as a “disaster for working people in all three countries” and said the opportunity to renegotiate the agreement presents a chance to fix past mistakes.

However, the United States Trade Representative’s July 17 letter to Congress stating its plans for the talks offered “more of the same” and did not go nearly far enough to protect workers, Gerard said.

“For decades our union’s membership has suffered from the devastating effects of failed trade agreements. Our members look towards these negotiations to correct past mistakes with the knowledge that their jobs are at stake if the status quo continues,” Gerard said. “We urge the leaders of the United States, Canada and Mexico to forge a path toward an agreement that puts working people first.”

Instead of delivering the widespread prosperity that was promised when NAFTA was proposed, the agreement led to a devastating loss of manufacturing jobs and the closure of tens of thousands of U.S. factories. The only beneficiaries have been corporations and the wealthy.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, more than 850,000 U.S. manufacturing jobs have been lost and 50,000 factories shuttered due to NAFTA. Meanwhile, the U.S. trade deficit with Mexico swung from a $1.7 billion surplus in 1993 to a $61.4 billion deficit in 2012.

“More than 20 years of NAFTA has failed to bring the promised prosperity for working people, no matter their country,” Gerard said.

Unimpressive plans

Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing labor-business partnership, said the Trump administration’s plans for NAFTA are “unimpressive,” and that the changes that the White House is seeking might not be enough.

“A good outcome is far from guaranteed” in the negotiations for a new NAFTA, said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. “While the president has called NAFTA the worst trade deal in history, his administration has given conflicting signals as to its priorities.”

For Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch, Trump’s promises to make NAFTA “much better” were far too vague.

Poverty and wage decline

In the years since NAFTA’s 1994 ratification, more than 20.5 million more Mexicans fell into poverty. Some
Like Coca-Cola, Tide, McDonald’s and Levi’s, Harley-Davidson is one of the most powerful American brands, recognized around the world and made even stronger by its long commitment to U.S. manufacturing.

That’s why it hurt to hear the news that Harley is eliminating U.S. manufacturing jobs and preparing to open a new motorcycle assembly plant in Thailand sometime next year.

During a conference call with analysts on June 18, Harley President and CEO Matt Levatich dropped the news that it was cutting back on American jobs because of “lower expected shipments,” but he gave no specifics.

USW District 2 Director Michael Bolton later said Harley intends to eliminate 180 jobs at facilities in Kansas City, Mo., and Milwaukee as the company slows production. Some temporary furloughs are also expected.

“Not long ago, President Trump hailed this company as a model of American manufacturing,” Bolton said. “Management’s decision to offshore production is an insult to the American worker and to hundreds of thousands of Harley riders across the country.”

Waiting period triggered
The administration’s letter to Congress in May triggered a 90-day waiting period that must pass before negotiations can officially begin. That means Aug. 16 is the earliest talks could begin.

U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said Americans should not view a retooled NAFTA as a “silver bullet” that will transform the economy.

The administration’s approach to the negotiations will provide a strong signal about whether the result will help or hurt working people, said Arthur Stamoulis, executive director of the Citizens Trade Campaign, which fights for economic and social justice in trade policies.

“If the administration keeps the same closed-door process and the hundreds of corporate advisors that got us into the original NAFTA debacle, it is not going to deliver a deal that’s good for working people and the planet,” Stamoulis said.

Gerard promised that USW members would be watching the talks closely.

“ar the renegotiations fail to advance the concerns of working people, we will fight like hell to defeat them,” Gerard said.

Responded to Harley’s decision that it would build a new assembly facility in Thailand, with a sharp rebuke. The factory is expected to open in 2018.

International President Leo W. Gerard condemned the move after the foreign expansion plans were detailed in The New York Times. He called for Harley to abandon its offshoring plans and expand operations in the United States. “Harley-Davidson has been the crown jewel of American manufacturing,” Gerard said. “Management’s decision to offshore production is an insult to the American worker and to hundreds of thousands of Harley riders across the country.”

Wrong path
USW members “have been true partners with this company, working in good times and bad to make good products that fostered its growth and success,” Gerard said, calling offshoring “the wrong path to prosperity.”

Harley spokeswoman Katie Whitmore said the company intends to assemble motorcycles in Thailand from components produced in the United States as part of a plan to grow its international business. Harley has similar operations in India and Brazil.

“Harley-Davidson is going overseas and taking American jobs with it,” said Robert Martinez, Jr., president of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), which represents Harley workers in Wisconsin, Missouri and Pennsylvania. “It’s a slap in the face to the U.S. workers who built an American icon.”
In the early 1940s, as the United States was engaged in World War II, the government built three secret cities – remote locations deliberately left off maps and so deeply classified that only a handful of residents knew their true purpose.

Their objective, revealed to the world with devastating clarity in August 1945 when the United States dropped bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, was to harness atomic power.

Nearly 75 years later, some 3,000 USW members are helping to clean up two of these atomic cities, Oak Ridge, Tenn., and Richland, Wash., along with four other nuclear projects in Carlsbad, N.M.; Idaho Falls, Idaho; Paducah, Ky.; and Piketon, Ohio.

Cleaning up the nation’s nuclear legacy – an effort that has cost the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) billions of dollars so far and will cost billions more before it is finished – requires a skilled, well-trained union work force equipped to meet unique challenges.

“Our atomic members care deeply about their jobs and the DOE cleanup mission,” said International Vice President Carol Landry, who leads the union’s atomic sector.

“They are extremely knowledgeable about the DOE nuclear facilities and the operations that used to be done in the plants. They push for safe cleanup procedures and advocate hands-on training to ensure everyone can perform their jobs safely and without incident.”

Because of the dangerous nature of the materials involved, health and safety issues are of paramount importance for atomic workers. But a rotating cast of contractors at the DOE sites can make advocating for safety a challenge.

While the DOE oversees and controls the budget at all six nuclear sites where USW members work, the department is not the primary employer. Instead, USW members work for contractors who bid on the jobs.

Until 2009, union recognition language in the requests for proposals kept wages and working conditions largely the same across contractors. The DOE has since decided these clauses are not enforceable.

Herman Potter, president of Local 689 at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Piketon, Ohio, said some contractors take health and safety more seriously than others.

Potter’s local, which includes about 750 workers in maintenance, operations, process and utilities, service crafts, technical divisions and professional groups, has nine full-time safety representatives.

“All of the workers in these classifications are potentially exposed to differing levels of radiation and chemical exposures depending on which job, job scope, job task and/or building they work in,” Potter said. “Members sometimes do not have confidence in how the contractors address health and safety issues.”

Aging infrastructure
Dealing with hazardous materials is just one challenging aspect of the job. The age and condition of the facilities make the cleanup process a race against deteriorating infrastructure in places like the Hanford site in Richland, Wash., which was built in the mid-1940s during World War II.

The DOE has agreements with six contractors at the sprawling Hanford site who employ members of various unions, including 560 workers represented by USW Local 12-369.

Hanford, widely considered the most contaminated nuclear site in the Western Hemisphere, produced the plutonium for most of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, including the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.

According to The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a nontechnical academic journal, Hanford is still heavily contaminated with radioactive and hazardous chemical waste, most of it stored in 177 underground tanks located not far from the Columbia River.

On May 9, the roof of a tunnel containing nuclear waste partially collapsed, prompting an evacuation of workers. No one was injured, and Hanford officials said no airborne release of radiation occurred.

A week later, radioactive contamination was found on one worker’s protective clothing, which was removed. No further contamination was found, according to contractor Washington River Protection Services.

The USW work site in Carlsbad has also experienced its share of safety
issues. A series of incidents in 2014 led to the temporary closure of the facility, where Local 12-9477 represents more than 240 workers.

USW members at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) there mine salt from 2,150 feet underground. Waste drums are stored in the remaining voids, where salt gradually encloses them like a tomb.

In February 2014, an underground truck fire caused the evacuation of 86 people at the WIPP. Six were hospitalized for smoke inhalation while seven others were treated on site. That same month, an improperly packaged drum ruptured, causing a radiological release. The WIPP reopened in January, after a nearly three-year closure caused by those incidents.

**Uncertain funding**

For USW members doing cleanup work at nuclear sites like those in Paducah, Ky., Idaho Falls, Idaho, and Oak Ridge, Tenn., federal funding can be the key to making sure the work gets done in a safe and timely fashion.

At the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant in western Kentucky, where over 530 members of Local 550 work in cleanup and containment, funding has been received for the deactivation stage. But not enough money has been allotted to begin removing large gaseous diffusion equipment, said local Vice President Jim Key, who also leads the USW Atomic Energy Workers Council.

Workers at Paducah today are reenriching spent uranium tails, disposing of legacy waste, and deactivating, decommissioning and demolishing inactive buildings.

A similar cleanup project is under way for members of Local 652 in Idaho Falls. The local represents a wide range of technicians and craft workers including carpenters, electricians, mechanics, painters, pipefitters and welders. The local also represents boiler and utility operators, spent nuclear fuel handlers, high-level waste operators, laborers, custodians and others.

The cleanup project in Idaho involves deactivation and decommissioning, soil and groundwater remediation and treatment and disposition of radioactive waste, including clothing, tools, rags, residues, debris, soil and other contaminated items.

**Workers exposed**

“Workers in almost all the positions are or have been exposed to chemicals at some point above the level you would be exposed to in a home environment,” said Local 652 Vice President Henry Littleford.

To avoid such exposure, workers wear massive amounts of protective clothing and other safety equipment. Because of the heat and heavy gear, some workers can stay on the job for only a few hours at a time and must change clothes and gear two or three times during each work day.

“When they get to the end of that time, they are soaked through from perspiration,” Key said.

While cleanup work is also under way at Oak Ridge, the site remains an active lab with a broader mission that includes research into physical and life sciences, supercomputing, advanced materials research and next-generation energy.

Local 288 represents nearly 90 workers who do a variety of jobs including janitorial, roads and grounds, fire protection, maintenance, plumbing, carpentry and shipping and handling of materials.

While workers at Oak Ridge have the potential to be exposed to radiation and other hazards, the local union and management are both dedicated to safety, said Billy Edington, president of Local 228.

“We have a good relationship with both our contractors and the DOE at the local level,” Edington said. “This relationship includes being dedicated to ensuring our workers are kept safe.”

Remediation projects can take decades to complete. When they are finished, the union works hard to ensure that sites are repurposed for other energy-related industrial projects so that USW members can continue to have good jobs.

“That’s a challenge for us right now. We want to bring other industrial projects to these sites so we can utilize new technology and the membership of our union can remain level or grow,” Key said. “We want to provide jobs for our workforce well into the future.”
Dura-Line Corp. and its parent, Maxichem, unlawfully laid off 90 USW members in Middlesboro, Ky., and were ordered by an administrative law judge with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to compensate, reinstate and reimburse them.

In a June 20, 2017, decision, Judge Melissa Olivero found Dura-Line illegally closed its Middlesboro plant in 2015 and transferred production of plastic pipe and conduit to nonunion facilities in Tennessee, Georgia and Ohio. Although Middlesboro was Dura-Line’s most profitable and productive facility, it was the only location in the company that was unionized. The contract between Dura-Line and the USW was set to expire in 2016, the year after the closure.

Dura-Line illegally discouraged members of Local 14300-12 from participating in union activities by repeatedly threatening them with discharge, plant closure and physical violence, and by requiring them to sign a confidentiality agreement.

**Evidence compelling**

In her opinion, Judge Olivero said the evidence presented at the trial compelled her finding that the company transferred work from Middlesboro to other plants in retaliation for the employees’ protected, concerted activity.

“Every piece of evidence presented at the trial regarding the closure of the Middlesboro facility or the transfer of its work also makes reference to the unionized work force in Middlesboro or the upcoming collective-bargaining obligation there,” she wrote.

Although the company’s financial forecasts could be a legitimate reason for closing the Middlesboro facility, the court said none of the credited evidence demonstrates that the company would have closed the facility absent employees’ protected union activity.

“Respondent embedded references to the unionized status of its work force and upcoming collective-bargaining negotiations throughout its economic justifications for closing the Middlesboro facility and transferring its work to its nonunion facilities.

“Furthermore, the record is replete with threats by respondent’s supervisors and agents that employees’ union activities would result in plant closure or had caused the plant closure.”

The trial testimony made clear that Dura-Line sought to keep its decision to transfer work from Middlesboro a secret from the union, apparently to avoid bargaining with the union.

Other violations by management included destroying the personal property of an individual union member and reducing the annual Thanksgiving bonus in 2015.
The Trump administration proposed canceling new protections for shipyard and construction workers who are exposed to beryllium at work just six months after the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) updated the rules.

The standards, issued in the final days of the Obama administration with strong support from then Labor Secretary Tom Perez, came after the USW fought for decades to update beryllium exposure standards.

“No worker should have to die from chronic beryllium disease,” said Michael Wright, the USW’s Director of Health, Safety and Environment. “The administration has no business discriminating against any group of workers just because they happen to be in the wrong industry. We will vigorously oppose this cruel proposal.”

The USW represents thousands of workers who use beryllium alloys and beryllium-containing products in various industries, including shipyards and construction. Exposure can cause potentially fatal lung diseases.

The updated standards would have covered workers in all industries. The rollback proposed by the Trump administration would eliminate coverage for workers in the maritime and construction industries.

As proposed by the Obama administration, the new rule would have significantly reduced the levels of beryllium to which workers could legally be exposed.

The provisions would have required employers to assess and control exposure, provide protective clothing and equipment, perform medical surveillance, and continue the wages and benefits of workers who become sensitized to beryllium.

The Trump administration’s proposal, released in June, would roll back those changes. Employers would no longer have to measure beryllium levels or provide testing to at-risk workers. In addition, workers would lose the right to wear protective clothing or to shower at the end of the work shift, making it possible for beryllium to enter the home and expose spouses and children.

“The USW has advocated for an OSHA rule since the early 1970s,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “The updated rules were meant to protect workers and ensure that controls are in place to prevent occupational illnesses.”

Reinstatement order

The decision includes orders for the company to restore production to Middlesboro and offer laid-off USW members full reinstatement to their jobs or substantially equivalent positions if those jobs no longer exist.

Olivero further directed Dura-Line to compensate the workers for lost earnings with interest and any tax liabilities incurred as a result of the back pay award.

Finally, the order includes a provision for the company to reimburse individuals who were illegally laid off for job-search and interim work-related expenses with interest.

The NLRB process so far has taken almost two years. The USW will continue the fight to ensure that Dura-Line management is held accountable and fulfills the obligations outlined in the decision.

NEW BERYLLIUM RULE COULD BE CANCELED
Nancy McCurrach, a USW member from Canada who leads efforts to help refugees in her hometown, won top honors this year from the Jefferson Awards Foundation for her volunteer work.

The award, presented in June at a Jefferson Awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., marked the second year in a row that a USW member has taken a national prize for community service. The Jefferson Award is considered America’s gold medal for public service.

McCurrach, a senior customer care representative at TELUS Mobility and a member of Telecommunications Workers USW Local 1944 in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada, founded Tri-Cities Refugee Welcome Wagon, a group of friends and co-workers who felt compelled to help Syrian and Turkish refugees who are making Port Coquitlam their new home.

“Nancy and her project represent what our union is all about: welcoming all with open arms and working for better lives for all people, regardless of where they come from,” said International President Leo W. Gerard.

The Welcome Wagon group raised $4,500 in 2016 to pay for urgent medical care for refugees and to buy strollers, transit passes, food and more. They also befriend and support their new neighbors by eating meals with them, driving them to school and teaching them English.

Shared values

“I’m so honored to be a national Jefferson Award winner, but even more honored to be a member of an organization that shares my values and works tirelessly to make the world a better place – at work and in the places where we live and work,” McCurrach said.

“It has been a privilege to have gotten to know these beautiful, kind people,” she added. “They continue to invite us into their homes, and despite the language barrier, we have formed long-term friendships.”

McCurrach also belongs to a women’s group that supports young women struggling with poverty and addiction. Once a month, she prepares meals at a women’s shelter called Warm Place. There, she also plays games, converses and shares her compassion with those in need.

McCurrach volunteers tirelessly to improve the lives of others despite suffering from the rare disease keratoconus, which causes significant visual impairment. She is a four-time cornea transplant recipient.

The USW is a “Champion” with the Jefferson Awards Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to building a culture of service through a variety of programs and awards. As a Champion, the union was able to create a formal structure through its USW Cares program to allow members and retirees to be nominated for Jefferson Awards and put a spotlight on members’ volunteer efforts in communities across North America.

2016 national winner

Priscilla Puente, an oil refinery worker and a member of Local 227 in Pasadena, Texas, won the 2016 national award for leading her local union’s efforts to raise money for scholarships that help women at The Bridge Over Troubled Water shelter.

“We are humbled that the USW has taken the Jefferson Awards’ top honor for the second straight year, but the recognition isn’t why we’re so active in our communities,” Gerard said. “It’s because it’s the right thing to do.”

The Jefferson Awards Foundation also honored Sheila Johnson, co-founder of BET; baseball hall-of-famer Joe Torre; former Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick; and Black Lives Matter founders Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi.

McCurrach was selected as the USW’s overall Jefferson Awards Foundation Champion volunteer for 2017. The union had over 150 nominations from each of its districts in the United States and Canada and from the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR).
Everyday life events – dressing for school, choosing what to eat for lunch, explaining aches and pains – can be a frustrating guessing game for parents and their children who cannot speak.

While electronic tools are available to assist communication with nonverbal children, they can be prohibitively expensive for ordinary working families.

The USW, in partnership with Variety, the Children’s Charity of Pittsburgh, has committed to help needy families by pledging to provide 10 high-tech communication devices designed to assist nonverbal children in expressing themselves.

International President Leo W. Gerard and Variety Pittsburgh CEO Charles P. LaVallee presented the first two devices – tablet computers with special software and heavy duty protective cases – to two union families in June.

“This is something we can do that really changes the lives of our members and their families,” Gerard said during a ceremony at the USW’s headquarters building in Pittsburgh.

Modified iPads

LaVallee demonstrated the devices, modified iPads outfitted with a communication app selected by each child’s doctor to match his or her conditions. With the push of a button, a child can express his or her needs and desires: everything from food requests, to clothing preferences, to how much pain he or she may be experiencing.

“It’s basic, but it’s a part of life – a little thing that’s a big thing,” LaVallee said. “Think about it. What would you do if you didn’t have a voice?”

“Parents have told us how frustrating it is when they don’t know what their child needs. This is painful to hear, but some of our kids are so frustrated that they can’t get mom or dad to understand them, they hit themselves.”

Variety currently promotes three programs to help kids with disabilities. In addition to the My Voice program, which provides the communication devices, they include My Bike and My Stroller, which provide individually customized adaptive bikes and adaptive strollers.

“I can’t think of anything more precious than giving a child and that child’s family the freedom that comes with being able to ride a bike or go in a stroller or use a communication device,” Gerard said.

LaVallee said many children have opportunities to use similar communication devices at school, but they typically only get to use them for brief periods of time during the day and are not able to take them home after school.

Vinnie and Tyler

The first two devices were given to Vinnie Beavers, age 15, whose father Keith is vice president of Local 1138 in Leechburg, Pa., and to Tyler Winfield, age 5, whose father, Nathan Winfield, is a member of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART).

Vinnie has a seizure disorder that limits his mobility and has robbed him of much of his vocabulary. The USW worked with Variety earlier to provide him with a bike and an adaptive stroller.

Tyler also struggles to communicate. His mother, Jennifer Winfield, said he can imitate sounds, but cannot talk on his own. The tablet computer replaced a picture card system that Tyler found too frustrating to use.

The next day, Mrs. Winfield wrote to Variety to express her appreciation for the gift. Tyler, she said, is happy to have the device and had not put it down since receiving it.

“He was able to type out a sentence and tell us exactly what he wanted for lunch,” she said. “He’s so proud of himself and loves being able to show us what he needs. He has the biggest smile and has been showing it to everyone he sees. We appreciate everything so much more than you will ever know!”

“We appreciate the USW for what they’ve done and can’t say enough about Variety,” said Vinnie’s father, Keith Beavers.
The Trump administration has wasted no time launching attacks on workers’ rights, from executive orders to cabinet appointments to sweeping budget cuts that, as a whole, could set the labor movement back decades.

“For a candidate who campaigned as a champion of the working class, Trump has had a hard time showing it,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “Rather than standing up for middle-class Americans, he has cozied up to Wall Street and largely ignored the problems of workers.”

The Trump administration’s budget, released in May, proposed cuts of billions from safety and environmental agencies, vocational training and education, health care, and other programs that help working families.

After promising $1 trillion in job-creating infrastructure investments during his campaign, Trump instead presented a budget that cuts $97.2 billion from airports, $123.4 billion from ground transportation and $16.3 billion from water projects.

Deep funding cuts

In addition, Republicans have:

• Reneged on a vow to name China a currency manipulator on the president’s first day in office, which could have provided relief to workers hurt by artificially low-priced Chinese imports.
• Proposed a replacement to the Affordable Care Act that would leave 22 million Americans without coverage and increase costs.
• Proposed deep cuts in funding for the NLRB, OSHA, MSHA and other worker-protection programs.
• Sought to eliminate the Chemical Safety Board.
• Delayed rules protecting workers from deadly silica and beryllium, and requiring safety inspections of mines.
• Reversed a rule that required businesses competing for large federal contracts to disclose and correct serious safety violations.

Comp time

In perhaps the most direct attack on workers, Republicans in the U.S. House passed a bill in May that would allow employers to offer “comp time” instead of paying overtime. The bill would alter federal overtime protections guaranteed since the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. The White House supports this anti-worker measure.

The bill would remove the guarantee of time-and-a-half pay after 40 hours and instead give employers the option of providing paid time off at a future date. Besides putting less money in workers’ pockets, the move would delay wage payments, by months in some cases, and provide no guarantee that workers would ever see time-and-a-half pay.

Opponents, including the AFL-CIO, said the bill would put more money into the pockets of the wealthy.

“It’s a complete and total fraud,” said Ross Eisenbrey, vice president of the Economic Policy Institute.

Overtime rules

Republicans took aim at another overtime-related rule in June when the Trump administration filed a brief in federal court challenging an Obama-era rule that doubled the annual salary workers must reach to be exempt from overtime pay.

That rule, enacted last year, made 4 million more workers eligible for time-and-a-half after 40 hours.

Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, said the coalition would oppose all administration attempts to reverse the rule.

Health care

The Trump administration sent mixed messages in June when Congress debated plans to replace the Affordable Care Act with a measure that would strip health care from 22 million people.

Trump vowed during his campaign that he would “cover everybody” with a plan that would be “a lot less expensive,” then held a party at the White House when the House passed a bill that would do the opposite.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Republican plan would cut more than $800 billion from Medicaid and would cost older Americans and those with pre-existing conditions significantly more.

“The Republican plan is an attack on low-income and older Americans,” Gerard said.
USW Members Mobilize to Protect Overtime Pay

USW members are mobilizing through the union’s Rapid Response program to stop a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives that could replace guaranteed overtime pay with a “comp time” alternative.

The misleading “Working Families Flexibility Act” (H.R. 1180), pushed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other corporate and big-business interests, would give employers the right to assign extra work only to those who “chose” more time off rather than wages.

While the bill says an employee can decline compensatory time off in lieu of overtime wages, many employers would simply start assigning extra hours of work to those who have shown they’ll accept comp time rather than pay.

“Not only would this represent a fundamental change to U.S. labor law, it would take money out of the pockets of hard-working people and put it in the hands of the already wealthy,” said International President Leo W. Gerard.

Local 13-189 Completes Union Safety Training

Local 13-189 in Bogalusa, La., on June 16 completed its first training under the USW Tony Mazzocchi Center’s grant program. The union-only portion of the class was devoted to industry hazards, successful problem-solving techniques, and how to improve safety and health by increasing the effectiveness of safety committees.

Stop Aleris Takeover

More than two dozen legislators have urged U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to reject on national security grounds the proposed sale of aluminum products maker Aleris Corp. to China Zhongwang Holdings. Aleris is involved in the production and testing of specialized alloys used by the defense industry.

In a June 9 letter, 27 lawmakers told Mnuchin the company’s research and technology are critical to U.S. economic and national security interests. They said it would be a “strategic misstep” to allow the $2.33 billion sale of Aleris to go ahead.

Zhongwang was under investigation by the U.S. Department of Commerce for allegedly evading U.S. import duties, and was being probed by U.S. agencies over allegations of smuggling, conspiracy and wire fraud, they said.

New Contract Achieves Gains at DuPuy Synthes

USW members at DuPuy Synthes in Warsaw, Ind., a leading maker of orthopedic devices and services, ratified a new five-year contract that strengthens job security and improves wages and benefits.

The new contract covers about 400 USW-represented employees at DuPuy, which is part of the Johnson & Johnson family of companies. The agreement runs through June 30, 2022.

In addition to pay increases every year, the contract locks in health care coverage for five years and includes improvements in pension calculations, vacations, life insurance and bereavement leave.

District 7 Director Mike Millsap praised Local 809 members at DuPuy for maintaining membership in a right-to-work state and sticking together during the contract talks.

“Because of their solidarity and 100 percent membership, we were able to achieve this great contract,” he said.

DuPuy Synthes is one of the companies that makes Northern Indiana a major manufacturing center of medical products. Warsaw, its hometown, calls itself the “Orthopedics Capital of the World.”
Save the Date for Women's Conference

The 2018 USW International Women’s Conference will take place Oct. 14 to 16, 2018, in Toronto, Ontario. Please save the date, and note that travel into Canada from the United States will require a passport.

Battle of Homestead Anniversary

USW members in Pennsylvania took part in a series of events this summer commemorating the 125th anniversary of the Homestead Strike, which culminated in one of the most significant events in the history of the labor movement, the Battle of Homestead.

On July 6, more than 100 people gathered at a cemetery outside of Pittsburgh, not far from the site of the 1892 conflict between striking workers and hired Pinkerton security forces, to mark the occasion. They sang songs, offered prayers and remembered the nine steel workers who gave their lives that day.

USW Developing ‘Veterans of Steel’

The USW agreed to explore creating a new veterans’ organization at the 2017 constitutional convention this spring in Las Vegas.

The USW is now in the preliminary stages of developing Veterans of Steel, where those who served or are serving the country can find resources, camaraderie, support and a way to fight for core issues such as a fully-funded Veterans Administration and protecting and creating family-supporting jobs after service.

If you are a USW member who also is a military veteran, please visit usw.org/vetsofsteel to keep in touch as this program is developed. Everyone who signs up will receive a free “Veteran of Steel” sticker.

USW Helps Open Computer Lab

The USW partnered with several other organizations to open a computer lab in a Pittsburgh neighborhood as part of a larger initiative to form a community work force alliance in southwestern Pennsylvania.

The coalition so far consists of the USW, Brothers and Sisters Emerging, Mon Valley Circles, and the Pittsburgh A. Philip Randolph Institute.

The goal is to better the lives of those living in disadvantaged communities both in the city and surrounding Allegheny County by improving educational outcomes and providing professional opportunities and resources.

“We need citizens to come together to build the next generation of kids,” said International President Leo W. Gerard.

“Education is one way to do that. It’s about building alliances and making a statement about where our society ought to be.”

Ten computers donated by the USW will reside at Brothers and Sisters Emerging, a nonprofit that includes a youth sports organization in Pittsburgh’s Garfield neighborhood.

Next Gen Promotes Bicycle Safety

The Next Generation Committee from Local 2737 in Dover, Ohio, hosted its second annual Bike Safety Day for local families with the goal of reducing bicycle-related injuries this summer.

Children were encouraged to bring their bikes to the May 27 event, held at the local’s union hall, where they could ride through a course while getting safety instructions from the Dover Police Department.

Kids who participated received a free helmet, bike safety handouts and USW gear.

“So many kids are injured every year, and if we can pass on this knowledge and help prevent accidents from happening, it’s well worth it to keep doing this,” said Next Generation committee Chairman Cory Ayers.
USW Backs Safe Staffing Bill

Two democratic lawmakers introduced legislation intended to help guarantee safe staffing in the health care industry.

The USW worked with U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) as they prepared the “Nurse Staffing Standards for Hospital Patient Safety and Quality Care Act of 2017” to guarantee it was in line with the union’s position on safe staffing.

The union has consistently maintained that safe staffing standards for registered nurses cannot be justification for understaffing other groups of health care workers.

The bill would require hospitals to develop staffing plans for direct care registered nurses in each department with input from workers. It also provides for whistleblower protections and the ability of nurses to refuse unsafe work.

Domtar Local Earns Safety Award

Named for a union activist and Domtar employee who was tragically killed on the job in 2015, the annual Velma Marie Perkins Safety Award honors one USW Domtar facility with a groundbreaking approach to safety.

This year’s award went to Local 10-701 in Johnsonburg, Pa. The award was announced at the annual USW/Domtar Safety Conference, after local union leadership and mill management reviewed presentations from local unions and jointly selected a winner.

Local 10-701 experienced a near miss involving a lift truck, but with cooperation from management, they moved quickly to eliminate hazards that could result in similar situations, earning them the award.

IP Council Holds One-Day Meeting

Some 85 local union leaders and staff participated in a one-day International Paper (IP) Council meeting on May 31 in Nashville.

The group welcomed a new local into the council: Local 1167 in New Bern, S.C., whose facility was acquired by IP from Weyerhaeuser last year.

Discussions focused on the state of the paper industry, internal organizing, safety, workload, shift schedules, health insurance and maintenance. The group also discussed the company’s long-term disability carrier and its need to improve processing and paying claims.

BASF Council Raises Union Flag

When their plant was purchased by BASF, USW members at Chemetall in Jackson, Mich., were able to negotiate that the union flag be flown at the facility entrance. To commemorate the flag-raising in June, Local 2659 invited the union’s BASF Council as well as the entire work force to participate. The USW has thousands of BASF members, represented by the BASF Council, which was meeting nearby.

Paper Safety Course Offered

The USW Health, Safety and Environment Department and the Tony Mazzocchi Center for Health, Safety and Environmental Education are offering a five-day course beginning Sept. 11 for full-time health and safety representatives in the paper sector.

The deadline for registration is Aug. 15. Use this link for information: http://usw.to/28s. If you have any questions contact Laura Donovan at 412-562-2504 or ldonovan@usw.org.

Unite Paper Workers Visit USA

The Kimberly-Clark, Graphic Packaging and SCA Councils met with their counterparts from the British union Unite in Appleton, Wis., to discuss safety and other topics of mutual interest.

The top priorities for the meeting held on May 17-18 included confronting a growing outsourcing trend and dealing with the “Grey Tsunami,” the dangerous hiring practices that have left the industry with a rapidly aging work force. The group also discussed ways to make the paper sector safer.

“There have been five fatalities this year in the USW paper sector and a staggering number of life-altering injuries,” said Leeann Foster, assistant to the USW president. “Our sector is again the most dangerous USW sector this year. That is why we are working to enact the Making and Converting Paper Safely policy that our sector conference adopted last year.”
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 _________

See Page 18 Inside.