BAD TRADE
KILLS
GOOD JOBS
The public is losing confidence in our trade laws, our trade agreements and in trade institutions. They’re right to lose that confidence. Either we change how trade is managed in America, or the system may have to be completely dismantled.”

International President Leo W. Gerard, April 12, 2016, Washington, D.C.

MADE IN AMERICA: NEWELL COACH
Members of Local 627 at Newell Coach in Miami, Okla., produce luxury motor coaches that allow well-heeled travelers to hit the open road in style and opulence.

PROTECTING JOBS
With layoffs in steel and other basic industries, the USW has shifted into overdrive its fight to protect jobs and American manufacturing from unfair trade.

ARCELMITTAL CONTRACT
The USW reached a tentative agreement with ArcelorMittal USA that covers 14,000 workers in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Minnesota and South Carolina.

PAPER CONFERENCE
Delegates to the USW’s 2016 paper conference updated safety and bargaining policies for the next two years.
China Not a Market Economy
In 16 years since joining the World Trade Organization, the Chinese government has done nothing to address concerns about overcapacity, subsidies for goods sold elsewhere at prices lower than production cost, violations of workers’ rights or environmental concerns.

Now, China seeks to be recognized by the WTO as a market economy, and granting its request would be the worst thing to happen to American workers since 2000, when the international trade authority gave Beijing Permanent Normal Trade Relations – a move that cost millions of jobs and caused thousands of factory closures.

The ability to place antidumping and countervailing duties on government-subsidized goods imported from China saved thousands of jobs in the steel industry and thousands more in industries where the USW represents hourly production, maintenance, office and technical workers.

Gifting Beijing this unwarranted status change would strip or tightly restrict that ability. Without protective tariffs to help level the playing field, American steel, aluminum, paper and tire companies would disappear, devastating communities and further eroding a shrinking middle class.

Jill Stough, Local 7248
Pioneer, Ohio

Tariffs Saved Tire Jobs
In 2007, all of 2008 and in the first quarter of 2009 Cooper Tire took days out of production at all three of the company’s plants due to a flood of imported tires into the U.S. market. It got so bad that Cooper Tire ultimately shut down its Albany, Ga., plant.

In 2009, at the urging of the USW, tariffs were placed on Chinese-made tires for three years. Almost immediately we noticed the positive impact.

Cooper went back to full schedule with overtime and resumed hiring. As soon as the tariffs came off, China started doing the same thing all over again.

Greg Knowles, Local 752L
Texarkana, Ark.

TPP Would Weaken America
If given the opportunity, Congress must vote down the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the latest so called “free” trade deal pending between 11 Pacific Rim Nations and the United States.

The TPP strengthens corporate control, big bank hedge funds, World Trade Organization (WTO) power and monopolies for pharmaceutical companies. It weakens our national sovereignty, food labeling, internet privacy and environmental, health, labor and safety regulations.

It is an unbalanced trade deal for America, which continues to suffer from the ill effects of NAFTA, CAFTA, the Korean Free Trade Agreement and others that promised prosperity but instead delivered a massive taxpayer subsidized offshoring of good American jobs.

If enacted, TPP rules will make it cheaper and less risky to offshore U.S. jobs to low-wage nations. It’s hardly good news for American families that Vietnam, a TPP member nation, pays its workers on average 65 cents an hour. Low-paid, third world workers will be disadvantaged as well by predatory corporate trade practices.

Another free trade agreement weakening America? We hope not!

J.W. Westman, Local 11470
Billings, Mont.

Trade Changed Our Way of Life
I grew up in South Buffalo, N.Y., during the 1970s when the steel industry allowed us to enjoy life as middle class Americans. We thought we would follow in our parents’ footsteps and work in the mills and other factories in the area or perhaps open a small business that would help support the community and allow our own family to prosper.

Little did we know at the time that things were changing across our country. Year by year our factories closed, and our work moved to other areas of the world under the pretext of free trade.

These countries taking our work do not care about a fair living wage, workers’ safety or environmental responsibility. Their only concerns are the profit margins of the corporations and their shareholders. Trade deal after trade deal devastated our country and our way of life.

This new one we have been fighting, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, will be no different.

Denny Mitchell, Local 135L
Buffalo, N.Y.

We Are Being Dumped On!
Opponents of the antidumping and countervailing duties case on flat rolled steel products are throwing everything at the wall to see if something will stick. They claim the weather conditions in the Great Lakes region during the winter of 2014 was a key contributor to the surge in steel imports.

We know better though, and we are lucky to have good people in front of the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) to explain that we prepare for these types of situations months in advance by stockpiling our raw material at our fully integrated steelmaking facilities.

We are being dumped on! Period. Let’s hope the ITC gets it right in their final ruling on this trade case. We have to keep standing up for all workers and for fair trade policies. After all, if not us, then who?

Jim Johnston, Local 1219 president
Braddock, Pa.
The members of Local 627 may not be rock stars, retired millionaires or world-famous race car drivers, but the work that they do at Newell Coach in Miami, Okla., gives them a glimpse into the world of the rich and famous.

At the Newell Coach facility about 80 miles east of Tulsa, USW members produce luxury motor coaches that allow well-heeled travelers to hit the open road with style and in opulence.

“Some people buy boats, some people want a private plane,” said Grant Kernan, Newell’s executive vice president. “Our customers like the RV lifestyle.”

For Newell Coach’s customers, it is a lifestyle that requires a sizeable down payment. Pre-owned Newell coaches retail for as much as $1.2 million. New custom-built coaches can sell for more than $2 million.

Handcrafted excellence

One factor that sets Newell’s vehicles apart as the best on the market, and helps to explain the hefty price tags, is that USW members handcraft them from top to bottom at the Oklahoma factory with custom-engineered chassis and bodies. By contrast, the company’s closest competitors construct RVs from the bodies of buses or vans.

That level of customization and top-to-bottom detail requires several months of painstakingly precise labor by the USW work force.

“A lot of talented people put these together,” Kernan said.

The 150,000-square-foot Newell factory consists of eight work stations, and each coach spends about two weeks at each one being built by USW members who are specialists in their respective areas. The workers do everything from welding the chassis to sewing the decorative pillows that adorn the living room furniture.

Each coach begins with the construction of a steel chassis and
drivetrain and the installation of a 600-horsepower semi-truck engine.

Once the engine is installed, workers construct a shell of aluminum plates that form the body of the vehicle, similar to an aircraft fuselage. The front and rear ends are made from molded fiberglass panels. When finished, the coaches are about 8 feet wide and 45 feet long.

Workers install insulation, wiring, plumbing, heating and air conditioning and other internal systems, which are controlled from a touch-screen, wall-mounted computer. The body is sealed and tested extensively for leaks before construction continues with the installation of walls, flooring, cabinetry, lighting and other components.

**Mansions on wheels**

Tony Kuester, who works in Newell’s cabinet-making department, said that once the chassis and the metal shells of the coaches are assembled, the manufacturing process resembles home construction, though on a small, compressed scale, with an eye toward luxury and road-ready functionality.

Once completed, the coaches, often described as “mansions on wheels,” offer about 550 square feet of living space when all four slide-outs are extended.

“This takes a good amount of experience, knowledge and craftsmanship to make it happen,” Kuester said as he built a set of custom kitchen cabinets. “It’s very challenging.”

Another factor that puts Newell’s vehicles at the top of the line is their durability. Out of approximately 1,500 coaches built since 1967, about 1,100 are still on the road, Kernan said.

Musician Steve Miller is a regular customer. Workers pointed out that one of his coaches, purchased in the mid-1990s, was still rolling to rock gigs more than 20 years and 400,000 miles later.
Everybody plays a role

The factory turns out, on average, two finished coaches per month, but there are many more in varying stages of development at any one time.

“There is a lot of work that goes into it, and everybody plays a role, big or small,” said 11-year employee Michael Thomas.

Many of the workers at the Newell factory wear T-shirts with the slogan: Newell Coach: One Company, One Team. That concept of teamwork is a huge part of the company’s success and longevity, said Brov Cawyer, a 31-year veteran.

Because one small error at the beginning of construction can cause much bigger headaches later on in the production process, each worker must have the big picture in mind when performing even the smallest tasks.

“A guy puts a bolt in backwards, and it can turn a 10-minute job into a two-hour job,” said Henry Gaines, an electrician who has worked for Newell for 10 years. “So there has to be a lot of communication.”

Larry Vanover, who has worked at the Newell factory for 36 years, is the company’s most senior production employee.

“One thing that makes us different than some other companies is that all of our workers have a special skill,” Vanover said. “And all of those departments have to work together.”

That “all for one” concept also extends to the interactions between Local 627 and the company.

“The company and the union go hand in hand,” Cawyer said. “We really do work well together.”

Newell has operated continuously at the same Miami, Okla., location since 1967. Founded by L.K. Newell, the company was sold twice in the 1970s and now is under the direction of owner and company President Karl Blade, who joined Newell in 1979.

Newell employs about 165 workers, including 85 USW members in manufacturing.

Last November, Newell moved production to a new, larger facility on the same site as the original factory. The move allowed the company to streamline production and increase efficiency, while giving workers added space and more comfortable working conditions.

Because some stages of the manufacturing process require more than eight hours at a time, the workers at Newell operate on a 10-hour, four-day week, Monday through Thursday.

That arrangement is a “win-win”
that gives the company the scheduling it needs to produce the coaches more efficiently, and gives workers an extra day off each week, said Local 627 President Mitch Hutson.

**Top customer service**

Newell’s customers play a major role in the design of each coach, so that, as Hutson says, “no two are alike.”

The USW members at Newell take great pride in the fact that they are able to meet very specific customer requests, and that the coaches they build are considered the best in the business, Gaines said.

One example of a unique request Newell fulfilled was to build a coach for a NASCAR driver who wanted doors on each end of his vehicle to make it easier for fans to enter and exit during autograph signing sessions.

“We are extremely proud of our customer service – that sells more of our coaches than anything,” Gaines said. “We have tried very hard to keep that reputation for the company.”

Kernan said that while the company does its share of business with touring musicians, NASCAR stars and other celebrities, most of Newell’s customers are “people you have never heard of.”

**The union difference**

Many of the workers at Newell started their careers at non-union workplaces like Wal-Mart and have seen first-hand the difference a union can make, both in the quality of the products and in the quality of life for workers.

“I’ve worked at places where they would push you around however they wanted to,” Gaines said. “Here, we have common ground that we all stand on, and you have people standing behind you.”

Karen Shea started working in Newell’s upholstery shop last July. She said she decided to change jobs after years of working for a nearby boat company because of the improved pay and added benefits of being part of a union workforce.

When Sonny Bartley started working at Newell in the spring of 1994, he planned to stay only long enough to get his two sons through school.

“I’m still here 22 years later because these are jobs with good pay and good benefits,” Bartley said.

Gaines said that without the dedication to quality and craftsmanship on the part of USW members, Newell would not have its reputation as a world-class RV company.

“It’s a team effort,” Gaines said, “all the way from the weld shop to the paint shop.”
The USW reached a tentative agreement with ArcelorMittal USA on April 27, 2016, after almost a year of difficult negotiations that continued eight months past the expiration of the previous contract.

If ratified, the contract will expire Sept. 1, 2018, and cover almost 14,000 workers at 15 of the company’s facilities in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Minnesota and South Carolina.

The proposed agreement preserves wages, benefits and other contractual protections won at the bargaining table through generations of hard work and sacrifice without lowering the standards of living for current or future retirees.

“Instead of caving to ArcelorMittal’s unfair and unnecessary demands to reduce, restrict or eliminate incentives, vacations, sick and accident benefits, supplemental unemployment and severance pay, our committee held the line,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

“Instead of allowing the company to force retirees into poverty and new hires into a second, lower tier of compensation and benefits, we fought for and won a fair contract that meets the needs of our members and retirees.”

Industry struggling
Without question, the steel industry has struggled since 2014, as record levels of unfairly and often illegally traded imports flooded the domestic market and depressed prices.

ArcelorMittal had lost hundreds of millions of dollars, and management pursued dramatic concessions, including proposals that would have tripled the amount that retirees already contribute toward their health insurance.

“We committed to members and retirees that we would not allow the company to use a temporary downturn in our industry as an excuse to reverse decades of collective bargaining progress,” said District 1 Director David McCall, who chairs the USW’s negotiations with ArcelorMittal.

From the very beginning of negotiations until the final days, the company sought to divide the membership with demands designed to create conflict within the union’s ranks and between facilities, but management severely underestimated the power of solidarity.

At each location, ArcelorMittal Steelworkers organized sticker days, gate rallies and participated in national days of action to mobilize support for our negotiations and show unity with USW brothers and sisters at U.S. Steel, ATI and Cliffs Natural Resources, all of whom faced similar demands.

Rush hour rally
On the morning of Wednesday, Jan. 27, about 100 USW members, retirees and supporters rallied at rush hour outside ArcelorMittal’s corporate offices in downtown Chicago and delivered the loud, clear and unified message directly to chairman and CEO Lakshmi Mittal, “We deserve a fair contract now!”

Mittal and then-North American CEO Lou Schorsch were drawn to the USW rally from their offices and invited a delegation of USW members into the corporate building for a brief discussion of the issues.

Once inside, the delegation told management that tens of thousands of active and retired members stand in solidarity against the company’s contract demands.

The journey from ArcelorMittal’s one-sided initial proposals to weaken the union and extract concessions from the members and retirees to the proposed agreement was long and difficult, but one by one, the company’s unreasonable demands fell off the table.

“Throughout the process and in the face of management’s persistent drive for major concessions, we stood together,” McCall said. “We could not have achieved this agreement without the support and solidarity of the membership.”

The ratification process is now underway, with special information and explanation meetings scheduled at each of the ArcelorMittal facilities. Members of the negotiating committee will return to Pittsburgh on June 23 to count ballots and announce the results.
USW members began returning to work at Allegheny Technologies Inc. after overwhelmingly ratifying a new, four-year contract with the specialty steelmaker that ended an illegal six-month lockout.

Members at ATI voted March 1 by a five-to-one margin to approve the agreement, which covers 2,200 workers at 12 facilities in six states – Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Oregon.

A tentative agreement was reached Feb. 22, 10 days after the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) filed a lengthy unfair labor practice complaint against ATI declaring that the lockout was illegal and that the company had bargained in bad faith.

“The strength and solidarity of our union paid off with a fair contract that contains virtually none of the drastic concessions ATI sought to arbitrarily impose,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

The contract protects retirement benefits and maintains affordable, quality health care for active workers and retirees. It protects union jobs against outside contractors, maintains the grievance procedure and other important contract language, and introduces a new profit-sharing system that allows USW members a bigger share in ATI’s future success.

Before bargaining got underway a year ago, ATI launched an orchestrated campaign of intimidation and manipulation, recruiting scabs and security guards for the lockout.

The company then opened negotiations with a jaw-dropping list of demands that included 145 deep and permanent concessions that would have erased decades of progress, significantly increased health care costs for retirees and created an unacceptable and divisive two-tier benefit system designed to divide the USW membership.

After weeks of negotiations, ATI demanded last August that the union vote on a last, best and final concessionary offer. Before a vote could be held, ATI locked the workers out of their jobs on Aug. 15.

“The company’s plan from day one was to starve us out, to push the lockout into February when unemployment benefits would begin to run out and then force us to accept its insulting ‘last, best and final’ offer,” said International Vice President Tom Conway, who led the union bargaining team.

Instead, as USW members and their families stood strong for more than six months, the company eventually caved, settling for a contract nearly identical to the one the USW had offered in August, before the lockout began. The scabs were fired before USW members returned.

“We stood strong on our picket lines, in our communities and at the bargaining table,” Conway said. “This agreement represents a tremendous victory for a very brave group of workers.”

Bargaining with Cliffs Natural Resources on a new contract was continuing as USW@Work went to press with the company refusing to budge on demands for dramatic changes to pension funding and health care benefits.

The company proposed significantly defunding pensions and merging all single-employer retirement plans into one multi-employer plan, a move that could have serious consequences for retirees and active employees.

In addition, the company wants to increase health care costs for both its active and retired workers in the iron ore industry.

“Since day one, our goal has been to negotiate a fair contract,” said District 11 Director Emil Ramirez, who leads the union’s bargaining. “We must not allow the company to use the crisis in steel as an excuse to gut benefits that people have worked their whole lives to achieve.”

In January, Cliffs drastically increased health care premiums for retirees. The USW has consistently disputed that move, and ultimately the 2016 premiums will be set by the next contract.

That contract would cover workers at two locations in Michigan and two in Minnesota.

“If the company gets its way, health care premiums could eventually be so high after inflation that retirees either won’t even be able to afford insurance, or workers simply won’t be able to retire,” Ramirez said.

“That’s why we have to keep fighting – to protect not just our retirees, but active employees and their families as well.”
With tens of thousands of Steelworkers laid off in steel and other basic industries around the country, the USW has shifted into overdrive its fight to protect jobs and American manufacturing from unfair trade.

The union is using every tool at its disposal including filing massive trade cases and mobilizing labor-friendly legislators to change policies that allow China and other countries to flood global markets with unfairly priced steel, aluminum and other commodities.

“This is an employment crisis, and it also poses serious threats to our national security,” said International President Leo W. Gerard, who is leading the union’s multi-faceted fight for good-paying jobs.

More than 13,500 workers in the steel industry had received layoff notices as USW@Work went to press. The pink slips hit workers in iron ore mines and steel production facilities all around the nation.

Aluminum, another industry in crisis, is shutting capacity at an alarming rate with more than 6,500 workers on layoff or expected to receive layoff notices by the end of June. Only five aluminum smelters, down from 14 in 2011, are operating in the United States, with one of those expected to be idled this summer.

“Everyone from restaurants and grocery stores to appliance shops and retail stores are feeling the pain,” Dan Simmons, president of Local 1899 at U.S. Steel’s idled Granite City Works in Illinois, told a hearing held in Washington, D.C., on the global steel industry.

**Trade law enforcement**

To combat the crisis, the USW is aggressively using U.S. trade laws to protect jobs threatened by China’s surging imports and predatory trade practices. China has long used dumping, market-distorting subsidies and industrial policies to prop up its own industries and employment and rip off American manufacturing jobs.

The USW’s all-out effort continues the union’s long and largely successful history of filing trade enforcement actions to protect jobs in steel, tires, paper and other industries. The union has been involved in more than 50 trade cases involving a wide range of industries since 2000.

The current glut of basic materials flooding global markets from China has triggered a sharp rise in trade disputes, particularly in the United States, where the USW is leading the call for trade law enforcement.

In the first three months of this year, the U.S. government launched seven new investigations into alleged dumping and illegal subsidies given to exporters such as cash, raw materials and electricity. That’s more investigations than any similar period dating back to at least 2003.

The increasing number of cases reflect the severity of the problems created by global overcapacity. Between 2013 and the 2016 first quarter, the USW participated in 13 reviews and 28 preliminary and final investigations of illegally traded goods flooding U.S. markets.

Trade cases are complex and very expensive to research, file and defend, often costing $1 million or more. Typically, the USW uses U.S. trade laws to target illegal government subsidies and dumping, the sale of goods at less than the cost of production or below the price charged in the importer’s home market. The union has used other trade laws as a basis for cases when appropriate.
Losing to win

One of the big troubles with existing trade law is that USW members have to lose jobs before the union can prove harm has been done and win relief.

“We don’t want to bring these trade cases — we have to,” Gerard told a congressional panel. “Cases aren’t a sign of success. They are a sign of failure, and most important, injury. To bring a trade case, and win, we have to show how much injury has been inflicted on our members.”

In the past, the USW fought to win trade cases by partnering with employers, testifying before the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC), and lobbying legislators and trade representatives with visits, letters, emails and phone calls.

More recently, the USW has increasingly had to go it alone in trade cases without employer assistance, as it did in successful trade actions against unfairly priced tire imports.

That’s a reflection of the competing interests of multinational corporations that want to set up shop anywhere in the world and get access to the American market without concern for U.S. jobs.

With and without corporate partners, the USW is confronting China for its excessive production that is flooding world markets and killing manufacturing and jobs worldwide.

China ignoring promises

Despite a worldwide outcry, China is ignoring past pledges to curb excess production capacity and is doubling down on efforts to keep unneeded factories running and providing jobs.

“The Chinese steel industry produces 400 million tons more steel than it can consume, and it does that deliberately because China can’t keep its system afloat if its people are on the streets. Not only do they export that global excess capacity in steel around the world, they are exporting their unneeded projects to upgrade bridges, power grids and other parts of the nation’s infrastructure.

The union is also seeking aggressive enforcement and expansion of domestic procurement policies, including their retention in international trade negotiations.

Gerard and International Vice President Tom Conway tell all who will listen that the rules need to change. The United States must establish a new system of trade rules and enforcement that puts workers first.

“The public is losing confidence in our trade laws, our trade agreements and in trade institutions. They’re right to lose that confidence. Either we change how trade is managed in America, or the system may have to be completely dismantled,” Gerard said.

“We want trade to work for working people,” Conway said. “Our members want a new trade policy that puts results – results for domestic producers and workers – ahead of all else.”
Six local union leaders from across the United States joined International President Leo W. Gerard and company executives in testifying about unfair trade and the ongoing crisis it has created in the steel industry.

Gerard and other USW leaders first appeared at an April 12 hearing called by the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in Washington, D.C., to solicit comments on global steel overcapacity and its impact on the U.S. industry and market. A few days later, Gerard testified before the Congressional Steel Caucus.

“No one action will solve this crisis,” said Gerard, who told the caucus that 13,500 steelworkers across the country are holding layoff notices from their employers. “We need a comprehensive strategy that addresses the flood of foreign steel into our market.”

Joining Gerard at the USTR hearing were Sam Pantello, vice president of Local 2102 at EVRAZ Rocky Mountain Steel in Pueblo, Colo.; Dan Pierce, vice president of Local 2660 at U.S. Steel’s Keewatin Taconite in Keewatin, Minn.; Tim Davis, vice president of Local 8378 at Cascade Steel Rolling Mills in McMinnville, Ore.; David Clark, president of Local 1013 at U.S. Steel Tubular Operations in Fairfield, Ala.; Dan Simmons, president of Local 1899 at U.S. Steel in Granite City, Ill.; and James Sanderson, president of Local 7898 at ArcelorMittal in Georgetown, S.C.

Each leader shared a personal story of the pain inflicted on families and steel communities as a result of Chinese producers that benefit from illegal government subsidies and dump their artificially low-priced steel into the U.S. market.

Gerard calls for action

“The current steel crisis is primarily caused by unfair foreign trade that includes dramatic expansions of global overcapacity,” Gerard said. “Our national and economic security is at risk. We need an immediate action plan to address this crisis.” That action plan should include import restraints, stimulation of domestic demand, and aggressive enforcement and expansion of domestic procurement policies, Gerard said.

Pantello, a maintenance mechanical technician, told the USTR that 260 of his fellow workers at EVRAZ are laid off and the facility is running at 65 percent capacity.

“We are the only manufacturer of steel rail west of the Mississippi,” Pantello said. “And yet, because of steel dumping, I have co-workers out of a job, worrying about making their next mortgage or car payment.”

Pierce, a diesel mechanic at Keewatin Taconite, was laid off in 2015 along with 360 co-workers due to a sharp drop in demand for iron ore. He explained to the USTR the ripple effect the steel crisis has on communities.

“Our family has had to hold off on home repairs and cut back on groceries and eating out,” he said. “Multiply that by all of the other workers going through the same things, it means local businesses suffer.”

Tim Davis is a second-generation worker at Cascade Steel, which produces rebar, coiled steel wire and flat bar. The mill is running at reduced capacity and has furloughed 70 workers, including Davis.

“I want to know that as long as I work hard to provide for my family that my kids can have the same childhood I did thanks to my dad working hard at Cascade Steel,” Davis said. “With the current rate of American factories closing their doors for good, I’m concerned they won’t have that option.”

David Clark, a maintenance utility worker in Fairfield, where U.S. Steel recently shut down its blast furnace, said his local union has set up a food bank to help families get by. “My community is struggling,” he told the USTR. “It has gotten to the point where the city council in Fairfield is debating closure of the police department.”

Sanderson said the closure of his wire rod mill in 2015 left 226 workers in South Carolina without jobs. “No U.S. steelworker should have to lose a job because we allow unfairly traded...
steel into this country.”

The speakers all agreed that American steelworkers produce the best products in the world, in the most efficient, environmentally friendly way possible. Still, they struggle to compete because the U.S. trade system has been unable to provide them with a level playing field.

Simmons said in steel towns like Granite City, a huge part of the local economy centers around the mill and its workers.

“I can’t stop anywhere in town, or even in the surrounding communities, without being asked about when the Granite City Works will start back up,” he said.

Steel Caucus hearing

After the two-day USTR hearing, Gerard joined steel industry executives to testify before the Congressional Steel Caucus to urge Congress to take action to end the dumping of cheap steel and to curb Chinese production.

The speakers also called on the United States and other trading partners to deny China the coveted status of a “market economy” under the World Trade Organization, a move that China has long sought, but which would make it even more difficult for nations to impose duties on Chinese imports.

In his testimony, Gerard urged Congress to act quickly and boldly, arguing that relying on foreign producers for steel is a threat to both national and economic security.

“Steel is the backbone of our military – weapons and armaments,” Gerard said. “It is also the backbone of critical transportation and energy infrastructure in this country from rails and bridges to docks and depots.”

Joining Gerard to testify before the Steel Caucus were Mario Longhi, CEO of U.S. Steel; Jim Baske, CEO of ArcelorMittal North America; Roger Newport, CEO of AK Steel; Dennis Oates, CEO of Universal Stainless and Alloy Products, and other steel industry leaders.

U.S. Steel won the opening round of its fight to stop all Chinese steel exports from entering the United States when the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) voted to open an investigation into the company’s petition for relief.

Prior to the ITC vote on May 26, the USW conducted a quick petition drive to support U.S. Steel’s action. Nearly 6,000 petitions from 17 local unions were collected at union halls, plant gates, locker rooms and lunch rooms for delivery to the ITC.

In a complaint filed with the ITC on April 26, U.S. Steel urged trade regulators to investigate dozens of Chinese producers and distributors for stealing trade secrets, conspiring to fix prices and circumventing import duties.

“The USW stands with U.S. Steel in its effort to put a stop to China’s illegal and predatory acts targeting our country’s steel sector,” said International President Leo W. Gerard, who wrote to the ITC in support of the case.

“America’s steel sector is under attack by China. Repeated illegal and predatory trade practices have devastated production and employment in steel and many other sectors,” he said.

The petition was filed under Section 337 of the Tariff Act of 1930, which allows U.S. officials to exclude from the market all unfairly traded products named in the complaint.

The statute protects U.S. companies from patent infringement and theft of intellectual property and is commonly applied to medical devices and technology. It was last used by the steel industry in 1978 to curb imports of welded stainless steel pipe from Japan.

The allegation regarding stolen trade secrets stems from a 2014 federal indictment against members of the Chinese military for hacking into the computer systems of U.S. Steel, Allegheny Technologies, Westinghouse, Alcoa and the USW. U.S. Steel claims China stole decades of research on high-strength steel.

The complaint also accuses 11 Chinese steelmakers of anti-competitive pricing and false labeling, or unlawfully sending shipments through intermediate countries to skirt U.S. restrictions.

Baoshan Iron & Steel, China’s second-largest steelmaker, urged the ITC to reject U.S. Steel’s complaint. “Never before has a single company sought to erect what would be a total blockade of steel trade from an entire country,” Baoshan said in a filing with the agency.

A week before the filing, China made clear at a meeting of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that it had no intention of cooperating with other countries to help manage problems caused by its overcapacity in steel.

As China pushed its chair away from the negotiating table, new data was released highlighting its steel shipments reaching a new record,” Gerard said. “China’s steel exports continue to swamp the world, jeopardizing the very survival of free markets.”
Investigations are underway in a trade case filed by the USW that seeks antidumping and countervailing duties on truck and bus tires imported from China.

The USW filed petitions on Jan. 29 alleging imported Chinese-made truck and bus tires were hurting the domestic industry through dumping and unfair government subsidies.

“Once again, we are taking action to stop the unfair trade practices of China from damaging our members’ good jobs and the U.S. manufacturing base,” International President Leo W. Gerard said in announcing the filing of petitions with the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC).

The DOC began a preliminary investigation of Chinese truck and bus tires Feb. 18. On March 11, the ITC voted 4-2 that there was sufficient evidence of material injury to continue the investigation.

Chinese dumping and subsidization distort the U.S. market in tires and in many other products manufactured by USW members, Gerard said.

The USW represents about 6,000 workers at five truck and bus-tire plants operated in the United States by Bridgestone-Firestone, Goodyear and Sumitomo in Tennessee, New York, Virginia and Kansas. Together, those facilities account for two thirds of the domestic capacity for truck and bus tires.

“This case, which is another segment of the tire industry targeted by China, will benefit all workers making truck and bus tires in the United States whether or not they are members of the USW,” said International Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson, who oversees the union’s rubber and plastics industry conference.

The DOC is scheduled to make a preliminary determination on the subsidy issue on June 27, postponed from April 25. A preliminary decision on dumping is due by July 7.

The U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) voted to continue investigations into imports of carbon and alloy steel cut-to-length plate products from 12 countries, including China and Korea.

International President Leo W. Gerard said the May 20 vote by the ITC was “an important step in helping to restore market conditions” for the products.

The ITC found there is a reasonable enough indication of harm to the U.S. industry that it will continue antidumping duty investigations on imports from Austria, Belgium, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, South Africa, Taiwan and Turkey.

The ITC also said it would press forward with countervailing duty investigations on imports subsidized by the Chinese and Korean governments. The agency dropped Brazil from the case, saying subsidies from that country were negligible.

“The ITC acknowledged the injury that workers all across the country have felt first hand,” Gerard said. “More than 13,500 Steelworkers have received pink slips as a result of the practices alleged in this case and others such as massive overcapacity. It’s time to have a comprehensive approach to address the threats facing the sector to strengthen America’s economic and national security.”

Imports of cut-to-length steel plate surged by over 100 percent between 2013 and 2015 from 572,000 tons to 1.2 million tons. It is used in buildings, bridges, transmission towers, light poles, machine parts, tooling, and equipment for agriculture, construction, mining and heavy transportation.
A report from the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) on the expected effects of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) confirms what the USW and other opponents of the deal have long believed: The TPP would not help American workers.

“This report validates that the TPP is not worth passing,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “In the past, similar reports have proven to widely underestimate the negative impact of trade agreements on American workers and the economy. This report indicates the TPP will produce almost no benefits, but inflict real harm on so many workers.”

Past trade agreements, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 and the U.S.-Korea free trade deal of 2012, have resulted in lost jobs, lower wages, shuttered factories and greater income inequality. This report makes it clear that the TPP would mean more of the same.

The ITC found that the agreement would have virtually no positive effect on the nation’s gross domestic product, employment rate or annual income, while causing the trade deficit to increase by $21.7 billion.

“The American public is sick and tired of economists projecting fantasies of prosperity for them when it is primarily corporations that benefit,” Gerard said. “This may be the most damning government report ever submitted for a trade agreement. It is clear that the TPP will be dead on arrival if Congress ever decides to bring it up.”

STOP the TPP!

Contact your senators and congressional representatives today and tell them to OPPOSE the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Call your senators at 1-877-607-0785 and your representatives at 1-866-202-5409.

Antidumping Duties Set

Taking a step toward returning fair trade to the flat-rolled steel market, the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) tagged China with steep duties on cold-rolled flat steel after finding those products were sold in the U.S. market at below cost and with illegal subsidies.

A final determination was also made on antidumping duties for Japanese cold-rolled steel.

On May 18, the DOC assessed Chinese producers and exporters with final antidumping duties of 265 percent and Japanese suppliers with final anti-dumping duties of 71 percent.

In addition, to offset illegal subsidies, Chinese suppliers were assessed a 256 percent countervailing duty margin to be added to the antidumping duties. If upheld, the duties together will increase import prices for Chinese-made cold-rolled flat steel products by more than five fold.

The next step is for the International Trade Commission (ITC) to make a final decision due June 30 on whether cold-rolled imports from China and Japan have injured or threaten to injure domestic steelmakers.

An affirmative ruling from the ITC is required before duties can be issued. If the ITC finds that the imports are not hurting U.S. mills, the case will be terminated.

China’s Refusal to Support Steel Cuts Disappoints

China has refused to participate in a multinational effort led by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to reduce global overcapacity in steel.

Officials of major steel-producing countries, including the United States, met in Brussels on April 18 at a meeting called by the OECD to develop a global framework to address the overcapacity problem.

The meeting ended in frustration after China, the single largest contributor to worldwide steel overcapacity, declined to participate in the discussions.

“Now the time for talk has ended,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “Action is needed. Too many lives and livelihoods are at stake as well as the national security of the United States.”
Nearly 700 USW volunteers spent several days in Rapid Response training to become more effective activists and then put that training into practice by personally urging their representatives in Congress to reject the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and commit to an agenda for working people.

“We need to say to the members of the House and the Senate, ‘enough is enough, get your head out of the sand and do something,’” International President Leo W. Gerard told the USW’s annual Rapid Response and Legislative Conference.

The conference, held in Washington, D.C., in April, included workshops, panel discussions and speeches about issues ranging from fair trade to workplace health and safety to the rights of workers to organize.

The event culminated with a full day of lobbying on Capitol Hill, where members visited nearly every available lawmaker to push for congressional action on TPP and other issues.

As Rapid Response coordinators and volunteers headed out to lobby legislators, International Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson urged them to “put the final nail in the coffin of the TPP.”

“You are the bedrock of our program,” Johnson told the activists who participate in Rapid Response, the union’s grassroots education, communication and action program.

“Your collective work has been responsible for saving thousands of jobs,” he said. “This is not a program we put on auto-pilot. It demands constant attention and activism.”

In a spirited keynote address, Gerard highlighted decades of failed U.S. trade policies that have cost USW members and other workers their jobs by the thousands. The TPP agreement, Gerard said, would only deliver more of the same.

“Our members can compete with anyone in the world if we’re competing on a level playing field,” Gerard said.

Many sectors impacted

Nearly every USW sector has been affected by unfair trade, from paper to steel to aluminum to rubber and tires, Gerard said. A panel discussion that followed his speech outlined the depth of the problem and the possible solutions.

Besides simply rejecting the TPP, Congress must address the issue of global overcapacity in industries such as steel and aluminum, problems driven largely by China, said International Vice President Tom Conway.

Members of Congress could take action to solve that problem and help to save jobs in manufacturing, Conway said. All they need is the will to act. “Don’t let them go quietly on this issue,” he urged the activists.

USW members took Conway’s words to heart in pushing their legislators to oppose the TPP, a proposed trade agreement involving the United States and 11 other nations that would include 40 percent of the world’s economy. The TPP, which Congress is expected to consider later this year, is often referred to as “NAFTA on steroids.”

In addition to Gerard, Conway and Johnson, who oversees the Rapid Response program, the activists heard from AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, OSHA Director David Michaels, Rapid Response Director Kim Miller, Legislative Director Holly Hart, Alliance for American Manufacturing President Scott Paul and BlueGreen Alliance Director Kim Glas.

Glas said fighting for fair trade is part of the core mission of the BlueGreen Alliance.

“When manufacturing jobs go overseas, environmental protections fall by the wayside,” Glas said. “When we import aluminum and steel into this country, we are importing pollution.”

The USW began its lobby day by presenting the union’s Paul Wellstone Award to U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio of Oregon, a leading opponent of the TPP.
The USW presents the award annually to a champion of workers’ rights in memory of the Minnesota senator who died in a plane crash in 2002.

“Our jobs and our wages and our way of life and the future of our country are all on the line right now.”

USW members received strong words of encouragement from DeFazio and other House and Senate leaders before moving on to their individual meetings.

DeFazio vowed to reject the TPP and then to “begin to construct a trade policy that actually benefits American workers.”

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, who wore a USW scarf to the event, pledged to fight for trade policies that support good jobs.

“It’s a mystery to me” why the United States continues to sign onto trade agreements that result in good jobs being shipped to low-wage countries, Pelosi said.

U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Sherrod Brown of Ohio promised to wage a vigorous battle against the TPP in the Senate.

“They keep saying, ‘this time it will be different,’” Warren said, comparing the TPP to the job-killing NAFTA deal. “But it’s a rigged process, one that is designed to help corporations and leave workers in the dirt.”

Over the past several months, Rapid Response activists around the country gathered more than 325,000 signatures on postcards calling on Congress to reject the TPP. They delivered thousands of those cards to lawmakers’ offices during their visits.

Gerard reminded the activists that their visits with congressional leaders were just the start of a months-long campaign to defeat the TPP. Rapid Response activists must educate their USW sisters and brothers about the dangers of the deal and urge them to take action as well.

“What you do after you go home—that is more important than what we do here,” Gerard said.

Proud to participate

One of those activists, Justina Harmon of Columbus, Ohio, was attending her first Rapid Response conference.

Harmon, who works for Express Scripts, took over in January as Rapid Response coordinator for Local 730. She said she was impressed with the non-partisan approach that the program takes to workers’ issues.

“It doesn’t matter if they’re Republicans or Democrats, as long as they are helping us,” Harmon said.

Another activist, Andres Bravo, who works at Vista Metals in Fontana, Calif., was also attending his first conference. Bravo, a member of Local 5632, expressed concern that U.S. trade policy was destroying the country’s manufacturing core and replacing it with a service economy.

Bravo said he was proud to be part of the USW delegation to Capitol Hill to speak out against failed trade policies.

“We got to speak our minds on the TPP, about how it’s going to affect us,” he said. “We made our voices heard.”

Johnson, Trumka and others reminded Steelworkers that those voices will be vitally important as the country prepares for a presidential election this fall that could have wide-ranging consequences for workers.

“Our jobs and our wages and our way of life and the future of our country are all on the line right now,” Trumka said. “We support trade. What we oppose are bad trade deals that hurt workers and send our jobs away and destroy our communities.”
No one at Carrier’s Indianapolis factory had a clue their lives would be upended when management told them on Feb. 10 to gather at the Green Mile, the nickname for the plant’s main pedestrian walkway.

What happened next – an executive telling workers their jobs are moving to Mexico as boos and curses erupt from the floor – was recorded on a smart phone and quickly went viral on the internet.

The resulting outrage over U.S. jobs relocating to Monterrey, Mexico, where workers will be paid $3 an hour, made Carrier a poster child for greedy corporations and thrust the issue of inefficient trade deals front and center in the presidential race.

“I felt like I was being punched in the gut,” Donnie Knox, president of amalgamated Local 1999’s Carrier unit, said after learning the Indianapolis factory would lose 1,400 jobs that pay up to $20 an hour or more plus overtime.

Later that day, Carrier’s parent, United Technologies (UTC), said it would move production of electronic controls from Huntington, Ind., to Mexico, eliminating 700 jobs. The one-day double punch cost Indiana 2,100 good-paying jobs.

Carrier executive Chris Nelson can be heard on the video saying the pending closure was “strictly a business decision” made to “stay competitive and protect the business for the long term.” At one point, he scolds angry workers to quiet down and listen.

Local 1999 members had no intentions of being quiet. The local worked hard to urge Carrier and UTC to rescind the decision and keep jobs in Indianapolis. Their message has been reported by media around the world and became the centerpiece of speeches by leading presidential candidates of both parties.

“The company picked a fight. We’re in the fight,” said Local 1999 President Chuck Jones. “We’re going to do every-thing we can to try to keep those jobs here, and we’re not going to roll over quietly.”

Statehouse rally

In the biggest action to date, thousands of workers and their allies marched through downtown Indianapolis on April 29. They rallied outside the Indiana Statehouse to protest Carrier’s decision and call for an end to tax breaks for corporations that move and leave employees behind.

“We have to get in the streets, and we have to get in the face of the politicians,” said Scott Marshall, a retired Steelworker and SOAR member.

International Vice President Fred Redmond, District 7 Director Mike Millsap and AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka each revved up a crowd that swelled to about 3,000 outside the Statehouse.

“This is an economy that gives those at the top too much and those at the bottom too little,” Trumka shouted. “The message is ‘enough is enough.’ We’ve had enough of this crap.”

In one poignant moment, Jesus Velasquez, of Los Mineros, the USW’s partner union in Mexico, expressed solidarity with American workers. He said workers in Mexico are exploited, and their low wages hurt workers in both countries.

“We the Mexican steelworkers are not your enemies,” Velasquez said through an interpreter. “We are your brothers. We want what you want.”

A few weeks earlier, Local 1999 members took their message to the UTC annual meeting in St. Petersburg, Fla., where they presented a petition with
more than 4,500 signatures from Carrier employees and their supporters.

“Abandoning the Indianapolis plant will have a devastating effect on not only 1,400 workers, but also on our families and our community,” Knox told shareholders and executives.

**Exploiting workers**

After the announcement, Carrier told the USW in meetings that the corporation will save $65 million a year with the move by exploiting the stark difference in wages between the two countries.

To meet Carrier’s advantage, the workers in Indianapolis would have to accept $5.85 an hour, a wage so low that it is illegal under federal and state minimum wage statutes.

“Carrier didn’t decide to move our work to Mexico because it can’t make money in Indianapolis. Carrier decided to move our work to Mexico because it wants to make even more money,” said Knox, who called Carrier and UTC “poster children for corporate greed.”

The rally was part of an educational and activist campaign that aims to expose the corporate greed behind the decision and generate political support to make Carrier and UTC reverse course.

The 1,400 jobs lost to Indianapolis will cost the economy $64 million a year, estimated Wayne Dale, USW sub-district director in Indianapolis. Wayne Township, where the plant is located, is already struggling to fund roads, schools and emergency services.

“We believe that our restaurants and gas stations, salons, barber shops, auto parts shops, are all going to be impacted,” Dale said.

UTC, meanwhile, recorded profits exceeding $7 billion last year, 37 percent of which came from the climate-control division that includes Carrier.

Dale has compiled a stunning set of facts and statistics that show Carrier and UTC have long benefited from hundreds of millions of dollars in local, state and federal incentives and tax breaks as well as military contracts. Top executives are paid obscene amounts while bragging that they have more work to shift to lower-wage countries, he said.

In 2011, UTC told employees it wanted to invest in the future and expand employment in Indianapolis but needed help to do so. The union agreed to lower wages and benefits for new hires in return for jobs. The company also sought and received substantial local, state and federal aid.

Dale is particularly incensed that the U.S. government awarded UTC’s Pratt and Whitney division a major contract to build jet engines on March 27, less than a month after the Indianapolis shutdown was announced and four years after UTC agreed in 2012 to pay more than $75 million to settle U.S. arms export violations.

“How dare United Technologies come to our government and ask for government contracts when they are destroying people’s lives, and how dare they do that after pleading to arms control violations,” Dale said.

As Local 1999 points out, Carrier and UTC aren’t the only bad guys in this story. The company’s greedy move was made possible by decades of bad trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). And the situation is likely to get worse if Congress passes NAFTA’s big brother, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

“We know that here in Indianapolis we are fighting an uphill battle to stop this move,” Knox said. “We also know that the stakes have never been higher, and if the TPP is passed, we will see thousands of other workers go through what my co-workers and I went through.”
A row of 20 chairs sat empty at the USW’s 2016 paper conference, each one with a blue or pink hardhat for a worker killed in a USW-represented workplace since the last meeting in 2014. The empty chairs in a packed hotel ballroom were a vivid reminder that the paper sector – including mills and paper converter factories – is the most dangerous of all the basic industries where the USW represents workers.

“We’ve got to fight for a safe workplace,” International President Leo W. Gerard told more than 550 local union delegates at the April 5-7 conference, which was called to update safety and bargaining policies for the next two years.

“Nobody goes to work to get injured. Nobody goes to work to die,” he said. “You go to work to have some dignity, to take care of family, to put something away for the future.”

At the urging of International Vice President Jon Geenen, delegates approved a bargaining agenda around Making and Converting Paper Safely, a 10-point plan developed in response to industry fatalities in paper mills and converting plants.

Paper workers face a greater chance of getting killed at work than police officers shot by gunfire in the United States, said Geenen, who oversees paper bargaining for the union.

“These aren’t public safety professions. There’s not supposed to be an inherent risk that we accept when we walk in the doors of our employers,” he said. “We are supposed to go home at the end of the day, and the 20 people who should be in those chairs didn’t.”

Of the 20 fatalities, 18 were men and two were women. There were six fatalities at International Paper, four at Georgia-Pacific, two at Domtar, two at Expera, two at Packaging Corp. of America, one at Appvion, one at Graphic Packaging International, one at Rumford Paper (formerly NewPage Corp.) and one at Resolute Forest Products.

All of the fatalities occurred in workplaces where the USW has representation rights. Nine of those killed were USW members, nine were contractors, and two were non-members. No supervisors were on the list.

“Hazards don’t discriminate,” said Steve Sallman, a USW Health, Safety and Environment specialist. “They don’t care
if you are a member, a non-member, a contractor or a supervi-
sor. They all kill, maim or injure.”

Key issues in the 10-point plan include developing a *Right
to Act* process that would allow employees to stop work when
they believe it is unsafe or unhealthy, and ensuring every
location has a trained union safety representative.

“When new employees walk through the facility they
should be trained on the *Right to Act*,” said Leeann Foster, an
assistant to President Gerard. “When a new supervisor comes
in they should know every employee has the *Right to Act* and
the supervisor should be held accountable.”

The safety program includes proposals meant to address
major areas where fatalities most often happen such as mov-
ing equipment, hazardous substances, falls from heights,
machine guarding and objects or debris that strike workers.

**Abating hazards**

The program calls for developing systems to identify and
abate workplace hazards, implementing near-miss and injury-
reporting systems, administering lessons learned from fatalities and developing methods for joint accident investigations and ways to communicate the results.

The fatalities occurred at a time when the USW is doing
more cooperative work with the industry than ever, Geenen
said, noting that the union has had some success in convinc-
ing the industry that behavior-based health and safety pro-
grams that blame the workers for accidents are not a solution
but part of the problem.

The USW will work with the U.S. Occupational Safety
and Health Administration (OSHA) and paper companies to
implement the safety plan, Foster said.

“OSHA has taken an interest in this, and they have sug-
gested to industry leaders that they work with us, the USW,
in partnership to address fatalities,” she said. “If 500 of our
leaders can speak with one voice, we can begin to make some
change.”

In addition to approving the safety priorities, conference
debates reaffirmed mandatory “foundational” bargaining
goals related to contract terms and health care coverage.

The union will maintain three-year contract terms unless
there are strategic reasons not to do so and will work towards
common expiration dates and “status quo” masters.

Quality, affordable health care plans with no waiver of the
right to bargain over health care will be maintained, as will
the current 80/20 premium split unless a plan is superior to
the current industry standard.

Three key bargaining goals or priorities related to safety
were added to the agenda: adequate staffing, rational overtime
restrictions and protecting work from outsourcing.

The delegates maintained primary goals including achiev-
ing successorship language for locations that do not have
it and improving it for those that do, and maintaining and
improving reasonable economic packages while resisting
two-tier wage and benefit systems and lump-sum payments.

The union will continue its fight to maintain defined benefit plans or alternative plans that provide secure retire-
ments and account for disabilities. Negotiators will also seek
to improve vacation time, find innovative ways to fund retiree
health care and introduce paid orientation time for new hires.

There were 27 separate company council meetings for
debates to build goals and action plans. They also attended
workshops and plenary sessions with panel discussions, pre-
sentations and speeches on issues affecting the industry.

**Many challenges**

Bargaining preparation comes as the paper sector is facing
many challenges including declining demand and unfairly
traded imports that have led to paper machine and plant clos-
ings, corporate consolidations, acquisitions and bankruptcies.

The internet and the explosion of electronic media have
contributed to the decline in demand, especially for office
paper, newsprint, magazines and books.

Gerard said the union, a member of the BlueGreen Alli-
ance, could improve demand by campaigning against envi-
ronmentally troublesome plastic bags in favor of recyclable
paper bags made from sustainable forests.

Tissue production and packaging are bright spots, USW
researcher Howard Bochner noted. “There are more noses and
more bottoms, and you need tissue to wipe them,” he said.

The growth in tissue production, however, has gone
largely to non-union plants. Geenen called for increased orga-
izing in tissue making and in warehousing, where wages and
benefits are being eroded by non-union competition.

Gerard and Geenen both noted the USW has been helped
by cooperation from unions in other countries through in-
ternational labor alliances as the paper industry has become
increasingly globalized.

“One of the things we’ve got to do working with our
global partners is to go after corporations and challenge them
wherever they are,” Gerard said. “We can’t let them play one
group of workers off another.”
Audry Chamberlin, a health care worker and new union steward, didn’t know what to expect from the 2016 Women of Steel (WOS) conference, her first USW event. But she left pumped up and ready to step up.

“I feel more empowered as a woman, and I really want to get involved in the union,” said Chamberlin, 35, a registration scheduler for a health clinic in Hibbing, Minn.

“And I feel more confident now in representing my co-workers,” she added at the close of the conference, held at the Wyndham Grand hotel in Pittsburgh.

“The workshops and classes were great. I honestly learned a lot.”

The conference, the largest gathering of working women in North America, drew 1,000 women, and some men, from the United States and Canada to Pittsburgh in March for several days of education, activism and networking. There were guests from Australia, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

“Stepping up” – giving the extra effort to become a leader in the USW and in the communities where WOS members live and work – was this year’s conference theme.

“I’m proud of the work and passion that each of you show every day. We are the heartbeat of our homes, our communities and our workplaces,” Leann Foster, an assistant to International President Leo W. Gerard, told those assembled. “We need each of you to come out of here with fire and step up in your union and your communities.”

Enthusiasm was evident at the opening session on International Women’s Day, when directors from the union’s 13 districts were noisily introduced by their WOS coordinators with a competitive verve that rocked the house.

Strength in solidarity

At day’s end, they showed the strength of solidarity by marching with a police escort from the conference hotel to Point Park University, where the USW represents adjunct professors, to rally for women’s issues, including equal pay and fair family leave.

“We got everybody pumped up. It was good,” said Betty Foret, an operator at Shell’s Norco refinery complex near New Orleans, who chanted at the top of her lungs as the march made its way through Downtown Pittsburgh.

The WOS program was developed during the mid-1980s from a leadership development course for women with non-traditional jobs in Canada’s District 6, where it had the support of a young Leo W. Gerard, first as a staff rep and later as District 6 director.

The program gravitated to the United States, where it expanded and became an official union movement in 1989. In 2005, women’s committees were made mandatory for all union locals with female members.

In his opening remarks, Gerard challenged the WOS participants to step up and be active in the 2016 elections and in the union’s fights for fair trade, fair contracts, equal rights and pay equity.

“We’ve got to fight every day to make the lives of our members better. It’s that simple,” Gerard said. “We need to make sure our union is on the cutting edge of economic and social justice.”

Activism and education

With activism and education its goals, the WOS program is a way for women to develop interests and skills, learn about the union and become
involved in politics and union campaigns on issues that are important to working families.

To that end, the conference offered nearly two dozen workshops over three days with topics ranging from bargaining and union operations to political organizing and communications.

“There are a ton of educational things we can bring back to our locals,” said Cindy Odden, of Local 904-L in Madison, Wis., who plans to submit a report to her local on the conference. “It’s the members’ money,” she said. “They need to know what they sent us for.”

There were workshops on the union’s constitution and bylaws, how to organize new members, how to represent workers on the job, strategies for improving health and safety, and improving political action through the Rapid Response program.

A workshop on issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning workers was well-attended this year along with workshops on promoting family-friendly workplaces and understanding the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Enthusiasm noted

Catherine Houston, the WOS coordinator for District 12, was impressed by the large number of first-time attendees and their enthusiasm.

On the first morning of classes, Houston showed up more than an hour early to set up audio visual equipment and was astounded to find people were already in their seats.

“It doesn’t get any better than that. They wanted to get the full experience,” Houston said. “It just speaks to their dedication. These women are so dedicated.”

Houston described the typical Woman of Steel as a multi-tasker, the type of person who works while caring for elderly parents and young children. They are involved with the local Parent Teacher Association and volunteer for Rapid Response and other union projects at work.

“These women are probably the people who truly have the least amount of time available in an average day, but they find a way to weave it into everything else, and to make it seem easy. They inspire me.”

Worth the journey

Sandy Conway, an ultrasonic inspector for Alcoa in Bettendorf, Iowa, took the opportunity to network and to learn about the union, its international partners and labor’s struggles on behalf of working people.

“I thank my local for allowing me to come here because it has just been so great,” she said. “I am so fired up. I can’t wait to go back to work and share what I’ve learned and to get more people active.

“Everything kind of weaves together and ties in with our jobs and our communities,” she said. “We want to have a good world to leave for our kids and our grandkids. We want them to have jobs.”

To illustrate the theme of “Stepping Up,” several members told personal stories of leadership development. WOS Director Ann Flener-Gittlen used her knowledge of the union’s constitution and bylaws to push for female participation years ago in a 1,400-member local.

Los Mineros Leader Promises Solidarity

Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, general secretary of Mexico’s National Mining and Metal Workers Union, also known as Los Mineros, pledged his solidarity with the USW.

“We will fight for you the same way you have fought for us,” Gómez said in addressing the WOS conference with his wife, Oralia Casso de Gómez, who gave a passionate speech on their life in the labor movement and living in exile in Canada.

Gómez pledged support for the USW in the struggles with shared employers, ArcelorMittal and mining giant Grupo Mexico, and said he is working with International Vice President Carol Landry to create a Women of Steel program in Mexico.

“On International Women’s Day, let’s pledge finally to work together, sisters and brothers, to … build a world free of discrimination and hatred, a world we would be proud to leave to our children and grandchildren,” he said.

Gómez and his family fled Mexico for Canada amidst death threats after he accused Grupo Mexico and the Mexican government of industrial homicide for a 2006 coal mine explosion that trapped 65 miners underground. The bodies have never been recovered.
With support of a mentor, Flener-Gittlen worked her way up to become a local executive board member and local union president. She beat two male challengers for the top job, one of whom had warned her that women should not run for office.

“I had to step up. I had to fight, and it was worth the fight,” Flener-Gittlen told the audience. “Don’t get discouraged and never give up. Stay engaged. It’s a worthwhile journey.”

**Yes you can**

Mine worker Monica Badillo was a firefighter in Hayden, Ariz., when a colleague asked her to run for city council. She hesitated, but ran and won. It was the beginning of a 12-year political career with Badillo serving as a council member, vice mayor and mayor of Hayden.

During the same period, Badillo tragically lost a son, got divorced and applied for a job at the mine where her ex-husband worked. He said she would never make as much money as he did if they split.

“I applied. I got hired. From day one, I always made more money than him,” Badillo said to applause. Currently the treasurer of her local, Badillo had this advice: “You think you can’t do it, but you can do it.”

Holly Hart was a secretary in the USW’s legislative office in Washington, D.C., until a colleague encouraged her to speak up and do more. She became a legislative representative and assistant director before Gerard appointed her in 2006 as the union’s first woman legislative director, the union’s top lobbyist.

Along the way, Hart said she was coached and helped by others. She forced herself to overcome stage fright and do what was necessary to succeed even when it was uncomfortable.

Hart urged conference attendees as they move ahead to encourage younger women and others in the union to succeed and find their own place in leadership.

“It’s one thing to reach forward for yourself, your family and your union,” she said, “but it all ends with you if you don’t reach behind you and start nurturing the generation to come.”
More physicians are working for health systems rather than pursuing private practices,” Redmond said. “An effective way to ensure they have a voice in patient care within this system is to collectively bargain.”

The journey towards joining Local 9460 was a rocky but successful one for both professional and support staffs, who provide care for uninsured and underinsured residents of Duluth and Superior.

The new provider unit complements a non-professional or support staff unit, whose 17 members – medical assistants, receptionists, health information service clerks, billing specialists, coders/billers, licensed practical nurses and lab technicians – approved a separate contract on Feb. 5, 2015.

Both units were organized by Duluth-based Local 9460, an amalgamated local that represents about 2,400 health care workers at several employers, including the Essentia Health system.

Local President Stacy Spexet and staff representative Cathy Dummond were key to the campaign. “Their expertise, knowledge and experience were priceless for us,” Dr. Onello said.

Clinic workers were motivated by concerns about being at-will employees to seek a voice at work and protection from unilateral changes to work rules, policies and benefits.

Certified Physician Assistant Louise Curnow made the first call inquiring about union representation after a new CEO made detrimental changes to benefits and working conditions without notice.

“Beyond having a voice at work, my big picture – and I said this all along to my co-workers as we organized – was to try and take health care back into the hands of actual providers as opposed to being in the hands of management and insurance companies,” Curnow said.

The first organizing meeting was held in April 2013. The election took place June 28 and the National Labor Relations Board certified the results on July 5, 2013.

The next few years after the union election were spent negotiating, fighting a revolving management that included three new CEOs, and pursuing dozens of unfair labor practice allegations against the clinic, 42 of which were affirmed by the NLRB.

Now that first contracts are in hand, all involved are looking forward to a positive future and what the new unit will represent for the union and the Health Care Workers Council.

“It just makes us stronger as a whole,” Spexet said.
Some 125 Steelworkers and 15 members of Unite the Union traveled to Mexico this spring to demonstrate global solidarity with Los Mineros, the Mexican mine and metal workers union.

Steelworkers representing every USW district across the United States and Canada were joined on the April trip by Unite members from the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The group met with Los Mineros as they marked the 10th anniversary of the murder of two Mineros members during a strike in 2006.

Hector Alvarez and Mario Alberto Castillo Rodriquez were among 500 members of Los Mineros who had been on strike for 18 days when 800 police moved in to forcibly remove them. They were shot dead and 41 others were injured.

The strike followed an attempt by the government to remove Napoleón Gómez Urrutia as general secretary of Los Mineros after he was critical of a mine explosion that killed 65 of his members.

Directors Mike Millsap (District 7), Bob LaVenture (District 12), John Shinn (District 4) and Emil Ramirez (District 11) led the Steelworkers as they joined thousands of representatives of Mineros locals.
Get Well Cards

K

eep those cards and letters coming.

That’s what volunteer Emergency Response Team (ERT) member Joe Smith, of Local 959 in Fayetteville, N.C., urged for USW member Brian Allen, who is recovering at the Joseph M. Still Burn Center in Augusta, Ga., from injuries received at work last year.

Allen, a member of Local 9-508, was in a harness preparing to weld an overhead pipe with union brother Chad Classen at a KapStone Paper and Packaging mill in Charleston, S.C., last Oct. 20 when a fire erupted.

Allen has spent months slowly recovering at the burn center with his wife Kristie at his side. He has undergone numerous surgeries and skin grafts because of burns so severe his eyelids were sewn shut to enable recuperation.

Smith, a volunteer ERT program coordinator in District 9, keeps in close contact with Allen’s family. When Kristie Allen mentioned that Brian’s spirits are lifted when she reads get well cards to him, Smith swung into action.

After Smith sent emails to other ERT coordinators and his contacts in District 9, “hundreds of cards and letters from Steelworkers everywhere” started arriving at Kristie Allen’s temporary address in Augusta, he said.

International President Leo W. Gerard, District 9 Director Dan Flippo and ERT program director Allan McDougall pitched in too. Cards and letters also came from USW members attending the Women of Steel conference and the union’s annual paper sector bargaining conference.

Kristie Allen wasn’t up to speaking about her husband. Smith said she “becomes emotional when talking about the outpouring of support” and “sends her heartfelt apologies and thanks to all.”

If you want to keep the cards coming, get-well mail for Brian Allen can be sent to:

Kristie Allen
Home 2 Suites by Hilton, Room 210
3606 Exchange Lane
Augusta, GA 30909
long-awaited regulations sought by the USW and other labor unions to better protect workers from deadly silica dust have finally been adopted by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

“This rule will save lives,” U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas Perez said in announcing the new standards. “It will enable workers to earn a living without sacrificing their health.”

The new standards are expected to dramatically cut levels of fine airborne silica dust, thereby curbing lung cancer, silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and kidney disease in American workers.

The adoption of the new rule this spring ended a decades-long debate in Washington, D.C., over controlling silica dust, which has been debilitating lungs as long as workers have been cutting and grinding materials such as stone, brick and concrete.

The rules limiting worker exposure to silica dust had not been changed since the early 1970s despite evolving science. Even then, Perez said, research showed the exposure limit failed to adequately protect workers.

“We’ve known for over 40 years that it needed to be strengthened, and it has taken 40 years to strengthen it,” Perez said. “Many people who are going to work right now and breathing unacceptable levels of silica dust are in for a brighter future.”

Many lives saved

OSHA believes the new rule could save more than 600 lives and prevent more than 900 new cases of silicosis, a lung disease, annually once its effects are fully realized.

About 2.3 million workers are exposed to respirable crystalline silica in their workplaces, including 2 million construction workers who drill, cut, crush or grind silica-containing materials such as concrete and stone, OSHA estimated.

Another 300,000 workers are exposed in general industry operations such as brick manufacturing, foundries, hydraulic fracturing, a natural gas extraction method, and even dental labs.

Many employers fought the new rule, saying it will be too expensive to implement. OSHA, however, believes the diseases and ailments caused by silica dust — silicosis, lung cancer, kidney disease and emphysema, to name a few — are so costly that the new regulations will lead to annual savings of about $7.7 billion annually, well over the expense of implementation.

The new standards employ common dust control methods, such as wetting down work operations to keep silica-containing dust from getting into the air, enclosing an operation, or using a vacuum to collect dust where it is created and before it can be inhaled. Perez said most employers will be able to meet compliance by using equipment available from local hardware stores.

Some employers responsible

Responsible employers have been protecting workers from harmful exposure for years using widely-available equipment that controls dust with water or a vacuum system.

“The best employers already are doing what OSHA now requires,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “But everyone deserves protection from deadly workplace diseases.”

The rule is comprised of two standards, one for construction and one for general industry and maritime. Both standards contained in the final rule take effect on June 23, 2016, after which industries have one to five years to comply with most requirements. Additional time is provided to offer medical exams and for hydraulic fracturing employers to install dust controls and meet the new exposure limit.

The USW has long pushed for upgraded standards to protect members exposed to silica dust in workplaces such as foundries, ship yards, tool and die shops and factories that make asphalt, bricks, ceramics, cement, china and glass.

Local 593 member Alan White of Buffalo, N.Y., who contracted incurable silicosis while working at an Aurubis Copper foundry, has been one of the union’s most effective advocates. He joined the USW Health Safety & Environment Department at the OSHA announcement in late March.

“It’s a shame that you have to legislate caring and consideration for your workers,” he said. “But that’s what had to happen.”

Hope for future

Although the regulations may not help White, who was diagnosed with silicosis in 2009, he is pleased that future generations of workers should not have to suffer as he does.

White didn’t know about silica or the dangers of breathing it when he started working at the foundry, but now he battles every day with the ill effects of a disease that may one day kill him.

Walking has become difficult for White, who is now forced to avoid strenuous physical activities — running, biking or keeping up with grandchildren. He has found himself to be more susceptible to colds, flu and bronchitis.

He can no longer work at the higher-paying jobs at the foundry, having taken his doctor’s advice to move to a cleaner section of the plant. He now works in shipping.

“A lot of my co-workers in the foundry still do not know about the dangers of exposure to silica dust, even though they are literally surrounded by it all day,” he said.

But there is hope. On the day of the OSHA announcement, White saw young apprentices at a masonry institute using protective controls and equipment that eliminated the cloud of dust that used to envelop him while doing the same work.
A largely forgotten industrial tragedy, the Hawk’s Nest Tunnel disaster in West Virginia, killed more than 700 workers in the 1930s and forced silicosis onto the national agenda.

As part of a hydroelectric project, workers drilled a tunnel through 3.8 miles of silica-bearing rock near Gauley Bridge, W.Va., to reroute a river and generate power for a Union Carbide plant in Alloy, W.Va., later operated by Elkem Metals.

Some 5,000 men seeking jobs during the Great Depression worked on the project from March 1930 to December 1931. They earned 25 cents an hour and worked 60 hours a week with no breathing protection. Only supervisors wore air-filtering masks.

As workers drilled through the mountain, they kicked up clouds of silica dust. Within two months, workers started falling over dead from silicosis, which scars lung tissue and makes breathing difficult. At the time, company doctors called the disease “tunnelitis.”

At least 764 men who worked underground for at least two months died within five years of the tunnel’s completion, according to The Hawk’s Nest Incident: America’s Worst Industrial Disaster, published in 1986 by Yale University professor Martin Cherniack.

The total death toll is unknown. Some workers died in their beds in company-owned camps. Others were driven out of town to die elsewhere or were put on trains and sent home. An untold number were laid to rest in unmarked graves, apparently to cover up the size of the tragedy.

Union Carbide and its contractor, Rinehart & Dennis, eventually offered death benefits of $1,000 to wives of white workers and $800 for sons. The families of African-American workers were paid $600 for a husband and $400 for a son.

In 1936, a Senate subcommittee investigated the disaster and lambasted the working conditions. In 1937, Labor Secretary Frances Perkins declared war on silicosis, toured mines, convened national conferences on the problem and issued a film entitled “Stop Silicosis.”

In later years, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration adopted rules limiting silica dust exposure, but the completely preventable disease continued to kill.
Pricilla Puente, a Texas refinery worker, is the first USW Cares Jefferson Awards Champion, chosen for her volunteer work in helping domestic violence survivors prepare for family-sustaining union jobs.

A member of Local 227 in Pasadena, Puente will represent the USW at this year’s Jefferson Awards Foundation ceremony in Washington, D.C., where she will be a candidate for an award as the nation’s top Jefferson Awards Champion volunteer.

As a volunteer for the organization The Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Puente leads a fund-raising project in her local that supports scholarships for domestic violence survivors to study for employment at union-represented oil refineries.

“The amazing work that Priscilla and her local union are doing with the The Bridge Over Troubled Waters organization is life changing.” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “We’re so proud of them for showing that Steelworkers are not just leaders in our union, but leaders in the communities where we live and work.”

The USW is in its first year as a partner with the Jefferson Awards Foundation, created in 1972 to honor community and public volunteerism. Its awards are often called the Nobel Prize for public service.

As a program champion, the USW created a formal structure to nominate members and retirees for Jefferson Awards while shining a spotlight on USW Cares efforts in communities across North America.

Choosing from the 125 nominations received this year, the International Executive Board presented USW Cares Jefferson Awards to 14 members and retirees at its meeting in June. Puente was selected as the overall winner.

“This work is making such a difference in our communities, and there is so much more volunteerism being done that did not result in a nomination,” Gerard said. “I’m proud to say that among our union’s values is an authentic, deep commitment to service. The USW really does care.”

Go to the USW website, http://usw.to/9p, for more information about the district winners and their good deeds.

**2016 USW CARES JEFFERSON AWARDS CHAMPIONS**

- **District 1** – Rich Banichar, Local 3057
- **District 2** – Richard Ziolecki, Local 209
- **District 3** – Ronald Palmer, Local 1944
- **District 4** – Cindy Marlow, Local 3609/Women of Steel
- **District 5** – Billy St. Pierre, Local 9490
- **District 6** – Rick Bertrand, Local 6500
- **District 7** – Steven Minchuk, Local 6787
- **District 8** – Local 957 Women of Steel/Carla Hartley
- **District 9** – Kuyzendra A. Cobb, Local 425
- **District 10** – Mark Simko, Local 1219/Next Gen
- **District 11** – Tammy Renzaglia, Local 6115/Women of Steel
- **District 12** – Raylynn McIntire, Local 5
- **District 13** – Priscilla Puente, Local 227/Women of Steel/Next Gen

SOAR - Chapter 7-34-2 led by Jeff Rains
John W. Sellers, a rubber worker and International Executive Vice President of the Steelworkers who died April 1, combined a ready smile with an inner toughness that served him well as a union leader, friends and co-workers recalled.

“John had an amazing, disarming smile that put everyone at ease and made everyone comfortable and at home with him,” International Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson said at a May 24 memorial held in Pittsburgh at the USW headquarters. “But at the same time, underneath that disarming smile was this tenacious individual who fought every fight that needed to be fought.”

Sellers died at age 75 after a battle with cancer. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., on Dec. 11, 1940, he was raised in Schenectady, N.Y., and moved to Memphis, Tenn., in his teens.

A U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Sellers’ life embodied OOHRAH, the Marine Corps battle cry that also stands for strength, honor and bonds of friendship and love, friend and co-worker Mike Yoffee wrote in a poetic eulogy.

It was a battle cry that stood with Sellers as he and the union took on tough corporations like Bridgestone-Firestone, Continental General and Titan Tire. When the battles got rough and nasty, Yoffee said, “Sellers’ wisdom – and his courageous spirit of OOHRAH! – would always pull us through.”

The Marine battle cry stuck with Sellers later in life as he fought cancer. “Often times,” Yoffee said, “the words in his mind, he’d find difficult to say, but a hearty ‘OOHRAH!’ early in the morning helped power his marathon walks every single day.”

**An issue of dignity**

Sellers began his career in 1966 at an AMF Voit sporting goods plant in Santa Ana, Calif., where he joined United Rubber Workers (URW) Local 639. Over the years, he served the local as a time study engineer, steward, trustee, executive board member, vice president and president.

“I got involved in the union probably for many of the same reasons other people do,” he later told an interviewer. “I didn’t like the way things were in my plant. Maybe dignity is an overused word, but to me it was really an issue of dignity. I didn’t think people were treated the way they should be treated.”

Sellers took charge of the local in 1974 during a nasty strike where Voit attempted to permanently replace its union work force with scabs. He developed a reputation as a militant.

After the strike ended and union members recovered their jobs, Sellers worked to rebuild the URW’s relationship with the company. The next negotiations, in 1978, went smoothly.

He was appointed to the URW staff in late 1978 and serviced local unions until 1989 when he was named assistant to the director of the URW’s District 3.

URW President Ken Coss then brought Sellers to Akron, Ohio, to serve as political education director and as organizing director, a position he held when the URW merged with the USW in 1995. A 10-month strike at Bridgestone-Firestone had depleted the URW’s strike fund.

International Vice President Tom Conway said he met Sellers during that strike and came away “impressed with this man and how he knew that we could get through this if we could just pull everyone together.”

“I really came to appreciate working with John and his steadiness and seriousness,” Conway said. “We’re all going to miss him.”

**R/PIC Leader**

In 1996 after the merger, the late International President George Becker named Sellers to the interim position of International Executive Vice President in charge of the USW’s Rubber and Plastics Industries Conference (R/PIC). In 1997, Sellers was elected to a full four-year term as R/PIC leader.

As head of R/PIC, Sellers oversaw negotiations with major tire producers. He retired from the USW in 2005 and was succeeded by Ron Hoover, another former URW leader.

Hoover, now retired, said Sellers showed his tenacity when he refused to end the Bridgestone-Firestone strike when all that remained in the way of a settlement was the return to work of one member the corporation did not want back. Sellers did not budge, and the member returned to work.

Retired General Counsel Carl Frankel also described Sellers as a tenacious negotiator who knew the tire industry and enjoyed the admiration of union members and the respect of his company adversaries.

“Heir affable personality, permanent smile and wonderful sense of humor belied an inner toughness, all of which contributed to his success,” Frankel said. “In everything that he did, John Sellers was a staunch leader and beyond that, a wonderful human being.”
New Rule Will Expose Spending on Union Busting

Beginning this summer, employers will be required to report to the U.S. Labor Department when they engage outside consultants to craft and deliver anti-union messages to workers.

“This long-awaited rule will increase transparency about employers’ activities when they hire outside third parties to do their union busting,” AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said.

“It takes great courage for working people to come together to form a union. Working men and women deserve to know who their employer is hiring and exactly how much they are spending to discourage workers from forming a union.”

The new rule, which takes effect in July, closes a long-standing loophole in the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act that allowed employers to hire consultants and strategize against union-organizing campaigns without disclosing any information.

Huhtamaki Safety Day of Action

USW members who work for the Huhtamaki paper products company in the United States held a successful Safety Day of Action on May 19 that was supported by the IndustriALL Global Union and other allies.

All four USW Huhtamaki locals participated in the action day including Local 819 in Sacramento, Calif., Local 54 in Fulton, N.Y., Local 449 in Waterville, Maine, and Local 645 in Hammond, Ind.

The show of solidarity came as the USW is engaged in a round of contract bargaining with Huhtamaki, a Finnish company that has 21 facilities in the United States, six of which are organized.

The USW is pressing Huhtamaki to improve safety conditions at its U.S. facilities, said District 4 Director John Shinn, who oversees the Huhtamaki bargaining.

Although Huhtamaki engages in collective bargaining with unions in Europe, the company discourages unions at its unorganized facilities in the United States with the help of anti-union consultants.

Health, Safety and Environment Conference

The 2016 USW/CWA Health, Safety and Environment Conference will be held from Sept. 12-16 at the Westin Convention Center and Hotel in Pittsburgh. For more information on the conference and registration, go to www.usw.org/hseconference.

Civil and Human Rights Conference

The USW Civil and Human Rights Conference will be held from Dec. 5-9 at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel in Birmingham, Ala. The conference theme is “Seize the Day – Change the Future: The Power of Union and Community.” For more information, send an email to civilrights@usw.org or call 412-562-2491.
USW Confronts Solvay

USW locals at Solvay facilities in Chicago Heights, University Park and Blue Island, Ill., are having trouble getting a fair contract and dealing with management that they believe ignores safety problems.

The USW contends management’s behavior violates a global framework agreement (GFA) signed between Solvay and IndustriALL, an international labor federation. The GFA binds the company to adhere to labor, environmental and workplace standards.

The USW is working with Solvay to resolve outstanding issues. Two industrial and labor relations managers will attend the Solvay union council’s June meeting to hear workers’ concerns. They also will meet with local management and International Vice President Carol Landry.

Don’t Sit on the Sidelines

International President Leo W. Gerard encourages USW members to participate in the American democracy by voluntarily contributing to the union’s Political Action Committee (PAC).

The PAC pools contributions from members and uses the funds to campaign for candidates that support the union and its issues, including fair trade and domestic manufacturing.

“Go back to your locals and get 10 or 15 people to sign up for $5 or $10 a week,” Gerard told the 2016 paper industry conference meeting. “That helps us fight our trade cases and helps us to elect people who will be on our side.”

International Vice President Jon Geenen acknowledged that some members bristle at the mention of politics or political parties and believe the union should not get involved.

“But the truth is we have no place on the sidelines. We cannot wait on the sidelines while the middle class, the fabric of this country, is dismantled,” he said. “We have got to convince our members that this isn’t a spectator sport. The world is run by those who show up.”
Global Alcoa Network Meets

Union leaders at Alcoa facilities in five countries spent three days at USW headquarters in Pittsburgh addressing the state of the aluminum industry and the effects of those conditions on workers.

The meeting of the IndustriALL global network of Alcoa unions included leaders from USW Alcoa locals as well as members of Unite the Union of Great Britain and Ireland; the Australian Workers Union (AWU); the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA); Sindmetal and Stiennfopa of Brazil; and the Fédération des Travailleurs de la Métallurgie - Confédération Générale du Travail (FTM-CGT) of France.

The members delivered updates on working conditions at their locations, offered ideas to address the current industry crisis and set goals for future organizing and collective bargaining efforts.

After a full day of internal discussions, the group met with Alcoa CEO Klaus Kleinfeld and President of Global Primary Products Roy Harvey to discuss the impact of the Alcoa corporate split and other issues.

As the week came to a close, the group attended and addressed the annual meeting of Alcoa shareholders held a few blocks from the USW headquarters.

In a public statement, the union members reaffirmed their commitment to working together in solidarity and called on Alcoa to respect the rights of workers to organize and to provide safe and healthy working environments for their employees around the world.

The statement condemned China’s unfair dumping of aluminum and criticized the forced removal of Maritime Union of Australia members from the Alcoa cargo ship MV Portland while they were protesting a decision to switch to a foreign ship and crew. It also urged Alcoa to protect Brazilian workers who have been subjected to armed assaults while at work in São Luis.

Next Generation Plans Activism

During a weeklong training program, leaders of the USW’s Next Generation program pledged to expand into every local this year and get more involved in community service and politics.

Meeting in Pittsburgh in February, 60 Next Generation leaders set three goals for the year including establishing a Next Generation chapter in each USW local.

Delegates also pledged to register 16,000 young voters by partnering with National Voter Registration Day and to plan one community service program for every local Next Generation chapter.

The goals are aimed at involving young Steelworkers in the union and connecting other young people and their communities to the labor movement and its values.

The training included a day of action.

In the morning, the Next Generation crew volunteered at the Center for Hope in Ambridge, Pa., a faith-based organization that serves the former steel community through its food pantry and outreach programs.

In the afternoon, participants traveled to Washington, Pa., to show support for USW members who were then locked out of their jobs by specialty metals producer ATI.

International President Leo W. Gerard led a lineup of speakers with an update about the union and the continued fight against unfair trade. Steven Valles from the Bus Federation discussed the importance of registering young voters. Jodi Klebick from the Jefferson Awards Foundation got attendees thinking about how they could support their communities through service projects.

To learn more about Next Generation, visit the USW’s website at www.usw.org/NextGen.

USW Oil Workers in Global Talks

Two USW leaders joined fellow oil workers from around the world in drafting a list of priorities for improving occupational health and safety for oil and gas workers in the Arctic.

Kim Nibarger, a former refinery worker and safety representative who in January became the new chair of the USW’s National Oil Bargaining Program (NOBP), and Fritz Guenther, a health and safety representative for Local 4959 on Alaska’s North Slope, traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, for four days in late January for the meetings, sponsored by the IndustriALL Global Union and the International Labour Organization.

The group, which included union members, representatives of management, and government leaders from the United States and Canada, as well as Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United Kingdom, worked together to draft a list of policies to improve health and safety for workers in the harsh Arctic climate.

Despite opposition from management representatives, the labor group fought to keep a number of important issues in the final draft, including language on the rights of workers to refuse unsafe work. Labor also successfully argued to keep behavioral safety language out of the document.

“The USW and our union sisters and brothers from around the world brought a wealth of knowledge to the table on these issues through specific experiences,” Nibarger said. “We are proud to have been a part of the process in developing a tool to address issues specific to the oil and gas sector in the Arctic.”
Rubber Conference Looks to Future, Prepares for Contract Bargaining

Local leaders from the Rubber and Plastics Industry Conference (R/PIC) met in Pittsburgh to examine the state of the tire industry as they prepare to bargain new contracts over the next two summers.

Discussions, held in May with International Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson and International Vice President Tom Conway, touched on issues at individual plants and in the overall industry. Topics included organizing opportunities, changes in production levels, upcoming capital investments, health and safety, training and the effects of unfair trade.

The local USW leaders also discussed issues they plan to address in upcoming bargaining, including safety and health, wages, retirement plans, health care costs and contracting out.

Addressing the disparities in the industry’s two-tier wage and benefit systems is expected to be a priority over the next few years. “We will look to continue to close those gaps and to improve the wages and benefits of our members,” Johnson said.

The USW will enter negotiations this year with BF Goodrich and Titan Tire and in 2017 with Bridgestone-Firestone, Goodyear and Yokohama. First up is the contract with BF Goodrich, which expires on July 30. Bargaining on that agreement began in early June. The USW’s contracts with Bridgestone-Firestone and Goodyear expire in 2017. Overall, the USW represents about 18,000 workers in the tire industry.

Another priority, as always, will be to ensure that U.S. rubber and tire workers are competing on a level playing field with foreign producers, Johnson said.

The USW has petitioned the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) and Department of Commerce (DOC) several times in recent years to issue duties against tire imports from a number of trade law violators, most notably China.

In January, the USW filed petitions seeking anti-dumping and countervailing duties on imports of truck and bus tires, as well as off-the-road tires from China and elsewhere. Investigations into those cases are ongoing.

While the USW’s trade-enforcement activity helps to protect good, family-supporting jobs in the United States, the union’s activism aids the tire industry as a whole, and benefits entire communities, Johnson said.

“We don’t just protect our members,” he said. “We are working on behalf of all workers and their families. It’s the right thing to do... We want to see the industry grow.”

New Contract at Appalachian Healthcare

USW members voted this spring to ratify a new three-year contract that covers 2,400 workers at nine Appalachian Regional Healthcare (ARH) facilities in Southeastern Kentucky and Southern West Virginia.

ARH entered bargaining in February seeking to take advantage of West Virginia’s new status as a right-to-work (for less) state by pushing a number of proposals that would have severely weakened the union.

Among other changes, the company sought to freeze workers’ pensions, reduce disability payments, limit vacation time, holiday pay and overtime and eliminate the union’s security clause.

Through nearly two months of difficult bargaining, the bargaining committee members and the rank-and-file membership stuck together and won a strong three-year agreement that includes wage increases and bonuses, while beating back the most concessionary proposals.

“This successful contract campaign was a perfect example of why solidarity is so important,” said District 8 Director Billy Thompson. “The only way we could possibly have fought off these anti-union proposals was by standing together and saying no with one clear voice.”
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 _________

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY 2016
In Memory of Those Who Died at USW Work Sites
April 13, 2015 to April 12, 2016

4/18/2015     Heather Warren, 41     USS Great Lakes Works
5/19/2015     Mark Duffy, 54          Metallurgie Castech
6/2/2015       Mark Guay, 54          Expera Old Town LLC
6/5/2015      Richard “Randy” Daugherty, 64  Resolute Forest Products
6/15/2015     Andrew Brundidge, 56     Horsehead Corp.
6/22/2015     Mike Hill, 44           International Paper
6/23/2015     Dwane Walters, 47       AK Steel
7/5/2015       John Phare, 60         John Phare Contracting
7/22/2015     Clemi Long, 60          M&G Polymers
7/24/2015     Jeremy Tanaka, 38       Coast Forest Industries Ltd. (CFI)
8/21/2015     Kenneth Gish, 61        ArcelorMittal (Burns Harbor)
8/31/2015     Jeanie Strader, 56      Goodyear Tire & Rubber
9/5/2015       Thomas Courts, 66      Total PetroChemical
9/8/2015       Jonathan Jonasson, 31    Carrier Forest Products
9/16/2015     Parrish Sewell, 44      Whistler Construction
9/18/2015     Velma Perkins, 51       Domtar Paper
10/17/2015    Danny Peters, 55        IMTT-BAYONNE
1/6/2016       Richard Wade, 60       Tonawanda Coke
1/22/2016     Jean-Guy Trempe, 50     Nyrstar Langlois
1/30/2016     Robert Jones            Sunoco Partners Lease Acquisition & Marketing
2/4/2016       Carolyn Williams-Robinson, 57  Kaiser Aluminum Fabricated Products
2/19/2016     Chema Fernandez Saucedo, 28  Tradebe Treatment & Recycling
2/24/2016    Yvan Hallé, 29           Béton Bolduc Inc.
2/27/2016     Calvin Livingston, 64    Bonanza Lake Logging
2/29/2016     Ricky Wright, 54        Huntington Alloys
3/20/2016     Kenneth Ray, 32         Timken Steel
3/31/2016    Kevin Edmonds, 54        Goodyear Tire & Rubber
4/11/2016    Gregory Cooper, 52       Goodyear Tire & Rubber