It’s time now for the president to take action to fix our failed trade policies, protect our industrial base and national security, revitalize our infrastructure and create good-paying jobs. The time for talk and debate has passed, and the president should act boldly.

International President Leo W. Gerard
Jan. 12, 2018
Fair Trade Fight Should Unite All

We must continuously defend ourselves and our contracts from company-driven efforts to undermine the progress achieved in collective bargaining. However, we must also set aside those differences and work in partnership with management to level the playing field for American manufacturers. Doing so has no doubt preserved thousands of good jobs, saved families and communities and prevented entire industries from collapsing.

For more than 20 years, USW members and employers together have battled illegal dumping of subsidized goods, currency manipulation and other unfair tactics and anticompetitive schemes our so-called foreign trade “partners” use to steal market share from U.S. manufacturers and push our employers out of business.

Just as the USW has done with employers, Democrats and Republicans need to set aside their differences to address the problems created by two decades of terrible trade policies. Our current trade agreements have failed to protect jobs and failed to fulfill promises to improve working conditions or environmental regulations in emerging economies.

Our elected leaders need to take steps now to ensure the fairness of international trade because our jobs continue to disappear, and globalization is here to stay. When a plant closure results in layoffs, individual workers, their families and communities suffer – no matter which party or candidate they supported.

James Evanoff, Jr.
Local 979 Rapid Response coordinator
Cleveland, Ohio

Right to Work Goes Local

The fight to stop so-called right-to-work laws has played out from coast to coast. In January, we faced it down in Sussex County, Del., where the county council was trying to pass an ordinance to bring this bad policy to the local level.

Steelworkers joined other local union members in protesting the ordinance, including demonstrating in sub-zero temperatures as the debate unfolded in council chambers. We were successful in stopping it. The council voted 4-1 against the proposed ordinance.

We need to stay watchful to beat this back wherever and whenever it comes up. Congratulations to the Steelworkers who helped out in this effort.

Kenneth Gomeringer
District 4 staff representative
Carney’s Point, N.J.

Proud to Be Union

A long time ago I worked at the Republic Steel plant in East Chicago. I remember the thousands of workers who came to the mill to earn an honest living. This was my first encounter with union protection. By protection I mean the old-timers who had worked there many years.

I was working with a big Swede from northern Michigan who was about to retire. The work that day was cleaning the billet furnace. After 15 minutes, he yelled at me to “get the hell out of there.”

He then sat me down and educated me as to why I was to spend only 15 minutes in that oven at a time. I learned a lot about the union that day and how many men had died through the years to gain the protections we benefited from.

I love the unions for what they do and for their members who watch out for one another. I love your magazine. Your union truly is making America great. With the wisdom you exhibit, I have hope, not depression.

I am a retired union plumber, Local 130, and proud to have been a union Steelworker a long time ago.

Phil Rada
Rockford, Ill.
More than 80,000 soft sandwich buns and English muffins roll out of the ovens every hour at the New Horizons Bakery in Norwalk, Ohio, and members of Local 1-00377 are there every step of the way.

The 160 USW members at New Horizons are part of a family-owned operation that produces about 2 million buns and muffins every day for restaurants and grocery stores across North America.

“It’s a great place to work, but it’s not easy work,” said Local 1-00377 President Paula Holzmiller. “We work nights, weekends, holidays. It gets hot in the summer, cold in the winter.”

Meeting high standards

Near-constant customer demand means that the doors at New Horizons rarely close. The bakery is a 24/7, 363-day-per-year facility, with Christmas and Thanksgiving as the only two scheduled off days on the calendar.

“Our customers are some of the biggest restaurants in the world,” Holzmiller explained. “They have standards, and you’ve got to meet them.”

The almost recession-proof status of the fast-food industry has meant that layoffs and slowdowns in business have been extremely rare in the bakery’s 51-year history, even during difficult economic times.

“There’s consistency, both for the products we make and in the business itself,” said Holzmiller, who has served in several leadership roles in the local over the past 20 years.

That consistency has made the bakery a fixture in the small Norwalk community for more than 50 years. Nearly everyone in town has some connection to the factory.

Close connections are also evident in the positive labor-management relationship at the bakery and in the way the community, company and its workforce interact.

“When you are out and about, you always see somebody who either works at the factory or is related to an employee,” Holzmiller said.

Local members help to lead holiday toy and food drives, United Way campaigns and other community initiatives. The company also hosts an
annual “casino night” that helps to foster closer relationships between workers and management.

**Union, company growth**

As customer demands have increased and product lines have diversified, the 130,000-square-foot facility has grown from just one bun-making line to include three English muffin lines. Additional expansion is in the works.

“We’re always growing,” said 25-year member Maria Zapata.

Thanks to that growth, USW membership at the factory has increased despite a continuing focus on automation.

Zapata, vice president of the local union, said the work environment and health and safety have also improved significantly over the years as the union and company worked together to address issues.

“It’s a partnership,” said Zapata, who has performed nearly every job in the facility over her tenure. “When there’s a problem, we address it immediately.”

Zapata works in the bakery’s sanitation department, which ensures cleanliness at every point in the production process. Members perform routine cleaning and maintenance while work stations are in operation, along with more intensive sanitation during temporary line shutdowns.

“There’s a safe way to do everything,” Zapata said.

The increase in automation at the plant has also meant less physical strain for workers, who are able to focus more attention on other important aspects of the operation such as cleanliness, safety, and quality control.

“Consistency is key,” said Mike Porter, the company’s chief operating officer.

To ensure that consistency, USW members visually inspect each item several times as the products pass through the various phases of the baking process. Buns and muffins that don’t meet the company’s strict quality standards are discarded and sold for animal feed.

The process starts with workers meticulously measuring dry ingredients such as flour, sugar and yeast using digital scales. Those materials are then mixed with water and made into dough.

Machines divide the dough into equal parts, which are carried by conveyor belts to large ovens, where each piece is baked to a perfect golden brown. The products are then packaged and sent to large industrial freezers before they are shipped to customers throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico.

During a recent USW@Work visit to the bakery, Bridgett Lacy was “indexing” hamburger buns, looking for the slightest imperfections to
make sure only the highest-quality products made it out the door.

Lacy said her USW membership has provided a level of security and continuity that may not be available at other workplaces.

“That’s the union difference,” Lacy said. “We have more rights, better conditions and better benefits.”

Thanks in large part to the USW and its strong relationship with management, the starting wages for bakery workers (about $16 per hour) are among the highest in the region. The local’s contract expires in March 2020.

For Holzmiller, whose husband also works at the bakery, the wages and strong benefits have given her the ability to raise and care for a family, put children through school, and look forward to a secure retirement.

‘They have your back’

Becky Boswell, a 7-year USW member, said she’s grateful for the cooperative relationship that the USW has developed with owners and management at the Norwalk facility.

“You’re going to have your days when things go wrong,” Boswell said. “But if something’s not right, they have your back.”

The bakery in Norwalk has been a union facility since it opened, becoming part of the USW in 2005 when the Steelworkers merged with the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers (PACE).

“We are the baker’s baker,” said company owner Tilmon Brown, who was part of a group of investors who purchased the baking company in 1995. In 2014, the Brown family bought out the remaining partners.

New Horizons’ newest facility is in Toledo, Ohio. Recently opened, that facility now employs about 10 Local 1-00377 members and plans to employ more based on new business opportunities.

The Norwalk location, the company’s first, opened in 1967 and serves as the New Horizons flagship and headquarters. The company operates another facility in Fremont, Ind., where the workers are represented by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.

Brown said he has had respect for the union at his company “since day one.” In turn, the owner has gained the admiration of the USW membership in part by regularly stepping out of his office and onto the factory floor, where he interacts with workers and even assists members with day-to-day tasks.

“We’re like a family here,” Brown said. “We’ve really been blessed over the years.”
USW FIGHTS FOR JOB GROWTH ON IRON RANGE

To learn more about the USW’s mining campaign, visit www.miningisminnesota.org.
The USW and allies throughout Minnesota, including the BlueGreen Alliance, have launched a year-long campaign to ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the mining industry in the state’s iron range.

Called “Mining Matters to Minnesota,” the group has launched newspaper, online and radio advertising, letter-writing campaigns, news conferences and other informational sessions designed to educate the community on the positive effects the mining industry has had on the state over the years.

“We realized long ago that any ‘choice’ between good jobs and a clean environment is a false one – we must have both or we will have neither,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “That’s why we’re working with stakeholders across Minnesota and around the country to ensure the industry’s future.”

The USW has represented thousands of iron ore miners on the iron ranges of Minnesota and Michigan for generations. Today, their workplaces include mines owned by Cliffs Natural Resources, ArcelorMittal, U.S. Steel and others.

In January, the USW reached a neutrality agreement with Mesabi Metallics at the company’s Nashwauk, Minn., taconite mining and processing site. That deal will allow the USW to organize the 350 Mesabi Metallics workers into the union without interference.

“The Steelworkers have a long and deep history of performance on Minnesota’s iron range, and we are excited about giving our employees the opportunity to join the USW,” Mesabi CEO Tom Clarke said.

**Essential raw material**

Iron ore is one of the essential raw materials that are smelted in blast furnaces at the beginning of the steel production process.

“We are in full support of this project going forward,” District 11 Director Emil Ramirez said. “It is one of the largest in Minnesota’s history.”

For Dan Hill, a member of Local 6860 at the Cliffs United Taconite mine, mining runs in his family. His father and both of his grandfathers worked in the mines.

“Mining puts food on the table and a roof over our heads,” Hill said. “The local economy and all the businesses in the area are built around it, and have been for generations.”

Besides providing good jobs for thousands of people in Minnesota, the industry contributes $1.8 billion annually to the state’s economy, $140 million in annual tax revenue, and $60 million to public schools throughout the state.

Of particular concern to workers in Minnesota is a current movement to rewrite the state’s pollution-control standards for water in an effort to protect the state’s extensive wild rice population from excess sulfates, a common byproduct of iron ore mining.

Critics say a new standard, if it is unnecessarily strict, could cost millions of dollars for mining companies to follow, which could result in shutdowns and layoffs.

State Sen. David Tomassoni, a member of the Minnesota Democratic–Farmer–Labor Party, represents District 6, which includes portions of the iron range. For him, protecting mining jobs and protecting the environment are inextricably linked.

Tomassoni said water quality reports consistently show the water in the iron range to be cleaner than water from elsewhere in the state.

“We live here, we work here, we play here. We are the stewards of this environment,” he said. “Mining has to be done in a safe and environmentally friendly way, and we have delivered on that promise.”

In addition to being an economic engine and a major source of tax revenue, the mining industry produces materials that are essential in a wide variety of “green” manufacturing applications.

Rechargeable batteries, solar panels, hybrid automobiles and other products couldn’t be made without the minerals that workers pull from mines like those in Minnesota.

“I like to say that if it wasn’t mined, logged, farmed or drilled, it probably doesn’t exist,” Tomassoni said. “The steel that builds the windmills doesn’t just show up. These things all have to be mined.”
In a life-saving act of kindness, Heather Szymasek donated a kidney to co-worker Jason Reyes. Photos courtesy Jason Reyes and family

Jason Reyes and Heather Szymasek, members of Local 1010 in Hammond, Ind., were only casual work acquaintances when both of his kidneys failed and she offered to give him one of hers.

Reyes, 35, a foundry worker at the ArcelorMittal Indiana Harbor East plant, was vacationing in California early last year when he fell ill from renal disease that had been exacerbated by diabetes and high blood pressure. His body swelled to the point where he could not walk or lay down to rest.

Not wanting to be treated away from home, Reyes returned to Indiana and his doctor promptly sent him to a hospital in Chicago. A catheter was plunged into an artery near his heart for dialysis, which began the next day. Reyes’ doctor started the process of putting him on a kidney transplant waiting list.

His vacation over, Reyes called the scheduling office to let ArcelorMittal know his kidneys had failed and he could not immediately return to work. Szymasek, a scheduling clerk, was in
Heather Szymasek overheard the bad news.

“Heather right away started messaging me on Facebook asking if I was OK,” Reyes said. “Instantly without putting any thought into it, she said, ‘I’m the same blood type. Maybe we’re a match, and I’ll give you my kidney.’”

Reyes remembers being shocked at her offer and thanking her for the kind gesture. They were, after all, only passing acquaintances in a huge workplace, she an office worker and he a foundry employee. “I wasn’t expecting much,” he said. “What are the chances of us being a match?”

**No hesitation**

Szymasek, 43, whose family includes six children, recalled meeting Reyes a few years ago with kids at a labor march on the ArcelorMittal Burns Harbor plant and occasionally talking with him about his charity efforts.

Reyes volunteers as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for abused and neglected children and, with a group of five friends, runs an annual People’s Turkey Drive, which provided complete ready-to-cook holiday meals last Thanksgiving to some 540 needy families in northwest Indiana.

As her co-worker was working on Reyes’ schedule, Szymasek grabbed her phone and messaged him. “Do you really have kidney failure?” she asked. Reyes replied that he had kidney disease and was to begin dialysis. He called it “one of those things.”

Szymasek didn’t hesitate in making the life-saving offer.

“I said, ‘this guy gives to the community. He gives to the world. I think he’s a good person,’” she said. “I told him I have type O blood. I can give my blood to anybody, and that is the first step. If you need a kidney, let me know.”

That began the tedious and confidential process of testing for the match and preparing for the operation. They accompanied each other on long drives to medical appointments and evaluations.

“It was crazy how fast everything went and how everything just fell perfectly into place;” a grateful Reyes said. “I can’t think of anything to compare it to. The bond between us has grown so much.”

**Birthday gift**

But once the evaluations were done and the approvals made, Reyes began to worry to his family about what his new friend would have to undergo. “I was worried sick about how painful it was going to be for Heather,” he said.

The surgery was originally scheduled for Dec. 22, three days before Christmas. Knowing that would put Szymasek in the hospital for Christmas Day, Reyes lobbied the hospital to change the date.

The surgery went off without a hitch on Dec. 27, which turned out to be Szymasek’s birthday. “It was her birthday, and I got the gift,” Reyes joked.

The families met the Friday before the operation and Jason gave Heather a “dorky” yellow shirt with his picture on the front. “I gave him my kidney,” the text around the photo read, “All I got was this lousy shirt.”

Both Local 1010 members received a lot of support from their friends, family and co-workers. “It was a tremendous thing, such an act of kindness,” Local 1010 President Tom Hargrove said.

A week after the surgery, Reyes was recuperating at home, feeling “ready to conquer the world.”

Szymasek was also recuperating at home, coping with incision pain, and trying to do her scheduling work on a laptop computer.

She hopes to share a lesson with her teenagers. “I’m trying to teach them compassion,” she said.
A federal appeals court upheld an Obama-era Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rule that protects millions of workers, including USW members, from exposure to dangerous levels of silica dust in their workplaces.

The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit rejected all industry challenges to the silica rule in an order issued on Dec. 22. The court also directed OSHA to reconsider or explain why it omitted provisions requiring companies to pay workers who are temporarily removed from exposure at the recommendation of medical professionals.

The ruling was a win for the USW, its members and many other workers in a variety of industries including foundries. The union has investigated the dangers of silica for many years and knows it can be controlled to create safer workplaces.

“Everyone deserves protection from deadly workplace diseases,” said International President Leo W. Gerard.

An estimated 2.3 million American workers are exposed to deadly silica dust.

Steelworker Alan White started on the path to becoming a national health and safety activist in 2013 when he bravely testified before OSHA in support of proposed new standards limiting worker exposure to deadly silica dust.

“I am 48 years old. I live and work in Buffalo, N.Y., at a foundry and am a member of United Steelworkers Local 593,” White testified in August 2013. “Four years ago, I went to a doctor and after a series of tests, he told me that I will die from exposure to silica in my workplace.”

After admitting he had silicosis on a national stage, White continued over the next few years to speak out for himself, the union and all workers against the dangers of silica exposure.

For those efforts, White received a community activist award from the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, or National COSH, a federation of local and statewide Committees/Coalitions on Occupational Safety and Health.

White was introduced at the December awards ceremony by Mike Wright, director of the USW’s Department of Health, Safety and Environment, as a “dedicated and courageous” union member whose efforts played a role in OSHA developing and releasing a life-protecting standard on silica exposure.

“And when that standard was finally released in March of 2016, then Secretary of Labor Tom Perez publically praised Alan as one of those whose courage and activism made it a reality,” Wright said.

“Alan would be the first to remind us that the struggle against silica is not over, that the standard needs to be defended and enforced, extended to miners under MSHA and used by shop floor activists,” Wright added.
to respirable crystalline silica in their workplaces, including some 2 million construction workers who drill, cut, crush or grind silica-containing materials such as concrete and stone.

Responsible employers already protect workers from harmful exposure to silica by using widely-available equipment that controls dust with water sprays or vacuum systems.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said the court’s decision fully upholding OSHA’s 2016 final silica standard is a huge victory for working Americans.

“This will protect millions of workers from disease and save thousands of lives,” Trumka said. “The labor movement worked for decades to win these lifesaving measures, and we are proud to see these standards remain the law of the land.

“Now we must turn our efforts to making sure this standard is put into full effect, enforced and protected from further attacks so that workers are finally protected from deadly silica dust.”

Exposure can be deadly

Exposure to silica can cause silicosis, an incurable lung disease characterized by extreme shortness of breath, weakness, weight loss and, eventually, death. Silica exposure may also cause lung cancer and kidney disease, and raises the risk of contracting infectious diseases like tuberculosis.

The new silica rule, already in effect for the construction industry, lowers the permissible exposure limit during an 8-hour shift and requires employers to use engineering controls to prevent exposure. Most provisions in the OSHA standard for maritime and general industry are scheduled to begin June 23.

“Exposure to silica is one of the oldest known occupational hazards,” a panel of judges – Merrick Garland, Karen Henderson and David Tatel – wrote in their decision.

“And the health effects of exposure to silica – most commonly silicosis, a progressive and irreversible lung disease caused by the inflammatory effects of silica – are not a thing of the past. Currently, silicosis is the most prevalent chronic occupational disease in the world.”

Industry groups, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, challenged many aspects of the rule. All of those were denied by the court panel.

Labor unions, including the USW and the AFL-CIO, filed lawsuits alleging the standard did not go far enough in requiring medical surveillance for exposed workers and medical removal protections for workers when recommended by medical professionals.
The annual AFL-CIO Martin Luther King Jr. Civil and Human Rights Conference drew more than 1,000 union activists to Houston, where attention focused on “Reclaiming the Dream” and labor reuniting with civil rights organizations and social justice movements.

“It was labor that lifted so many black Americans out of poverty,” Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner told the January conference. “It was labor that paid $165,000 to get Dr. King out of jail in Birmingham. And so labor and civil rights must always go together.”

This April 4 will be the 50th anniversary of King’s assassination in Memphis, where the renowned pastor and organizer was standing in solidarity with striking sanitation workers. King losing his life in service to workers makes labor’s recommitment to social justice all the more significant.

“We know that in today’s world, doing what is right is not always valued,” said International Vice President Fred Redmond, who helped organize the conference. “We face far too many dream killers. But I’m here to tell you that if we come together to strategize, organize and mobilize, we can reclaim the dream of Martin Luther King.”

During the Jan. 12 weekend conference, attendees performed community service in honor of the national holiday. Many city organizations and residents are still in desperate need as a result of Hurricane Harvey’s devastation last summer.

Byron Stallworth, a USW member at U.S. Steel Gary Works in Gary, Ind., volunteered his time at Launch Point,
a community-based, one-stop center offering adult training, social services and youth development programs.

Stallworth and fellow Steelworkers, who represented the conference’s largest union delegation, sorted through donated clothing and shoes and organized them by size. For him, this kind of community work is something in which all union members should participate.

“There are a lot of union naysayers out there. Volunteering takes away the stigma,” he said. “And community service helps grow strength and solidarity.”

Donna Hart, a Steelworker from Martinez, Calif., agreed that volunteering is a great way to let neighbors know what the labor movement is all about. “Service helps communities realize that the union is a good thing,” Hart, a Shell Oil employee, said. “Unions lift people up.”

Throughout the three-day conference, members from many unions, including the USW, the Communications Workers of America, the American Federation of Teachers, and the United Food and Commercial Workers, attended a variety of workshops that focused on pressing civil and labor rights issues such as right-to-work laws, the importance of diversity in union leadership, and voter suppression.

Rev. Dr. William Barber II, a Protestant minister and political leader in North Carolina, brought the audience to its feet while emphasizing the importance of fighting back against racist voter ID laws.

“When you suppress the power of the black and brown vote, you hurt labor, you hurt workers, you hurt poor people,” Barber said. “This is why the fight for labor rights cannot be separated from the fight against voter suppression.”

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka took to the stage to commit to leading the labor movement in the struggle and said action must be taken not just when it’s free, but when there is risk.

“Dr. King didn’t differentiate between labor rights and civil rights, and neither do I,” Trumka said. “I believe that if our coalitions stay together the way he spoke about, we will overcome.”
Some 25,000 new members officially joined the USW in January when the previously announced merger with the Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers International Union (GMP) took effect.

The merger, first announced in 2016, brought the GMP, one of the nation’s oldest labor unions, into the USW and created the GMP Council of the USW for glass, foundries and related workers.

The USW and the GMP Council are committed to building a better, stronger union where members can enjoy the best possible wages, benefits, workplace safety protections and retirement.
“We will be stronger together,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “The merger will ultimately benefit our members in glass and other industries where we have common employers.”

The GMP Council represents craft and manufacturing workers who make glass containers including beer bottles, wine bottles, spirit bottles and some food containers. The council also has significant membership in fiberglass, both residential and commercial, and the foundry sector, which covers cast iron to stainless steel and nonferrous metals.

The GMP marked its 175th anniversary last year before the merger took effect. Its roots go back to 1842 when skilled glass blowers in the Philadelphia area organized under the name Glass Blowers’ League.

Previous mergers

With the merger, GMP members joined thousands of glass and related workers already in the USW, many of whom became members through previous mergers with the American Flint Glass Workers Union in 2003 and the Aluminum, Brick and Glass Workers International Union in 1996.

The GMP Council is one of many employer or industry-based councils and conferences established by the USW that allow members to work together towards common goals in industries such as steel, paper, rubber and plastics, glass, oil, chemicals, health care and atomic.

With the merger complete, the GMP Council will function much like it operated previously but with the improved resources of the USW, said GMP International President Bruce R. Smith, who will direct the council.

The GMP membership approved the merger with the USW at its 75th quadrennial convention. GMP leaders campaigned long and hard among the membership for the merger with informational meetings, debates and plenty of background information published in the GMP’s magazine, Horizons.

“Our goal was to have a partner that we have a commonality with, a partner that would recognize and understand the continued legacy we wanted to have, and we believe this council structure provides that,” Smith said.

“We took the position that we were going to be fully transparent, and put it (the merger) out there a year ahead of our convention so there was plenty of opportunity for our members to raise issues and ask questions,” Smith said. “We ended up passing the merger at convention on a voice vote, so I guess we did our homework right.”

Improved union density

The merger improves the union’s density in glass and foundries, areas where the two unions had the most overlapping membership. In some locations such as Owens-Illinois and the Ardagh Group, where both unions were present prior to the merger, the combination now gives the USW wall-to-wall coverage.

“The merger will give the members of the GMP Council greater strength at the bargaining table, enhanced organizing and educational opportunities and access to the wide range of services and support provided by the USW,” GMP Secretary-Treasurer Claude Beaudin said.

The constant offshoring of jobs and automation that eliminated positions drove the GMP to look for a merger partner even though rank-and-file members were proud of the union, Smith said.

“We looked around,” Smith said. “But we wanted to stay within the manufacturing sector. The USW was in our eyes the most powerful industrial union out there and the most progressive.”

The first step in organizing the GMP Council came during the USW International Convention last year in Las Vegas. Attendees discussed a detailed mission statement for the council, its structure, and jurisdiction.

In July, a group of GMP volunteers attended training on organizing new members at the USW headquarters in Pittsburgh. The volunteers will help the council organize workers at non-union facilities and grow membership at union facilities in right-to-work states.

Training was also held this January for GMP Council officers and staff that will help them to take full advantage of the services and support available from the USW.

Smith urged GMP members to fully participate in the new council and all of the programs offered through the USW.

“We are looking forward to having a successful 2018,” he said. “We look forward to partnering with all our local unions in making the GMP Council a huge success and a leading light within the USW family.”
Graduate students at the University of Pittsburgh were already deep into their union organizing campaign with the USW when they received unsettling news: the House version of the Republican tax bill, proposed in the fall, would count their tuition waivers as income.

This would, in some cases, more than double students’ taxable income without raising their take-home pay, effectively cutting wages by as much as 45 percent. For students who live paycheck to paycheck, this was potentially devastating.

“This bill would tax money that we never see,” said Beth Shaaban, a doctoral student and research assistant in epidemiology.

So, under the leadership of the Graduate Students Organizing Committee, Pitt graduate students pushed back, joining the fight against anti-education provisions in the Republican tax bill.

Accompanied by a costumed Grinch, they rallied outside U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey’s office (R-PA) in December. They also leafleted campus, urging everyone to call their representatives.

In the end, their efforts and the efforts of other students around the country were successful. Even though the bill passed, the provision taxing tuition waivers was removed. Still, the encounter left many students shaken.

“This House tax bill exposed a vulnerability many of us never realized we had,” said Aaron Anthony, a doctoral candidate in education who is also running for Congress. “This makes having a collective voice all the more important.”

Seeking transparency
A week later, on Dec. 15, the Pitt graduate students filed for a union election, hand delivering union cards to the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board in Harrisburg, Pa.

The students began collecting union cards in February 2017, seeking more transparency in the decision-making that affects their working conditions, as well as protections against discrimination and harassment.

“Graduate students do important work that is vital to the success of the university,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “They deserve to have a voice on the job.”

Last summer, the Pitt administration started holding anti-union meetings and circulating anti-union emails. It also set up a website to discourage employees from exercising their right to create a union.

In response, graduate students and faculty delivered more than 20 letters from elected officials, including U.S. Sen. Bob Casey and U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle, calling for the university’s administration to remain neutral.

“We should be able to rely on our rights as workers and not on good luck,” said Caitlin Schroering, a Ph.D. student and research assistant in the sociology department. “This is why we need a collective voice and the protections that come when we join together as a union.”

If Pitt does not delay the normal process, an election to form a graduate student union for 2,000 student employees could take place as early as this spring.

Faculty collect cards
The effort to organize graduate student employees at Pitt has run parallel with a separate effort to organize the university’s faculty. Faculty members are concerned about pay, job security and their shrinking role in university governance.

Faculty began collecting union authorization cards Jan. 22. The same day some 65 faculty members and their allies gathered on campus to celebrate the next phase of their campaign, an effort that began more than two years ago.

“We are joining together as a union, part-time and full-time faculty, to put some power behind our need to improve our working conditions,” said Carl Redwood, an adjunct lecturer in the School of Social Work.

If successful, the bargaining unit will include some 4,000 faculty across Pitt’s five campuses.
The Health Care Workers Council is making steady progress toward its goals of becoming a larger and more powerful advocate for USW members who care for those who are sick and disabled.

A group of 17 newly appointed health care coordinators met in Pittsburgh early last December to establish goals and chart the future of the council. Health care is one of the fastest growing sectors in the USW with nearly 50,000 members.

“Health care is an important part of who we are as a union,” said International Vice President Fred Redmond, who oversees bargaining in the USW’s health care sector. “And it’s an important part of who we want to continue to be as we look to the future of this ever-evolving organization.”

The coordinators crafted a mission statement, made a strategic plan for fostering communications between local unions, and discussed the upcoming Health Care Workers Conference, scheduled to take place this April 23 to 25 in Lexington, Ky.

“This committee means there is hope on the horizon that we’re not an island,” said Debbie Yakscoe, a grievance committee member from Local 10-00086 in West Point, Pa.

The health care coordinator position was created through a resolution approved by delegates to the USW’s triennial Constitutional Convention held last April in Las Vegas.

The goal was to improve the council’s ability to empower health care workers, build bargaining power on the local and national levels, and lobby for legislation on health care related topics.

Coordinators are selected by his or her district director. They are responsible for facilitating communications between health care locals in their districts, and together they form the steering committee of the full Health Care Workers Council.

“It’s easy for the health care locals to feel isolated because many of the units are so small,” said coordinator Cheryl Ream, a radiographer and mammographer from Local 1940 in Lewistown, Pa. “Working together and communicating regularly gives us tools we never had before.”

The convention resolution requires all of the union’s districts in the United States and Canada to appoint district member coordinators, who must participate in quarterly conference calls and an annual meeting. It also commits the union to holding a health care sector conference at least once every three years.

“The health care sector faces some unique challenges, including geographically disparate locals, amalgamated locals in which the majority of members are not health care workers, and diverse job classifications within units.”

“My main goal is to get our members involved,” said Daniel Coghill, Vice President of Local 14637 in Hazard, Ky. “And I know there is support if we need help.”
Children Benefit
FROM USW PARTNERSHIP WITH VARIETY
Special-needs children and their families joined USW members and officers to celebrate the growing partnership between the union and Variety - the Children’s Charity.

Variety, an international nonprofit organization that has its roots in Pittsburgh, provides equipment and services meant to increase mobility, independence and inclusion for children with special needs.

International Vice President Fred Redmond announced during a ceremony held at the union’s international headquarters in December that the USW has helped to raise more than $500,000 for the organization.

“We’re proud to partner with Variety to do this life-changing work,” Redmond said. “We’re committed to helping children – our own children as well as children throughout our communities.”

Among the items that Variety provides are specially designed tricycles and strollers as well as electronic devices for children who have difficulty communicating.

USW shows it cares

Charles LaVallee, chief executive officer of Variety’s Pittsburgh chapter, said he hoped more organizations would follow the USW’s example.

“This symbolizes how the USW cares for its own and cares for the community,” LaVallee said.

Kindergartener Tyler Winfield, who struggles to speak, received an electronic device six months ago with the help of the USW, which has allowed him to communicate with family members, teachers and classmates.

Tyler’s mother, Jennifer, said that using the device has allowed Tyler to begin learning to speak on his own. “It has been a true blessing,” she said.

At the Pittsburgh ceremony, Tyler and his family shared cans of “purple pop” – his favorite drink – with LaVallee, International President Leo W. Gerard and other attendees.

Tyler is just one of dozens of children who have been helped through Variety’s partnership with the USW. Another, Troy Robinson, who was born with Down syndrome, showed off his new tricycle as he led a parade of smiling children through the lobby of the USW’s headquarters.

“He deserves to be as active as any other kid in the community,” said his father, also named Troy.

Partnership just beginning

The USW’s work with Variety thus far has been limited to Pittsburgh and the surrounding area, but the union’s goal is to take the partnership to an international level, Redmond said.

“Our commitment is to go out and tell the Variety story,” Redmond said. “We’re just beginning.”

The organization’s story began in Pittsburgh in 1927 and has since expanded to 42 offices in 13 countries that have raised more than $2 billion.

The Variety Club, as it was known 90 years ago, began its charitable work when its 11 founders, who were local theater owners and showmen, discovered an abandoned baby along with a desperate note from her mother saying she could not care for the child.

The club’s founders decided to act as “godfathers” and to underwrite the child’s support and education. They named her Catherine Variety Sheridan, her middle name for the club and her last name for the Sheridan Square Theater where they found her.

The girl was taken to the Roselia home, a Catholic charity where she stayed until she was adopted by an anonymous Long Island family and left to live a normal life.

Helping disadvantaged children

Inspired by Catherine’s story, more clothes, food, money and toys were collected than any one child could ever use. Variety used the surplus to help other disadvantaged children.

At the same time, hundreds of people applied to be foster parents, and show business people started Variety “tents” or “chapters” in other cities.

The modern Pittsburgh organization presents supporters with an annual award. In November, Gerard was the recipient of the 2017 Catherine Variety Sheridan Humanitarian Award in recognition of the USW’s fundraising efforts.

“I didn’t do this by myself. What motivated me and our union was the kids,” Gerard said at Variety’s 90th annual anniversary gala in Pittsburgh.
The USW and members of Local 7898 at the rod and wire mill in Georgetown, S.C., are looking forward to restarting production this spring now that the idled facility has a new owner.

A British company, Liberty House Group, purchased the mill in December from ArcelorMittal and pledged to reopen it with 125 workers represented by Local 7898. Plans call for doubling the work force to 250.

District 1 Director David McCall, who chairs the union’s negotiations with ArcelorMittal, said USW-represented workers should return to work soon at the mill, which ArcelorMittal idled in 2015 as part of its decision to exit the rod and wire business.

“Our track record of operating the Georgetown steelworks productively and profitably for generations under different employers speaks for itself,” McCall said. “Given a level playing field, there’s no question that American steelworkers can compete with anyone, anywhere.”

The union established a good relationship with Liberty management during successful negotiations on a collective bargaining agreement to facilitate the restart, District 9 Director Daniel Flippo said.

“We are very proud that USW members have this opportunity to go back to work with a fair contract that provides wages, pensions and benefits in line with the industry pattern,” Flippo said. “Liberty’s commitment to operate and invest in Georgetown shows great faith in our members, and we are dedicated to ensure that trust is rewarded.”

**Liberty House plans to expand**

Liberty House, part of the GFG Alliance, an international grouping of businesses including mining, energy generation, metals and engineering, said the Georgetown purchase is the first in a series of expected acquisitions and projects planned by the company for North America.

“Securing the Georgetown furnace and mill is a major milestone for us, marking our first major step in the USA,” said Sanjeev Gupta, executive chairman of the GFG Alliance.

The 600,000 square-foot plant includes an electric furnace rated at 540,000 metric tons a year and a 680,000 metric ton rod mill that can serve the construction and automotive markets. The electric furnace can recycle scrap metal.

“The melting and rolling facilities here give us a formidable entry to the American market and provide a strong platform for expansion,” Gupta said.

Local 7898 President James Sanderson, who has long advocated for the mill’s restart, said that workers, their families and the overall community will benefit by its return to productivity. The mill operated for nearly 70 years before its closure.

“I cannot overstate what an important, positive development it is that Liberty Steel has chosen Georgetown as the starting point for its strategic expansion into North America,” Sanderson said.

“The mill has provided good jobs for decades, and we hope that successfully restoring production will enable future generations of Steelworkers to support their families and sustain the growth of our community.”

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This is a year of bargaining preparation for oil workers.

Policy committee members with the USW’s National Oil Bargaining Program (NOBP) met in December to review the state of the industry and start planning for national talks in 2019.

The current NOBP pattern agreement expires on Feb. 1, 2019, at 12:01 a.m., making it likely national bargaining will begin next January for wages, benefits and working conditions.

The bargaining will impact some 30,000 USW members who work in oil refineries and petro-chemical plants and maintain transmission pipelines and terminals around the United States.

**Strengthening councils**

In preparation, NOBP Chairman Kim Nibarger urged USW activists to revitalize and strengthen oil industry councils to help the union address local issues and foster solidarity in bargaining.

Most of the councils within the NOBP are organized around employers such as BP, Chevron, Citgo, Marathon, Shell, Andeavor (formerly Tesoro) and Valero.

There are new councils for employees of PBF Energy, Holly Frontier and CHS Inc. There is also a 40-unit Pipeline, Transportation and Marketing Council and a Multi-Refinery Council, a combination of single-site refineries. A Specialty Council includes lubes, waxes, asphalt and more.

“We geared up the company councils to make them more active, and we need them to stick together on issues,” Nibarger said. “They will have at least one opportunity to meet on bargaining policies at the NOBP conference this fall before they present issues to the policy committee. Hopefully, councils will meet before the conference.”

Nibarger is also urging individual members and local unions to prepare for the event that USW members are forced out on a work stoppage.

He suggests members set aside money from each pay period for a personal strike fund and each local union or bargaining unit develop a Communications Action Team (CAT) to facilitate communications at the local level.

“I want members to start thinking seriously about bargaining and what they would like to see in the national contract,” said Nibarger, a refinery operator and USW safety expert who took over as chair of the NOBP last year, succeeding Gary Beevers, who retired.

In 2015, thousands of USW members seeking a national contract took on the oil industry with a series of selective unfair labor practice strikes and ultimately won four-year agreements with the industry’s largest companies. At its peak, the ULP strikes involved some 7,000 workers at 15 facilities.

**Local union surveys**

In preparation for the upcoming round, Nibarger asked policy committee members and alternates to survey local unions or bargaining units in their NOBP regions about the use of outside contractors, maintenance hiring and worker fatigue.

Nibarger wants to determine how well the last NOBP pattern agreement is being implemented at work sites. To that end, he asked the committee to report the number of outside contractors in each facility, whether the local or unit met with management to plan the hiring of additional daily maintenance workers and the number of people hired.

On the issue of fatigue, Nibarger wants to confirm that the locals or units are conducting required staffing level reviews every six months and forwarding the data to the NOBP office.

Locals will be asked how they communicate with members, what methods they use to talk one-on-one with members, and what committees or groups they participate in, such as union-only health and safety committees, civil and human rights committees, and the Women of Steel, Next Generation and Rapid Response programs.

**Mobilization schedule**

During its two-day December meeting, the policy committee laid out a mobilization schedule that starts in July. “The idea is to get more actions stirred up, so we can maintain members’ momentum,” Nibarger said.

Current policy committee members were elected at the 2016 NOBP conference and will serve through completion of the next contract. Most of the committee members, except for one returning veteran, are serving their first terms.

Since most of the members are new, Nibarger presented a history of national oil bargaining at the December meeting. The committee members appeared to be excited about upcoming bargaining, actively participated in the meeting, shared ideas and gave helpful feedback.

“Anything we talked about, they had thoughts about it,” he said. “It was a good meeting.”
The economy is rigged in favor of the rich and against working people, but labor unions provide the best path towards equality, fairness and shared prosperity.

That was the message of the 28th AFL-CIO convention, held in St. Louis on Oct. 22 to Oct. 25. It brought together representatives from more than 50 affiliate unions and some 160 state and area labor federations and central labor councils who worked to chart a path forward for the labor movement.

"The economy is not like the weather," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka told more than 1,000 delegates and guests. "It doesn’t just happen to us. It’s nothing but a set of rules written by the men and women we elect. And unfortunately for 40 years they’ve been written to make sure working people are the losers."

"Trickle down is a scam that has failed time and time again," said International President Leo W. Gerard. "Working people and our unions must mobilize to advance a comprehensive public campaign in support of tax and budget policies that are fair and just for working families."

For four days activists from unions across the country participated in workshops, conducted phone banks, went block walking and discussed resolutions on a wide variety of topics from the humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico to the looming threat of national right-to-work laws.

They also re-elected the AFL-CIO officers, including President Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler and Executive Vice President Tefere Gebre, to new four-year terms. Gerard and International Vice President Fred Redmond were also re-elected to the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

Win together

The convention addressed pressing issues that workers across the country are facing every day, including unfair trade, attacks on voting rights, the Republican assault on health care, the looming threat of ever more regressive labor laws, and many more.

The theme, Join Together, Fight Together, Win Together, set the tone, putting solidarity and unity at the forefront of the convention.

"We are a nation divided, and this is not by accident," International Vice President Fred Redmond told the delegates. "Politicians and corporations intentionally use charged rhetoric and divisive tactics to pit us one against another. Because…when we are fighting with each other, we are not fighting for each other."

Anaam Jabbir, unit president of Local 366-21 and an immigrant from Iraq who gained citizenship in 2013, gave a short but moving speech about her experiences as a textile worker in Portland, Maine.

"I’m here today with a simple message," Jabbir said. "I am strong. I am powerful. It’s because I have a voice on the job. American made, union made—that’s how we bring this country together."

Top priorities

Delegates passed 42 new resolutions outlining the top priorities of the labor movement and creating a plan of action for the next four years.

Introducing the resolution on
manufacturing, Esther Lopez, secretary-treasurer of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) and a former member of USW Local 1014 in Gary, Ind., asked, “What is the role of the American labor movement in a polarized nation?”

“When we invest in American manufacturing with good jobs and good union wages,” she said, “America becomes stronger and our country becomes more united.”

The resolution passed without opposition. Resolutions calling on Washington to invest in the country’s ailing infrastructure, condemning divisive rhetoric and rising fascism, and affirming the AFL-CIO’s fight for labor rights on a global scale also passed unanimously.

One of the biggest challenges facing the labor movement is the pending Supreme Court case Janus v. AFSCME. Though it primarily affects public sector unions, its outcome will ultimately influence the private sector as well.

The case would make the whole private sector right to work, allowing all public sector workers to opt out of paying dues while forcing their unions to continue negotiating on their behalf without compensation. With five conservative justices, it is likely the Supreme Court will rule against unions.

Delegates from both the private and public sector vowed to stand up to this threat, to redouble their commitment to organizing and to help educate members and non-members alike on the importance of labor unions in the wake of increasing economic inequality.

Global solidarity

Speaking on the convention’s “Buy American” resolution, Gerard reminded the delegates that just as the private sector will be hurt by Janus, the public sector is ultimately hurt by bad trade.

“If you think manufacturing doesn’t matter to the public sector, come with me to Lorain, Ohio, and see the buildings that are shut down,” said Gerard. “See the firefighters that are fighting for their jobs, the teachers fighting for their jobs. A strong industrial base, a strong manufacturing base creates a strong tax base so we can all prosper.”

On the second day of the convention some 70 international guests traveled across the Mississippi River to Granite City, Ill., for a bus tour of U.S. Steel’s still largely idled Granite City Works.

At a reception, representatives from Locals 1899, 68 and 50 met with the guests, giving them a brief history of steelmaking in Granite City and explaining how Chinese dumping and other unfair trade practices have kept 1,100 of the mill’s 1,800 workers off the job for nearly two years.

“We’re not against Chinese workers,” Gerard told the group, which represented workers from all over the world. “We respect workers, but we’re against an economic system that pits worker against worker.”

Steelworkers from Egypt and the Ukraine told the group that they too struggled with Chinese overcapacity and that their plants also faced massive layoffs and an uncertain future.

On the third day of the convention, delegates shared moving stories as they discussed the best way to combat the Republican assault on the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

“The health care status quo is not acceptable, and the labor movement must fight for major changes,” said Gerard.

Donnie Blatt, assistant to the director in District 1, shared his family’s story. Both his son-in-law and his grandson have a rare genetic disorder. Because the ACA banned the denial of health care coverage for preexisting conditions and eliminated lifetime caps, both were able to get the ongoing treatment they needed without the family going bankrupt.

At the heart of the health care debate are real families, Blatt told the delegates. “I hope our president can see that.”

“Our movement is the single greatest force for good in America,” said Trumka. “We give voice to the voiceless. We make sure that no one is left behind. Our opponents are bold. Their north star is greed. Ours is solidarity and fairness.”
Political action can and does work.
That’s the message from Canada where the USW has made great strides in getting out the vote to support the resurgence of the New Democratic Party (NDP) in the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia.

The USW was a founding partner in 1961 of the NDP, which has consistently fought since then for working people in Canada, whether in government or the opposition party.

In 2015, for the first time ever, the Alberta NDP was elected to a majority government under party leader Rachel Notley, a former USW member who became Alberta’s 17th premier. Her victory ousted the long-ruling Progressive Conservatives.

In 2017, the NDP formed a minority government in British Columbia with the Green Party and replaced the Liberal Party, which had been in power for 16 years. NDP leader John Horgan was installed as British Columbia’s new premier.

Health and safety standards, the right to refuse unsafe work and the Westray Act, which established criminal liability for employers in workplace deaths, are now enshrined in law thanks to the joint efforts of Steelworkers and the NDP.

“All in all we see good things happening,” said District 3 Director Stephen Hunt, whose district includes Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the northern territories. “In light of where a lot of governments have gone around the world, notably in the United States, we are making changes and showing it is possible to make progressive change.”

Steelworkers are active members of the NDP in English-speaking Canada. In French-speaking Quebec, the USW works with Québécois parties, candidates and elected members with a commitment to social democratic principles.

Canadian National Director Ken Neumann sees the provincial elections in Alberta and British Columbia as stepping stones toward another challenging election set for this June in Ontario, Canada’s largest province.

“The NDP is in the running, and there is an opportunity for us to form an NDP government,” Neumann said, in part because of Steelworkers Vote, a Canadian program that energizes local unions and members to become politically active.

**Mobilizing Steelworkers**

The Steelworkers Vote program aims to mobilize USW members to vote, stand up for the issues important to the labor movement and elect a government that is on the side of workers.

“Through Steelworkers Vote, we build the skills and confidence of our members to talk politics while supporting our political allies between and during election campaigns,” Neumann said. “Our message is getting through. Our members are hearing from the union.”

The first Steelworkers Vote campaign was launched during the 2005 provincial election in British Columbia. Targeted election outreach to USW members by USW members has since contributed to 18 NDP victories including several that elected union members to federal and provincial office.

How does the USW convince...
Canadian members to leaflet, donate and talk politics to their neighbors and friends? The union impresses on Canadian members how politics and legislation can have a big impact on their workplaces, their bargaining and their communities.

To explain the synergy, Hunt drew a rectangle on the back of a napkin that he described as a bargaining table. He put the union on one side and company management on the opposite side. In the middle, he listed bargaining issues including wages, pensions, benefits, vacation, safety and health and workers compensation. He put government at the top of the page.

“Who’s the ghost at the table on each of these issues?” Hunt asked. “The government,” he said, answering his own question. “The government is the ghost. Often unseen, they’re present at every round of bargaining.”

Hunt then connected bargaining issues to the government, explaining how elected officials can influence wages, pensions and employment issues through legislation and standards.

“By voting for people who support workers’ issues, it changes the complexion of how we work at the bargaining table,” he said.

**Tangible change**

For Hunt, the political change in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta, was swift and tangible, a welcomed improvement after more than 70 years of right-wing governments. Alberta was run by the Conservative Party for 44 years before the 2015 election. Before that, the right-wing Social Credit Party was in power as a majority government from 1935 until 1971.

After years of protesting in the streets, Hunt is now invited inside the legislative buildings in both Alberta and British Columbia, where his opinions are heard.

“When the premier of Alberta got elected – and I tell you this with pride – it was my first time ever in the legislative building. I had never been in it before because we weren’t welcomed,” Hunt said.

It was the first time in 70 years that a Steelworker had been in the premier’s office in Alberta, and not for a favor but to actually sit down and start a dialogue.”

There were immediate changes positive to the union movement. Notley “didn’t waffle like the right wingers did,” he said. “She didn’t just promise. She delivered and she’s been delivering.”

Notley called for a higher minimum wage and her government instituted card-check recognition in union elections, where certification is automatically granted after 65 percent of employees sign recognition cards. Previously unregulated industrial farms were brought under labor law.

And when Alberta was hit by a depression in oil prices, Notley resisted the temptation to make drastic cuts to services and went ahead with a carbon tax on oil companies with the industry’s blessing.

“For the first time ever, we have first collective agreement mediation, so if you come to an impasse, the mediator can impose a collective bargaining agreement on the first contract,” Hunt said.

“We’re now seeing safety and health laws where workers in Alberta have for the first time a right to refuse unsafe work without any fear of repercussions,” he added. “It’s enshrined in legislation.”
The USW is calling for Washington to act without delay to strengthen our national defense by protecting and revitalizing America’s vital steel and aluminum industries and the good jobs they provide.

“It’s time now for the president to take action to fix our failed trade policies, protect our industrial base and national security, rebuild our infrastructure and create good-paying jobs,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “The time for talk and debate has passed, and the president should act boldly.”

After a year of procrastinating on campaign promises to get tough on unfair trade, the president must soon make decisions on whether to punish China over the way it produces and trades steel and aluminum.

Last April, the president directed the U.S. Department of Commerce to launch separate investigations into whether steel and aluminum imports pose threats to national security under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which gives the president broad powers to impose trade remedies.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, a longtime investor and the founder of International Steel Group, promised in May that the reports would be ready for the White House by June 2017. Instead, the reports were delivered in January 2018. The president has 90 days from then to decide what actions, if any, to take.

Delays prompt more imports
Gerard and International Vice President Tom Conway have publicly expressed the USW’s displeasure over the repeated delays, which prompted steel importers to rush more products into the U.S. market, a near 20 percent increase, to beat any possible restrictions.

“When the investigation was initiated, working families were told that the investigation and a decision would be swift,” Gerard said. “Then, they were told that they would have to wait until health care was addressed. Then, they were told that they would have to wait until a tax cut was passed. Now they wonder how much longer they will have to wait to see if campaign promises will be kept.”

Meanwhile, American workers and domestic production suffer as evidenced by the recently announced closing of steel plants in Conshohocken, Pa., and Ashland, Ky., and reduced operations and job losses at plants across the country.

There were signs in January, however, that the tide may be turning in the right direction. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative announced that trade relief will be provided to U.S. manufacturers of home washing machines and solar cells based on investigations requested by the domestic industries.

The decision was important to American workers in the appliance and solar industries as well as USW-represented workers who provide steel, aluminum, rubber, silicone and other materials used in those products.

“Our goal has been to have the government stand up and implement a consistent, comprehensive trade policy that makes clear that if a trading partner breaks the law, or tries to cheat and steal our jobs, there will be an immediate response,” Gerard said. “The announced action is a step forward in drawing a line in the sand that unfair trade will not be tolerated.”

National defense crucial
Steel and aluminum play crucial roles in military and homeland defense. Their many military uses include fighter jets, Navy ships, submarines and armor. At home, there is a great need to repair and rebuild roads, bridges, pipelines, railways, schools, water systems and the electrical grid.

Ten retired military leaders wrote to the president last fall urging him to take action to protect the nation’s steel and aluminum production capacity from irreversible decline.

“If we lose the ability to make our own steel or aluminum, we could find ourselves depending on countries like China or Russia to supply our military and build our infrastructure,” said retired Army Gen. John Adams. “We cannot let that happen.”

In January, Conway joined aluminum industry executives in urging the White House to act quickly to protect American jobs threatened by world overcapacity and unfair trade.

“The deck is stacked against us. Our companies aren’t competing against other companies. They’re competing against other countries,” Conway told a press conference called by the China Trade Task Force, a coalition including Century Aluminum and the USW.

The need for urgent action comes as the U.S. aluminum industry struggles with a steep downturn related to unfair government subsidies given to producers in countries like China, Russia, India and the Middle East.

“I’ll put this bluntly. We cannot survive much longer if we don’t act,”
said Century CEO Mike Bless, whose company is currently the only U.S. maker of high-purity aluminum used in military fighter jets.

**China’s overcapacity hurts**

The task force argues that China’s government is illegally subsidizing its industry and producing a glut of aluminum to preserve jobs and prop up China’s economy. China’s exports have flooded the world market at depressed prices that U.S. manufacturers and other developed countries cannot match.

“If nothing changes soon, all U.S. aluminum smelters will shut down, and we will be relying on communist China to provide us with high-purity aluminum,” Bless said. “Every U.S. smelter is at risk due to Chinese overcapacity and unfair subsidization.”

Since 2000, the U.S. industry has gone from 23 aluminum-producing smelters to only five today, and only two of those five are operating at capacity, Conway noted. Over roughly the same period, since 2003, America lost more than 8,000 aluminum production jobs, a reduction exceeding 75 percent.

In addition to the Section 232 process, Commerce Secretary Ross took the unusual step of self-initiating investigations into whether aluminum sheet is being dumped on the U.S. market at unfairly low prices with government subsidies.

In January, the U.S. International Trade Commission issued a preliminary determination saying there is reasonable indication that Chinese aluminum is damaging U.S. producers. That gave the Commerce Department a green light to proceed with its portion of the investigations, which, if successful, can lead to anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties.

The entire investigative process, however, is expected to take about one year to complete with final determinations of dumping, subsidization and injury likely occurring in late 2018 or early 2019.

While the USW appreciates the self-initiated cases, Conway noted that the current process of fighting unfair trade cases is stacked against the workers who lose their jobs. “By the time a trade case makes its way through the process, we’ve lost already,” he added.
Indonesia struck out at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in its challenges to anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties imposed by the United States on coated paper imports.

A WTO dispute resolution panel on Dec. 6 wholly rejected Indonesia’s claims that the U.S. tariffs, initiated to counteract unfair subsidies and dumping, or selling at below market prices, violated WTO law.

“This is long overdue good news for the workers whose jobs were hanging in the balance in this challenge,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “The panel’s decision is consistent with the WTO agreements as written and negotiated.”

Coated paper is typically used for printing multi-colored graphics for catalogues, books, magazines, envelopes, labels and wraps, greeting cards, and other applications requiring high-quality print graphics. Excluded from the decision are imports of paper and paperboard printed with text or graphics.

The dispute began in March 2015, when Indonesia requested consultations with the United States over imposition of the duties and the U.S. investigation that led up to them.

**Challenges all rejected**

The WTO panel ultimately rejected every challenge made by Indonesia and upheld a determination by the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) that the U.S. industry and its workers were injured by Indonesia’s trade practices.

In a statement, the USW said U.S. workers and their employers have seen far too many other frivolous suits upheld by WTO panels and its appellate body, a track record that has undermined confidence in the WTO and its dispute settlement system.

“It is critical that our laws be faithfully enforced,” Gerard said. “When trade is fair, U.S. workers can compete with anyone. Challenges in the WTO need to respect the limitations built into the dispute settlement system.

It’s not always enough to successfully win trade cases. Foreign competitors often use every means available to circumvent tariffs and continue to ship unfairly traded and illegally priced products into the U.S. market.

The American aluminum and steel industries are both victims of exporter schemes to ship Chinese products to Vietnam before re-exporting them to the United States with slight modifications.

In January, domestic aluminum manufacturers filed a petition asking the U.S. Department of Commerce to investigate whether a Chinese rival, China Zhongwang Holdings and its network of affiliates, circumvents anti-dumping and countervailing duties by shipping aluminum extrusions to Vietnam before they reach a final destination in the United States.

The filing by the Aluminum Extruders Council (AEC), a trade group, is a new chapter in a longer skirmish with Zhongwang over duty avoidance. The AEC won Commerce Department decisions in November 2016 and June 2017 against earlier steps Zhongwang had taken to avoid paying duties.

**Steel products**

Last December, the Department of Commerce imposed steep duties on corrosion-resistant and cold-rolled steel products imported from Vietnam but largely manufactured in China.

The preliminary decision was a victory for the U.S. industry, which won anti-dumping and countervailing (anti-subsidy) duties on Chinese steel in 2015 and 2016 only to see imports continue to flood the American market. A final ruling is due in February.

China and its steel companies were caught routing low-cost and unfairly subsidized steel through Vietnam, where the products were minimally processed, to avoid tariffs.

International President Leo. W. Gerard said the tariffs imposed on below-cost Chinese steel helped to
Too frequently they are overlooked by panels or the Appellate Body.”

International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees the USW’s paper sector, said the U.S. coated paper industry and USW members who work for it have suffered mightily over recent years with unfair trade practices compounding the challenges of declining overall demand.

Both the U.S. Department of Commerce and the ITC conducted thorough investigations, Geenen said. “Their determinations were consistent with U.S. law, regulations and practice, and consistent with our international obligations,” Geenen said.

“We thank the team at the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Commerce and the ITC for their hard and effective work on this WTO challenge,” he added.

stabilize the U.S. market, restored fair prices and saved tens of thousands of domestic steel jobs.

The subsequent diversion of Chinese steel through Vietnam shows that China and other foreign competitors are constantly seeking new ways to evade the rules, Gerard said, adding that the trade fights are almost endless.

Although the products were coated for corrosion resistance or processed in cold reduction mills for use by the auto and appliance industries, the Commerce Department agreed with the U.S. steel industry that as much as 90 percent of the product value came from China.

“We need to let our competitors know that breaking the rules is not acceptable and we are committed to ensuring fair play,” Gerard added, noting that the private sector “bears the brunt of this problem – lost production, lost jobs and the burden of demanding the rules be aggressively enforced.”

As the United States and South Korea began talks in January to renegotiate the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS), the USW condemned a pattern of anti-worker actions and policies by the South Korean government and called on both sides to make workers a priority in a new agreement.

The KORUS agreement is the second major free-trade deal that the White House has sought to reform. Administration officials have also been working with Canadian and Mexican officials to redo the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

“Suppression and abuse of workers’ rights under the KORUS agreement by Korean companies and their government has injured workers in both countries,” International President Leo W. Gerard said as talks got under way.

In addition to harming workers, the agreement has led to soaring trade deficits and a sharp decline in U.S. exports to South Korea. U.S. exports to South Korea dropped $1.2 billion in the first five years of the agreement, while U.S. imports from South Korea increased.

The most recent example of the South Korean government’s disregard for workers’ rights came when the USW attempted to organize a Georgia tire factory in October 2017.

Workers at the Macon, Ga., factory of Kumho Tire, a multinational company that is effectively owned and controlled by the South Korean government, faced a coordinated onslaught of threats of plant closure and job loss.

Union-busting consultants

The company spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on union-busting consultants and committed multiple U.S. labor law violations, including a coordinated onslaught of threats of plant closure and job loss.

Union supporter Mario Smith was fired on Oct. 17, 2017, for union activity, and a USW-filed unfair labor practice charge on Smith’s behalf remains open.

Workers at the plant ultimately voted “no” by a narrow margin. The USW has filed objections to the results with Region 10 of the National Labor Relations Board.

“The USW is alarmed that a company controlled by the Korean government has chosen to violate the rights of U.S. workers at the same time that government is renegotiating its trade agreement with the U.S.,” Gerard said.

The USW urged U.S. negotiators to deliver a strong message to the South Korean government that its union-busting actions will not be tolerated.

Working people first

“The trade deficit continues to mount, which is lining the pockets of multinational companies while workers get shafted,” Gerard said.

The administration is intent on reforming U.S. trade policies, including NAFTA and KORUS.

“We have much work to do to reach an agreement that serves the economic interests of the American people,” Robert E. Lighthizer, the United States trade representative, said after the initial meeting between negotiators.

The KORUS agreement, the second-largest American trade agreement besides NAFTA, was signed in 2007, but did not take effect until 2012. The deal reduced almost all tariffs and other trade barriers between the two countries.

Since the agreement took effect, the trade deficit in goods between the two countries more than doubled from $13.2 billion in 2011 to $27.7 billion in 2016. Auto parts are likely to be a major focus of the talks, as much of the American trade deficit in goods with South Korea is generated by automobiles.

“The implications of this matter are significant not only for the future of the KORUS agreement but also for the NAFTA renegotiation,” Gerard said.

“Workers expect that their interests will be advanced, not undermined.”
International President Leo W. Gerard appointed Associate General Counsel David Jury to replace General Counsel Richard Brean, who elected to retire after 40 years of service to the union.

Brean joined the USW legal department in 1978 after graduating from Harvard Law School. He had a distinguished career as a litigator and administrator of a department known for professional excellence in the legal representation it provides to the union, its members and allies in court and at the bargaining table.

Highlights of Brean’s tenure include several major National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) cases that resulted in more than 12,000 USW members regaining their jobs after being illegally locked out or permanently replaced during bargaining disputes.

In retirement, Brean will devote time and energy to his new position as chair of the Peggy Browning Fund, a charitable organization that encourages talented law students to enter careers representing unions and workers.

Jury, son of a retired member of Local 2227 at U.S. Steel’s Mon Valley Works – Irvin Plant near Pittsburgh, graduated from George Washington University Law School in 1995. He spent a year on the faculty of the Duquesne University School of Law before joining the USW legal department in 1996.

In his 22 years with the USW, Jury has become an expert in bankruptcies and corporate restructurings across the range of USW-represented industries. He is also a member of the negotiating teams at Newport News Shipbuilding and in the container industry. He has substantial litigation experience and is an expert in union security issues.

Steelworkers at Anchor Glass Container are creating a new bottle for a start-up distillery begun by a group of ex-Special Forces Green Berets in St. Petersburg, Fla.

The molds for the bottle are being made by Local 121T members at Anchor Glass Container’s mold shop in Zanesville, Ohio. Bottle samples will be made at the company’s Lawrenceburg, Ind., plant by Local 138 members.

With the merger of the Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers International Union (GMP) into the USW, the bottles will be “100 percent Steelworkers from start to finish,” said Mike Grdinic, president of Local 138 and chairman of the USW’s Mold Making Negotiating Committee.

The American Freedom Distillery was created by Scott Neil, a retired Green Beret master sergeant, and three friends, ex-Green Berets Rob Schaefer, John Koko and Tyler Gamer, in St. Petersburg’s warehouse district. They expect the distillery will produce whiskey, vodka, rum and gin.

Anchor Glass is repurposing steel from the World Trade Center site for use in mold castings for the bottle, said John Sode, general manager for product development.

“American Freedom Distillery can truly say every bottle produced from those molds will have touched World Trade Center steel,” Sode said.
Steel Locals Gear Up for Bargaining

With several of the USW’s largest steel industry contracts set to expire on Sept. 1, 2018, dozens of locals and thousands of individual members are gearing up for negotiations.

Although it’s impossible to predict if the government will take action to address unfair foreign trade or how that action (or inaction) will impact the market for USW-made products, employers will likely propose new ways to undermine the protection USW contracts provide in job security, earnings and benefits.

Over the course of the next several months, the USW will solicit input from members employed at facilities covered by collective bargaining agreements with U.S. Steel, ArcelorMittal and Cleveland-Cliffs.

In June, the USW Basic Steel Industry Conference (BSIC) will convene to determine and prioritize bargaining goals for this round of negotiations based on the feedback received.

Delegates to the BSIC will discuss the state of the industry, review the latest trade and pricing data, set the industry-wide bargaining agenda and develop employer-specific strategies and objectives.

Locals Ratify Timken Contracts

Some 1,850 USW members at TimkenSteel and Timken Company facilities in Ohio separately ratified new contracts after months of negotiations and rejections of previous offers.

Steelworkers at Timken Co.’s Gambrinus bearing plant approved a three-year deal in December that includes pay raises and maintains premium health care coverage for about 140 members of Local 1123-04.

Members of Local 1123 approved a four-year contract covering 1,600 workers at TimkenSteel, which operates the Harrison, Faircrest and Gambrinus steel plants in Canton.

The Timken Co. separated its steel and bearing businesses in a tax-free spinoff that created TimkenSteel in 2014. TimkenSteel trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol TMST.

The contracts, which will expire in September of 2020 and 2021, include wage increases, a signing bonus and opportunities for workers to earn annual melt bonuses.

While they maintain high-quality, affordable health care, the new agreements preserve existing defined benefit pension plans and offer new employees the option to participate in a 401(k) instead if they choose.

The contracts implement a new health and safety program with full-time safety coordinators and include significant improvements to contract language, most notably by strengthening provisions designed to protect the jobs of bargaining unit members by limiting the use of outside contractors.

Eramet Improves Wages, Benefits

Members of Local 9639 ratified a new, three-year contract that improves wages and benefits for about 110 union workers at Eramet’s manganese plant in Marietta, Ohio.

In addition to the wage and benefit improvements, the contract demonstrates a commitment from both parties to the long-term future of the plant without concessions.

District 1 Director David McCall praised the local’s members for standing together during the process, as well as the USW negotiating committee and their management counterparts for their work at the bargaining table.

“The solidarity of our membership gives us the strength we need to negotiate fair contracts and ensure that we are treated with respect and dignity on the job,” McCall said. “When we work in partnership with management to achieve our common goals, we can accomplish truly great results.”

Eramet Marietta produces and sells manganese alloys used to make steel, aluminum and specialty metals stronger and more resistant to heat. The manganese is mined in West Africa and shipped to Marietta, where it is mixed and refined.

Union and management will work together to improve productivity and address trade and environmental issues, said John Saunders, a District 1 staff representative who chaired the negotiations.

“Ratifying this agreement with Eramet is important to our union because the company supplies high quality manganese for many American steel producers,” Saunders said.

“Even more importantly, at a time when good jobs with fair pay and benefits are disappearing at an astonishing rate, this contract provides much needed economic security and stability for our members, their families and community.”
USW Presses for NAFTA Changes

As the White House continued to press efforts to renegotiate the disastrous North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), officials from Mexico and Canada presented proposals to U.S. negotiators in January in an attempt to convince them to pull back from Washington’s harshest criticisms of the deal.

The three nations began talks in August to revamp the 24-year-old agreement, after the president campaigned in 2016 on a promise to make major changes to what he called a “horrible deal.”

“USW members know that their jobs are at stake if the status quo continues,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “All three countries deserve an agreement that puts working people, families and communities first, rather than protecting the interests of corporations and the wealthy few.”

NAFTA has cost more than 850,000 U.S. manufacturing workers their jobs and led to more than 50,000 factory closures in the United States. 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.

Negotiators met in Montreal in January for the sixth round of negotiations. U.S. negotiators are seeking provisions that would increase American-made content for automobiles made in North America.

While the White House has maintained that NAFTA and other free-trade deals have hurt the U.S. economy, the administration hasn’t advocated for tougher environmental, wage and labor standards that the USW and other organizations say are essential for keeping companies from continuing to offshore manufacturing operations.

“In Mexico, companies can pay their workers a dime for every dollar a skilled American worker earns,” Gerard said. “This only encourages a race to the bottom, and that is bad for workers across North America.”

Date for Paper Bargaining Conference

The USW will hold its biennial National Paper Bargaining Policy Conference in Pittsburgh at the Westin Convention Center Hotel on July 17 to July 20, 2018.

A meeting for box shop locals and units will be held on Monday, July 16, with early arrival on Sunday, July 15. The conference will begin for all locals and units on July 17.

Date Set for HS&E Conference

Registration is open for the 2018 USW/CWA Health, Safety and Environment Conference, which will be held from March 26 to March 30, 2018, at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center and Westin Hotel in Pittsburgh.

Visit www.usw.org for more details on hotels, registration and meeting and workshop agendas.

Atomic Local Establishes Training Center

Local 1-689 President Herman Potter’s long-held dream of establishing a regional training center at the former Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant cleanup site in Piketon, Ohio, is becoming a reality.

The gaseous diffusion plant ceased operations in 2001. Since then, USW members have worked on cleaning up the site under contracts with the U.S. Department of Energy.

With support from the USW’s Tony Mazzocchi Center (TMC) for Health, Safety and Environment, training has been provided to the local’s members, the community, other DOE sites and federal legislators.

The idea is to encourage reindustrialization on the site. Potter said the local began doing Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response training in 1989.

In the last seven years, the local has conducted OSHA, safety representative and industrial hygiene training with the help of the TMC and contractors.

The local has provided OSHA’s 10-hour and 30-hour courses to site employees, high school students, USW locals outside the nuclear industry, Communication Workers of America locals and county safety councils.

Steelworkers Coat Drive

Local 12431 partnered with the Alfred Lima elementary school in Providence, R.I., to keep students warm this winter. The local, which represents natural gas workers at National Grid, donated 28 new winter jackets, winter gloves and hats to underprivileged students at the school.
**B&H Workers in Manhattan Ratify Contract**

Some 80 USW members employed at B&H Photo Video’s midtown Manhattan store ratified their first contract in December with the electronics retailer.

District 4 Director John Shinn said that the three-year collective bargaining agreement increases wages, enhances job security and includes other provisions designed to improve working conditions.

“After a long, difficult struggle, we are proud to say that our brothers and sisters finally have the fair contract that they have earned and deserve,” Shinn said. “On top of the economic gains, the agreement gives B&H workers a stronger voice on the job than ever before.”

The contract also includes innovative language to protect the company’s immigrant workers from unfair discrimination, which was one of the issues that spurred B&H employees to seek union representation.


“During the initial stages of their organizing drive, management ran a very aggressive anti-union campaign to intimidate employees,” Shinn said. “Rather than turning workers against each other, the company united the work force in solidarity with a common goal.”

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**NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES COVERED BY A UNION SECURITY CLAUSE**

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

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

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

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

“2. To perfect a notice of objection, the individual must send an individually signed notice to the International Secretary-Treasurer during the first thirty days following either the individual’s initial date of hire into the USW represented unit or an anniversary date of such hiring: provided, however, that if the individual lacked knowledge of this Procedure, the individual shall have a 30 day period commencing on the date the individual became aware of the Procedure to perfect a notice of objection; and, provided, further, that a member who resigns membership shall have the opportunity to object within the 30 day period following resignation.1

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

Upon perfecting properly a notice of objection, the objector is entitled to an advance reduction of a portion of his or her union security obligation commensurate with expenditures unrelated to collective bargaining, as required by law. International Secretary-Treasurer Stanley W. Johnson has determined, based upon expenditures for the calendar year 2016, that the reduction percentage under the Procedure is 14.26% (23.95% if organizing expenditures were to be included).

There are court decisions holding that organizing activities are non-representational activities. The USW does not agree with those rulings. However, without intending to waive its position that its organizing expenditures are not subject to objection and without intending to waive its right to assert its position if there is a challenge to the reduction percentage, the USW has deemed it expedient to apply the 23.95% figure to most current and future objectors. Therefore, an objector will be charged 76.05% of the regular dues amount. Each objector will be given a detailed breakdown between representational and non-representational activities with a report by an independent auditor.

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

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

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1. Any right of a resignee to pay a reduced amount under this Procedure may or may not be superceded by the resignee’s check-off authorization.
Have You Moved?
Notify your local union financial secretary, or clip out this form with your old address label and send your new address to:

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

Name ______________________________________
New Address __________________________________
City _________________________________________
State _________________________   Zip __________

The USW is participating in a year-long campaign to promote mining jobs in Minnesota.
Go inside to page 8 for more information.