INSIDE USW @ WORK

We can compete against anyone that plays by the rules, but we can’t compete against governments. Chinese companies act primarily on behalf of and with the support of the state. That’s not market economics.”

International Vice President Tom Conway, Jan. 12, 2017

ALUMINUM CRISIS
The U.S. government launches a formal complaint against China at the World Trade Organization for illegally subsidizing aluminum exports.

TRIANGLE OF PREVENTION
Local union at the 3M factory in Gina, Ala., saves jobs by introducing Triangle of Prevention, a union-led, company-supported safety program.

TRUCK, BUS TIRES
Acting on a complaint filed by the USW, the federal government is imposing duties on trucks and bus tires from China.

ARCONIC
While much of the aluminum industry suffers from a crushing wave of cheap imports, Ford’s F-150 trucks boast business at the Arconic factory in Davenport, Iowa.

THE POWER OF UNITY
More than 3,000 delegates representing local unions from across the United States and Canada and guests are expected to attend the United Steelworkers 2017 Constitutional Convention this April in Las Vegas.

The convention will open at 10 a.m. on Monday, April 10, at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino, and conclude at the close of business on Thursday, April 14. Registration will be held on Saturday, April 8, from noon to 6 p.m., and on Sunday, April 9, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

International President Leo W. Gerard will lead the proceedings at the MGM Grand Marquee Ballroom, which will be outfitted with a large stage and multi-media screens to accommodate delegates and invited guests from around the world.

Held every three years, the Constitutional Convention is the USW’s top governing body. Delegates will debate and pass policy resolutions submitted by local unions and the International that will guide the union’s direction until the next convention in 2020.

This year’s theme is “The Power of Unity.” The convention coincides with the 75th anniversary of the founding convention of the United Steelworkers, held in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1941.

Typically, resolutions will be aimed at strengthening the union in organizing, bargaining, political action and International solidarity as well as health and safety in industries where USW members work.

The convention in 2014 focused on returning to the basics of organizing new members, servicing current members and expanding participation in the union and politics to further the fight for a better future. The theme was “A Union That Works.”

“Stand Up, Fight Back,” was the defiant convention theme in 2011, when the economy and middle-class working families were reeling from a global recession, the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Visit the USW website, www.usw.org, for information on reservations, travel and other convention matters.

Get on board for the fight
“We keep hope alive” is now more than an expression. Fighting for the rights of the middle class and working America is the duty of unions.

Every aspect of employment is now under siege, but not yet in critical condition. The threat of “making America great again” must be tempered to reflect all that organized labor has gained. The next Labor Secretary must not abandon this progress.

I encourage all who have benefits that were gained through organized labor to get on board for the fight ahead. There are millions who share this allegiance who can be rallied now.

George Bray, Lincoln, Neb.

Create Jobs, Buy American
We’re in a time of political uncertainty with a new administration in the White House, but one thing we should all be able to agree on is the need to revitalize American manufacturing and create more jobs.

Rebuilding and upgrading infrastructure like roads, bridges, schools, electrical power grids and communication networks is key to realizing these goals.

But we must make sure the benefits of rebalancing America stay here at home with American workers, particularly union members who are better trained, more efficient and productive than at any time in history.

It is vital that Buy American legislation be part of any infrastructure spending program to come out of Washington. It’s only right that we spend American taxpayer dollars on American workers.

It would be a crime if the job benefits resulting from an infrastructure rebuilding program would go to foreign countries over our own workers and taxpayers. Let’s not allow that to happen.

President Trump has said he wants to Buy American. Let’s hold his feet to the fire. Ask him to use the bully pulpit to encourage Congress to put Buy American language in any agreement to rebuild our infrastructure.

Bill Herbert, Local 5652 Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
For Local 105 member Pat Stock, the story of aluminum production in Davenport, Iowa, is so intertwined with that of his family, it’s hard to tell where one story begins and the other ends.

Stock, who serves as recording secretary of his local, followed in his father’s footsteps, working at the recently renamed Arconic aluminum plant for more than 20 years. Stock’s grandfather was part of the construction crew that built the original plant in the mid-1940s.

Similar stories have played out for other Local 105 members, including Brandon Greve, whose father, Brad, has worked at the former Alcoa facility for 37 years and serves as Local 105 president.

Brandon Greve, who has worked at the plant for more than six years, said growing up in a union household prepared him to get involved in the local “from day one.”

“I consider myself lucky,” said Greve, for whom participating in the local union has meant more than just fighting for a better life for himself and his co-workers. It also meant becoming more active in his community.

As the chair of the Local 105 Next Generation committee, the younger Greve has helped to organize fundraisers to promote issues such as mental health and autism awareness and to raise money to aid needy families in the Davenport region.

“I feel like I have a positive impact that I would not have had if not for the union,” said Greve, who works as a slitter operator in the plant’s sheet finishing department.

Much of the aluminum that Greve handles ends up as parts on Ford’s F-150 pickup trucks. The popularity of those vehicles has helped to spur business growth at the Davenport plant, even as much of the U.S. aluminum industry suffers the effects of a flood of illegal Chinese imports.

Drastic fall in prices
China has quadrupled its aluminum capacity in the past eight years, causing prices to drop by more than 45 percent worldwide.

That means that U.S. aluminum companies can’t get fair prices for their products. The resulting crisis has forced more than 6,600 USW members out of work across the industry.

“It’s a scary time for a lot of people,” said Local 105 member Amber St. Clair.
In the midst of the crisis in 2015, Alcoa, the iconic corporation that dates to 1888, announced its plans to split into two companies – a smelting and refining company that would retain the Alcoa name, and a downstream products division, Arconic, which now runs the Davenport facility. So far, members there say the split has meant “business as usual” with few changes other than new signage at the plant gates. Initially USW members were concerned about what the split might mean for pensions and benefits, but the union was able to address those concerns by reaching an effects agreement last fall that kept the current pattern bargaining agreement in effect through May 2019.

For Lisa Craig Boddie, being one of the 1,900 members of Local 105 has meant not only fair wages and benefits, but a chance to get involved in civil and human rights issues at the local level. Boddie, who started at the plant in 2004 after working a series of non-union jobs, said the USW has also helped to create a more diverse, healthier and safer workplace.

“Other jobs, you have no voice,” she said. “That’s kind of scary, when something doesn’t feel right, you have no avenue, nowhere to go.”

Safety is key

The biggest issue for the union, member Jose Chavez said, is making sure members are safe. That’s especially true in a plant that is the size of a golf course under one roof.

“We are all brothers and sisters, and we all want to get home to our families,” product Inspector Ric Ramirez said.

Since the company’s split, Arconic has invested in updated equipment, which should improve the work environment in Davenport, Chavez said.

“There is a safe way to do everything,” he said. “If they didn’t believe in us, they wouldn’t be investing in us.”

One reason for the success of the Davenport mill is the diversity of products made, said member Lee Shaffer. In addition to material for the Ford truck, the mill produces aerospace components for companies including Boeing and Airbus.

“All of your eggs aren’t in one basket,” Shaffer said.

Despite the relative success of the plant in recent years, Local 105 faces a constant challenge due to Iowa’s status as a right-to-work (for less) state. Still, thanks to constant diligence by the plant’s USW leadership, Local 105 only has about 100 freeloaders out of 1,900 workers.

Local committee members spend time at the orientation of each new hire discussing the role of the local and highlighting ways in which members can get involved.

“Since we started doing that, it’s been a long time since we had someone not give us a card,” Greve said.

Work force almost doubled

There have been plenty of chances for the local to collect more union cards in recent years. Since 2010, the USW work force at the plant has nearly doubled, Greve said.

As work and employment at the plant has increased, the USW’s relationship with management has improved, Shaffer said.

“It’s not perfect, but there is a mutual respect,” he said.

Arconic and USW representatives collaborate closely on health and safety issues. Management regularly participates in the union’s annual Workers’ Memorial Day events and flies the USW flag outside of the facility.

“I’m never afraid to speak up when I feel that something is wrong,” said crane operator Genaro A. Gomez.

Both USW members and management are interested in making sure workers go home safely and that the plant remains competitive as market pressures increase, said Jeff Hartford, a USW staff representative who previously served as Local 105 president.

“We’ve always been very competitive,” St. Clair said. “Everyone here takes pride in what we do. If we didn’t, our customers would look elsewhere.”
The United States launched a formal complaint against China at the World Trade Organization (WTO) for illegally subsidizing its expanding aluminum exports, severely damaging American producers and workers. 

The complaint, filed on Jan. 12 in the final days of the Obama administration, was the result of a cooperative effort begun by the USW and Century Aluminum more than a year ago when smelters across the United States were closing even as demand for aluminum was rising.

“Success in this case would give hope to the thousands of aluminum sector workers who have lost their jobs or are in fear of losing them in this distorted market,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

The USW vigorously fights bad trade when no one else will. To protect workers, their jobs and communities, the USW has filed or joined in more cases against trade law violators than any other union in all of the sectors where USW members work including the steel, aluminum, paper and tire industries.

“We worked with allies in Congress and partners in the American aluminum industry to bring the severity of the problem to the attention of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR),” said Gerard, who publicly thanked U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Rob Portman (R-Ohio) for their leadership on the issue.

“My message to the incoming administration is clear,” Schumer said. “You must continue this push and aggressively press China on their predatory trade practices.”

Massive subsidies

China’s government is providing massive subsidies to its aluminum and steel sectors, which are primarily state-owned, to export large volumes of metal for sale at artificially low prices in the United States and other markets.

China’s capacity to produce aluminum more than quadrupled between 2007 and 2015, while global prices fell approximately 46 percent, the USTR’s office said. China now produces more than half of the world’s aluminum.

The boom in Chinese production depressed prices worldwide and harmed the ability of U.S. producers to compete, forcing them to idle production capacity.

Once one of the world’s largest producers of aluminum with 22 smelters, the United States saw the number of smelters dwindle to 14 in 2011 and to just five now.

The crisis was acute in 2016. Alcoa closed its Wenatchee Works in Washington State that January, eliminating 428 jobs. That same month, Alcoa also announced the permanent closing of its Warrick operation in Evansville, Ind., then the largest U.S. smelter, with 600 workers.

Noranda Aluminum laid off more than half of its 850 workers at its smelter in New Madrid, Mo., in January, 2016. The company filed for bankruptcy protection in February and closed in March.

Century closed a smelter in Hawesville, Ky., in August 2015, eliminating 600 jobs. Two years earlier, Ormet closed a smelter in Ohio, eliminating 700 jobs, after a bid to lower power costs failed.

Alcoa, the largest American aluminum company, also split itself in two in 2016, separating its troubled raw aluminum operations from more profitable parts operations.

Competing with government

“Every job counts,” said International Vice President Tom Conway. “We have the most productive, efficient workers in the world. We can compete against anyone that plays by the rules, but we can’t compete against government. Chinese companies act primarily on behalf of and with the support of the state. That’s not market economics.”

Conway said the USTR’s case at the WTO deserves the attention and support of America’s trading partners and those who argue for further liberalization of trade. “China is not a market economy, and its actions in this sector and others are constant testimony to that fact,” Conway said.

Other jobs may be in danger. The way Robert Smith sees it, he and hundreds of other USW members who work for Alcoa in Massena, N.Y., are on borrowed time.

The smelter where Smith works and is president of Local 420-A was on the chopping block in 2015 when New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Schumer brokered a deal with Alcoa to keep it open until 2018.

“Auco was able to keep the smelter open for now, but we are simply on borrowed time,” Smith said last September in a hearing before the U.S. International Trade Commission, which is investigating the industry at the request of Congress.

“If this keeps up, within a few years, the United States will have no capacity for itself as an institution,” he said.

Years of talks failed

Outgoing U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman took the industry’s complaints to the WTO after years of talks with top officials in Beijing failed to solve problems related to China’s overcapacity.

The complaint specifically accuses China of funneling artificially cheap loans from state-run banks to Chinese aluminum producers to upgrade facilities and expand production capacity, and subsidizing the inputs - coal, electricity and alumina – needed to produce aluminum.

“China gives its aluminum industry an unfair advantage through underpriced loans and other illegal government subsidies,” President Obama said in a statement. “These kinds of policies have disadvantaged American manufacturers and contributed to the global glut in aluminum, steel and other sectors.”

The WTO complaint was the 16th brought by the Obama administration against China over eight years in office. They involved tariffs on brokered chicken, tax rebates for small aircraft and export duties on raw materials.

Gerard called on other nations that produce aluminum or are concerned about China’s overcapacity in many other economic sectors to join the U.S. government in the case.

“The WTO needs to act expeditiously and recognize that success in this case, as in other contexts that deal with China’s failure to become a market economy, is vital to continuing support for itself as an institution,” he said.
The USW is pushing the U.S. government to block the $2.3 billion acquisition of Alers Corp. by a Chinese billionaire whose aluminum business is under investi-
gation for allegedly evading U.S. import duties.

“The aluminum sector is critical to America’s national se-
curity and, for that reason alone, the acquisition should be re-
jected,” International President W. Gerald held in a letter to the U.S. Department of the Treasury. “But in our view, it is also critical to America’s economic security. We believe that national and economic security is inextricably intertwined.”

The USW is pressing Congress about the Aleris acquisition. A group of U.S. Senators opposed to the Aleris sale, led by Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, warned in a letter that the American aluminum industry is under threat by China’s economic policies. Their letter also noted that Zhongwang, the world’s second-largest aluminum producer, has been a leader in developing cutting-edge applications for advanced research and modeling techniques, development of high-strength alloys, and design of light armor material with increased ballistic performance,” the senators wrote.

The USW reached an agreement with Alcoa Corp. on the effects of the aluminum company’s separation into two indepen-
dent, publicly traded businesses. While the USW had existing collec-
tive bargaining agreements with Alcoa, the 2015 announcement of the split raised questions about how the com-
pany’s assets and liabilities would be divided, and how those decisions would affect workers and retirees, their benefits and their companies.

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rent labor and benefits agreements will remain in force and that past interpreta-
tions, practices and arbitration history will be observed by both companies,” International President W. Gerald said.

Alcoa, founded in 1888, announced in September 2015 that it planned to split into an upstream company (Alcoa) and a value-add subsidiary (Aluminum). The new Alcoa will mine bauxite, refine alumina and produce aluminums and other products, while Arconic produces higher-margin aluminum and titanium products for automotive, aerospace and other industries.

The Wall Street Journal connected Zhongwang to one of the world’s biggest stockpiles of aluminum, which was discov-
dered stored under hay and tarps in a Mexican desert.

The stockpile, some 500,000 metric tons of aluminum, was moved from the Mexican city of San Jose Iturbide, to a remote port in southern Vietnam after the Journal published its report.

The unusually large cache of aluminum, apparently extruded shapes made into pallets that can be remelted, has caused concern in the industry about what it means for prices and global markets.

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As the Obama administration came to a close, the Depart-
ment of Commerce and the Department of Homeland Secu-
rity were investigating whether China Zhongwang illegally shipped aluminum through Mexico to China to disguise its origin and to avoid U.S. tariffs.

As part of a long list of recommendations, the U.S.-China Economic Security Review Commission advised Congress to authorize the CFitus to bar Chinese state-owned com-
panies from acquiring or gaining effective control of American companies.

The USW responded to the an-
nouncement by requesting as much information as possible about the com-
pany’s plans and then scheduling effects bargaining to ensure that the decision would not have a negative effect on members’ wages, benefits and working conditions.

“The separation raised serious con-
cerns about retiree pension and health care obligations, and whether the new firms would be strong enough to fulfill the benefits promised to active employ-
ees and retirees,” said International Vice President Tom Conway, chairman of the union’s Alcoa bargaining committee.

“There were also practical issues on how several funds currently covering multiple facilities would be divided and administered following the split.”

Final agreement
Effects bargaining continued into the fall before the two sides reached a final agreement last Oct. 6.

“We had numerous meetings with senior management of Alcoa and Ar-
conic, reviewed extensive information on the structure and finances of the companies, and had discussions with the PBGC, the federal agency which insures the benefits of defined benefit pension plans,” Conway said.

As a result, the pension plan that covers Alcoa’s hourly employees will be fully funded following the split.

“We are satisfied that the alloca-
tion of defined pension and health care obligations is balanced and sustainable,” Conway said.

The current master agreement be-
 tween Alcoa and the USW runs through May 15, 2019, and covers 6,000 workers at 12 locations. The USW also represents more than 2,000 workers at nine loca-
tions in the United States and Canada who have separate agreements.

“Alcoa and the USW have a long, proud history together, and we wish both new companies much future success,” Conway said.

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Roy Moore and Mike Grdinic began their careers as glass mold makers together at Federal Glass in central Ohio in the early 1970s. Soon after, that company was bought out by a larger competitor, and the two men embarked on different paths.

Four decades later, during a recent USW@Work visit to the Anchor Hocking glass plant in Lancaster, Ohio, the pair reunited and quickly found common ground again, sharing stories of work and long-lost friends.

In Lancaster, USW members produce glasses, bowls and other tableware. They also produce, update and repair molds for a wide variety of Anchor Hocking products.

The reunion of Moore and Grdinic proved that for USW glass workers, union solidarity runs deep. That's especially true for mold makers, who practice a craft that dates to ancient Egypt.

"The union not only gives you a better environment to work in, it protects you as a person," said Moore, a member of Local 73 in Lancaster. "And it gives you pride in the final product."

Local 73 member John Glenn, a nine-year veteran of other departments at the Lancaster plant, just began his apprenticeship in the facility's mold shop. For Glenn, being an apprentice glass molder has meant getting an education and having a good job at the same time.

"It's a perfect situation," Glenn said. "I'm not just doing a job; I'm learning a skill, and learning how to do it right."

**Sense of pride**

The human element will always be part of glass making, despite the continuing development of more advanced machinery, he said. That's why, for the USW's glass mold makers, a sense of pride in the final product drives them in their day-to-day work.

"It doesn't matter how many machines we have. We'll always need people with the knowledge," said Grdinic, a member of Local 138 in Lawrenceburg, Ind., who serves as chair of the USW glass mold makers bargaining committee.

"It's an art. That's what we're trying to pass on to the younger generation."

Anchor Hocking has made a commitment to that younger generation by investing in updated machinery in Lancaster to make the process easier, safer and more efficient, Moore said.

Those investments came partly in response to the constant threat of unfair and illegal glass imports from China and other nations, practices that threaten jobs in the glass industry across the United States.

"This will help us compete," Moore said of the investments. For Moore, a 46-year veteran, all that American glass workers need is a level playing field to produce glass better than any other workers in the world.

"We can compete with anybody," Moore said. "Just give us a chance."

**Attention to detail**

For USW glass workers, precision, attention to detail and pride in their work is what sets them apart from others in the industry. That's especially true in mold making and mold repair, where the margin of error is less than the width of a human hair.

Most of the molds created in Zanesville are produced in two equal-sized pieces, cast from brass and other metals, which must be made to fit together perfectly to contain the molten glass that is poured between them to create a final product.
“We try to build the best quality product that we possibly can,” said Mike Emmert, president of Local 121T at the 102,000-square-foot mold department at Anchor Glass Container Corp. in Zanesville, Ohio. That’s why quality control is as important as any other aspect of the mold-production process in Zanesville, where workers produce intricate molds for beer, wine and spirit bottles as well as other liquids.

Tim Kelley has worked as a quality control inspector at the Zanesville mold plant for 30 years. Aspects of each product that Kelley must test before molds can leave the factory are volume displacement to ensure each bottle holds a standard amount of liquid, strength and integrity to ensure that bottles can withstand pressure, and consistency in size and shape.

“It has to be right when it comes from us,” Emmert said.

At Zanesville, USW mold makers must complete a two-year associate’s degree and a four-year apprenticeship before becoming journeyman mold makers. That level of training and expertise sets the Zanesville mold makers apart from the rest of the industry, Emmert said. “The stuff that’s going on here probably doesn’t go on anywhere else in the world,” he said.

History runs deep

In addition to being leaders in the glass industry, the mold makers in Zanesville are leaders in the history of collective bargaining. Their original union, the American Flint Glass Workers, organized in 1878 and was among the founding members of the American Federation of Labor (fore-runner of the AFL-CIO) in 1887. Mold makers were among the first unions in the country to utilize pattern bargaining to ensure standard wages, benefits and working conditions at plants throughout their industry. It’s a system the USW employs today in steel, rubber, oil and other industries.

The USW, which has about 2,000 mold makers in its ranks now, will add another 25,000 more glass workers and mold makers when the union’s merger with the Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics & Allied Workers (GMP) is complete.

Mike Flood, a Local 121T member, performs mold repair work at the Zanesville shop. Flood was a member of the United Auto Workers (UAW) before joining the USW in 2006.

The USW’s relationship with Anchor helps keep the Zanesville shop running smoothly. “The union and the company work well together,” Flood said.

In addition to cooperating on safety and health issues, the USW works with management to make sure workers have adequate training and to protect the quality and consistency of the products that leave the building.

In fact, each mold that leaves the Zanesville shop bears a “USW” stamp. That practice is enshrined as part of the Local 121T collective bargaining agreement.

For the USW mold makers in Zanesville and Lancaster, the stamp is a symbol of the importance the union plays in their lives and their livelihoods. “The union has given our family a quality of life that we wouldn’t have gotten somewhere else,” Moore said. “This is a unique group of people. We’re like family.”
Even though the USW’s endorsed candidate lost the 2016 national election, the union’s long-standing agenda on manufacturing and trade captured the attention of the new president, Donald Trump.

International President Leo W. Gerard sent a congratulatory letter to Trump after the election, saying the union will work with his administration to advance the interests of USW members and the nation.

“Where we can work with him on our issues – trade, reclaiming lost jobs, rebuilding the American infrastructure, fixing our crumbling schools and bridges – we’re going to work with him,” Gerard said.

In an open letter to USW members signed by the International Executive Board, Gerard acknowledged that many union households voted for Trump over endorsed candidate Hillary Clinton. Trump used the USW’s message and its long-standing agenda of promoting manufacturing and opposing failed trade policies to speak to the “real suffering, fear and anxieties” that so many people feel.

“We fully recognize that the members of our union were divided this election season,” Gerard wrote. “While our nation’s economy has begun to grow after the devastating economic collapse of the Bush years, it has failed to grow quickly enough.

“And, as the members of this union know better than anyone, the growth has failed to stimulate the manufacturing sector because of our failed trade policies, which grow out of both our political parties.”

Power of Unity

With the election fight over, the best way forward for the union and its members is to come together and recognize “The Power of Unity,” the theme for the upcoming constitutional convention in April.

“We need to build bridges both literally and with each other, not walls,” the letter said. “We need our nation, not create deeper divides. America and the USW are better than that.”

While pledges to work with Trump on trade and other important issues, the letter acknowledged that the union will not support all of his campaign promises.

There may be fights on issues such as worker rights, collective bargaining, health care, harsh immigration tactics, race relations, respect and equity for women, criminal justice reform, safe workplaces and a health environment.

The USW signaled its approval when Trump withdrew from the Trans Pacific Partnership, saying his action rewarded the long and hard-fought efforts of USW members and workers across the country to keep the TPP from coming to a vote before Congress.

There is much more work to be done on trade.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) must be renegotiated to restore jobs lost to Mexico, and trade deals ranging from China Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) to the United States – Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS) must be replaced or repealed.

“Enforcing existing rules demands a much higher priority,” Gerard said. “Dumping, subsidies, evasion, and so many other unfair trade practices are sap[ping] America’s industrial strength and undermining the lives and livelihoods of countless workers.”

Developing the right trade policies is an important step in creating the rules that link American workers to the global economy, and the USW will look for more details from the Trump administration.

The Wall Street Journal estimated that the TPP, as it was proposed, would have increased the U.S. trade deficit in manufacturing, car assembly and car parts by $35.8 billion a year by 2025. At that rate, the TPP would have cost another $325,000 American manufacturing workers their jobs each year, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Besides threatening jobs in American manufacturing, the agreement would have allowed corporations to sue governments if they believed those governments violated their “rights” under the TPP.

The TPP also contained weak environmental and labor standards that could have reduced access to low-cost medicines for millions of people in member countries.

“None of us oppose trade,” Gerard said of TPP opponents. “We just want trade agreements that benefit all workers around the world, not just corporations. For that to happen, working people in each country must be directly involved in the negotiations for whatever comes next.”

“Rebuilding our nation’s manufacturing sector and revitalizing broadly shared prosperity must be at the core of a new approach on trade,” Gerard said.

Making a difference

During the election, USW members volunteered for record amounts of the most of any labor organization. It did make a difference, especially in some key states.

USW volunteers made an estimated 245,000 telephone calls. Local union officers sent 338,000 handwritten letters to their memberships. More than 11 million people viewed USW videos.

In Nevada, the USW knocked on more doors and put out more handbills and phone calls than any other union, helping to elect the first Hispanic woman to the U.S. Senate – Catherine Cortez Masto, a former Nevada attorney general.

In New Hampshire, another competitive battle, the USW helped to elect Democratic Maggie Hassan to a U.S. Senate seat formerly held by Kelly Ayotte, the Republican incumbent.

By the fall, both House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, both Republicans who support free trade, admitted that they did not have the votes to pass the agreement, and said that the deal was dead until it could be renegotiated or revived by a future administration.

On Jan. 23, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to officially pull the United States out of the agreement.

“This should be just the beginning of a new approach on trade,” Gerard said. “NAFTA must be renegotiated to reclaim jobs lost to Mexico. Trade deals ranging from PNTR to KORUS must be replaced or repealed.”

Opposition from both sides

From the beginning, the TPP faced opposition from lawmakers on both sides of the political aisle. Many Democrats opposed the deal because of the economic, environmental and human rights consequences.

Many Republican free-trade advocates opposed it to avoid giving President Barack Obama, a TPP supporter, a victory on one of his signature issues.

The Power of Unity
The U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) is investigating whether Chinese steelmakers are illegally routing steel through Vietnam to evade U.S. import tariffs.

The USW is supporting U.S. steelmakers, who formally complained that Chinese mills are making steel and then shipping it to Vietnam for minor processing, in effect laundering the steel. “The U.S. economy is the most open in the world, but our market is under attack,” most open in the world, but the industry’s complaints. “The U.S. economy is the most open in the world, but our market is under attack,” most open in the world, but the industry’s complaints.

The probe will determine whether Chinese steelmakers are using every means available to circumvent these rulings and continue evading U.S. import tariffs.

“The U.S. economy is the most open in the world, but our market is under attack,” International President Leo W. Gerard said in support of the industry’s complaints.

“Despite having dozens of successful steel trade cases, foreign competitors are still finding ways to get around our laws,” Gerard said. “They do whatever they can to keep their facilities operating and their people working. We need to do the same.” The probe will determine whether widely-used steel products made in China were diverted through Vietnam for minor finishing as a ruse to evade tariffs imposed in 2016 to counteract illegal dumping and government subsidies. Products under investigation include cold-rolled steel used in industry and construction and corrosion-resistant steel that has been coated or plated to prevent rust.

Imports of cold-rolled steel from Vietnam rose nearly 1,900 percent from the first half of 2015 to 2016. Meanwhile, Chinese steel exports to Vietnam rose 46 percent to 6.3 million tons from 4.3 million tons during the first half of 2015.

Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), commended the Commerce Department for taking on the investigation. “Chinese steelmakers are using every avenue possible to sell their over-supply in our market, even if it means sidestepping the law,” he said. “Much like a weed that won’t go away, Chinese steel producers continue to crop up via new avenues to infest our open market.”

As the pace of China’s economic growth has slowed, its mills continue to produce more steel, cement and other heavy industrial goods than its domestic economy can absorb. The result has been an increasing flood of cheap exports that have been blamed for mill closures, layoffs and threats of layoffs in the United States and around the world.

The investigation opened Nov. 7 in response to two petitions filed within a day of each other last summer. One petition was filed by Steel Dynamics Inc., of Fort Wayne, Ind., and California Steel Industries of Fontana, Calif. The other was filed by ArcelorMittal USA, Nucor Corp., AK Steel Corp. and U.S. Steel.

Using existing rules designed to prevent tariff evasion, the DOC could expand existing tariffs on products that originate in China and come into the United States from Vietnam and other countries. Immediately after the DOC last July imposed provisional antidumping and countervailing duties, Chinese steel producers began to divert merchandise through Vietnam for minor finishing operations in an apparent attempt to circumvent higher U.S. duties.

Gerard said the fight to contain unfair imports is almost endless as China and other international competitors seek ways to skirt the rules. He compared trade enforcement to playing the arcade game of “whack a mole,” where players use a mallet to hit randomly appearing toy moles and force them back into their holes.

“These filings are us whacking that mole,” Gerard said. “Government needs to do much more to relieve that burden and send an unequivocal message that we are unable to get any equipment in our plant to improve our capacity utilization and to increase production and employment.”

For the tariffs to remain in effect, the International Trade Commission (ITC) must find that the domestic industry and its workers were injured or threatened with injury by the unfair trade. That decision is expected on March 6.

The DOC announced its final determinations on duty levels the evening before the ITC held its final hearing on whether truck and bus tire imports are injuring U.S. tire makers.

Johnson said China has aggressively targeted the U.S. market with dumped and subsidized truck and bus tires over the past few years. Imports from China were worth more than $1 billion in 2015 alone. “These unfairly traded imports have taken shipments and market share from domestic producers, deeply undercut prices and prevented our industry from participating in an extraordinary period of growth in domestic demand, meaning there have been fewer jobs, shorter hours and lower wages for all workers in the industry that would have existed under conditions of fair trade,” Johnson said.

Demand for truck and bus tires jumped significantly, by more than 20 percent, from 2013 to 2015. Low-cost Chinese imports, however, grew at a rate more than twice as rapid as the growth in demand.

Jody Juarez, president of Local 307 at the Goodyear plant in Topeka, Kan., told the ITC that production, work hours and new investment in equipment at his plant have been curtailed.

“It is distressing that right at the time when demand is growing, and we would expect the best for our company, we are unable to get any equipment in our plant to improve our capacity utilization and to increase production and employment,” he said. “Instead, our production has been cut repeatedly, our equipment is sitting idle and our work- ers are under used.”

Billy Wright, president of Local 1155 at the Bridgestone truck and bus tire plant in Tennessee, said production has been reduced as warehoused tire inventory has grown. He predicted steeper production cuts, reduced shifts and layoffs if imports keep rising.

Thomas O’Shei, president of Local 135 at the Sumitomo plant in Buffalo, N.Y., said the future of his facility, which is also producing below its capacity, will depend on the trade relief.

“This case will make all the difference to our plant,” he said.
**DUTIES EXTENDED ON PAPER FROM CHINA AND INDONESIA**

In a victory for USW paper workers, the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) has extended successful, strong sanctions against imported coated paper made in China and Indonesia.

In completing a required five-year sunset review, the ITC on Dec. 6 continued for another five years antidumping and countervailing (antisubsidy) duty orders on sheet-fed, coated paper often used in advertising materials, books, annual reports and high-quality catalogs.

International President Leo W. Gerard said the decision “maintains fair market conditions” that have been in place since 2010 because of a trade case filed in 2009 by the USW and three papermakers.

“Thousands of good, family-supportive jobs were at risk if the ITC didn’t extend the vital relief currently in place,” Gerard added. “We will continue to fight for the future of our members producing these and other paper products as well as workers across the industry who deserve to have the rules against unfair trade aggressively applied.”

Revolving the orders, the ITC determined, “would likely lead to the continuation or recurrence of material injury within a reasonably foreseeable time.”

The 2010 decision to impose tariffs was based on petitions filed with the ITC and the U.S. Department of Commerce in 2009 by New Page Corp. (since acquired by Verso), Sappi North America, Appleton Corp. and the USW.

“Unfair trade has put at risk thousands of jobs in this sector,” said International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees the union’s paper sector bargaining.

Geenen said the “decision will continue the hard-fought battle for relief that has helped save many of these jobs and ensure that our industry can survive.”

“The existing duties authorized to remain in place for the next five years will ensure that the hard work of USW members producing these products won’t be jeopardized by unfairly traded products from China and Indonesia.”

The decision concluded a five-year “sunset review” of trade relief the industry received in 2010 from subsidized imports that were produced in the two countries and dumped at below fair prices into U.S. markets.

The Department of Commerce (DOC), which also participated in the review, ruled earlier that the dumping and illegal subsidies would likely continue if the trade sanctions were allowed to expire.

**Vital lifetime**

“The orders offered a vital lifetime to our members and their families,” Geenen said. “Unfairly traded products receded from the market. Prices stabilized. And many workers were able to focus on making paper rather than looking for a new job and scrambling to make ends meet.”

“But our industry remains highly vulnerable,” he added. “In a market where demand is on a long-term downward trend, and with global overcapacity, the domestic industry has been forced to make painful adjustments to try to bring the market into balance.”

At the same ITC hearing, Local 676 President Chris Hinkley noted that duties imposed in 2010 helped to stabilize an industry that employs thousands of USW members.

“The orders that were imposed in 2010 have been vital to our mill’s continued survival,” said Harvey, a third-generation papermaker at the Verso mill in Luke, Md. Luke is a rural community that depends on the mill and the hundreds of direct jobs it provides.

Even with the 2010 orders in place, the Luke mill twice entered bankruptcy protection. The first bankruptcy occurred in 2011 through 2012 when the mill was owned by NewPage, and the second was filed in early 2016 after its acquisition by Verso.

The Luke mill needs a level playing field to survive,” Harvey told the ITC. “With the tariff in place, after unfair trade, my son may be the last in our family to work there, together with hundreds of our friends and colleagues whose families depend on the mill. Your vote to maintain the orders will make all the difference to the Luke mill and our industry as a whole.”

**Workers feel stranded**

During the first bankruptcy, the local had to negotiate new contracts that contained significant concessions in retiree benefits to help the company emerge in a stronger position. Workers also agreed to forgo wage increases and efficiency improvements. But it was not enough to prevent the second bankruptcy.

In 2012, Mohawk and SMART closed plants in Hamilton, N.Y. In 2014, Cascades shut its plant in Connecticut. In 2015, Catalyst idled a mill in Rumford, Maine, that has since resumed running on a scaled-back schedule. In 2016, Verso shuttered its mill in tiny Wickliffe, Ky., eliminating more than 300 jobs.

“Our local union presidents at these mills are forced to take on the role of grief counselor and mediator for their members — a role they never thought they would have to play,” Geenen said.

**For USW and Titan**

A win for the USW and Titan Tire International, U.S. trade authorities in March have finalized duties on unfairly subsidized off-road tires made in India and Sri Lanka.

The Department of Commerce (DOC) announced final duties against the two countries on Jan. 4. The duties were imposed March 11 after a U.S. International Trade Commission, which found the domestic industry and its workers were harmed or threatened with injury by the unfair trade practices.

The vote ended a 13-month investigation of Indian and Sri Lankan off-the-road tires that began in January 2016 with petitions filed by the USW and Titan under Sections 701 and 731 of the Trade Act.

In its ruling, the DOC found initial countervailing (antisubsidy) duty rates ranging from 4.9 percent to 5.4 percent against Indian manufacturers. Countervailing duties against producers in Sri Lanka were set at 2.2 percent.

“Unfortunately, our U.S. market and the Indian and Sri Lankan off-the-road tire industry has been the beneficiary of unfair trade practices and Indian manufacturers have been able to produce off-the-road tires in their countries, selling them to the U.S. market at the cost of American jobs,” said District 7 Director Mike Millspaugh, who chairs the USW’s negotiations with Titan, said the USW is proud to use existing trade law to stand up for union jobs.

“Rising volumes of unfairly traded imports have driven down prices and hurted domestic producers and workers,” Millspaugh said. “This is exactly the type of situation our trade remedy laws were designed to address.”

Imports of off-the-road tires used in agriculture, mining and logging totaled about $223 million from the two countries in 2016, the DOC said.

This is the second time the union has had to file a case to stop dumped and subsidized imports of off-the-road tires. International President Leo W. Gerard noted.

The first time we were successful, but Chinese producers and importers appear to be gaming the system to avoid the duties that were set,” Gerard said. “And now, subsidized producers in India and Sri Lanka have stepped in to get their own piece of the U.S. market.”

Titan Chairman Maurice Taylor, Jr., said the industry improved after anti-dumping and countervailing duties were imposed in 2008 on Chinese imports.

“Unfortunately, our U.S. market remains an attractive target for foreign off-the-road tire producers seeking to offload excess capacity and gain market share at our expense,” Taylor said.

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Donald Trump swept into Indianapolis after the other election as a job-saving hero for convincing Carrier Corp. to retain 750 union jobs that had been headed to Mexico for lower wages. Much less media attention was paid, however, to even larger numbers of Indiana workers who will still lose jobs at Carrier, its corporate parent United Technologies (UT), and a neighboring firm, Rexnord, that are moving south to Mexico. “We are all taxpayers, and we all need our jobs,” said District 7 Director Mike Millsap, who is leading USW efforts to preserve jobs held by members of Local 1999 at Carrier and Rexnord.

“At Carrier, at Rexnord and thousands of other plants in cities across the country, the future of American manufacturing and middle class jobs it provides are at stake,” Millsap said. “The situation is urgent. Without a radical change in our country’s approach to international trade, our jobs and our industries will continue to disappear.”

Millsap intends to begin his Indiana union’s ball bearings plant in February, according to a WARN notice that said the closure should be completed by June and is expected to be permanent.

Those workers who will be laid off from Carrier and Rexnord are eligible to receive benefits and services under the Federal Trade Adjustment Assistance program. The local union negotiated shutdown benefits for Carrier and Rexnord workers who will lose their jobs and pledged to continue to do whatever possible to save them. Rallies and other events are scheduled through February.

“We still have a campaign against Rexnord in the works,” said Sub-District Director Wayne Dale. “We’re trying to get support from the American people.”

Trump, then newly elected, twice used his Twitter account on Dec. 7 to criticize Jones, prompting the USW, other union members and citizens to fight back via the social media hashtag #ImWithChuck.

Jones, the president of Local 1999 in Indianapolis, was targeted by Trump for publicly noting the president-elect stretched the truth when taking credit for saving jobs at Carrier Corp.’s furnace bearing plant in February, according to a WARN notice that said the closure should be completed by June and is expected to be permanent.

When Trump heard the factual corrections about Carrier, according to Twitter, writing, “Chuck Jones, who is President of United Steelworkers 1999, has done a great job representing workers. No wonder companies flee country!”

Two hours later, Trump did it again. “If United Steelworkers 1999 was any good, they wouldn’t have kept those jobs in Indiana. Spend more time working—less time talking. Reduce dues.”

Jones repeatedly said he was grateful for what Trump did, but wanted to set the record straight that 550 members were still going to lose their jobs at Carrier’s outsourcing.

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Jones’ tweet immediately made national news, and the USW did what it always does—stand up and fight back—by sending out its own tweet callng Jones a hero for fighting for his members.

#ImWithChuck

Sign a petition

Employees of the Rexnord plant circulated and signed a petition asking Indiana’s new governor Eric Holcomb and the state to do everything possible to retain Rexnord jobs in Indiana.

Another petition calling on Holcomb to retain jobs in Indiana and asking Trump to keep a campaign promise to tax any product Rexnord sends back to the United States for sale is available for the public to sign on the USW website: www.usw.to/rexnord.

Trump initially exaggerated his Carrier success, telling a pool of employees and news media at a Dec. 1 victory rally that more than 1,100 jobs would be preserved at Carrier because of his intervention.

Chuck Jones, the president of Local 1999, set the record straight when he discovered the number was inflated, only to find himself the subject of Trump’s attacks on Twitter, a social media website. But even Trump, his due, and I hope he, the American people and Congress don’t forget about all these other jobs going to Mexico,” Jones said. “Down the pike, a lot more are going to be moving out.”

With the deal Carrier made with Trump, the company remains on track to send 650 to 700 USW jobs from Indiana to Mexico, Millsap said. Those jobs are related to fan coil production.

UT, which announced its closure last February, has stuck with its plans to close an electronics control factory in Huntington, Ohio, work done by 780 members of an electrical workers union to Mexico.

“His whole campaign was focused on Indy,” Huntington employee Mike Harmon said of Trump to a local TV reporter.

“We’re going to … automate to drive down the cost so that we can continue to be competitive,” Hayes told CNBC. “Is it as cheap as moving to Mexico, with lower labor costs? No, but we will make that plant competitive just because we’ll make the capital investments there. But what that ultimately means is there will be fewer jobs.”

Carrier has not said how many jobs will be lost to automation. “We don’t yet know the impact of automation, but it’s definitely going to be fewer employees,” Millsap said. “Is that number 100, 200 or 300? We don’t know.”

“#ImWithChuck has been the topic on Twitter. In about a day, 21,291 users sent 46,448 tweets that reached 97.9 million people. Most of them supported Jones.”

When then President-elect Donald Trump publicly attacked Chuck Jones on social media in December, the local USW president from Indiana discovered he has more friends than enemies.
by volunteering time, donating funds and resources, supported the memorial project and laid-off miners at Cliffs Natural Resources. Together they represent about 1,100 active mining disasters.

An avalanche of water, mud, rock and debris unexpectedly burst into the Barnes-Hecker mine near the town of Ishpeming on Nov. 3, 1926, killing 51 miners. Only 10 bodies were recovered, leaving the rest entombed in the mine, which is closed off from public view.

It was Michigan’s worst mining catastrophe. The sole survivor, motorman Rutherford Wills, escaped by quickly climbing 800 feet up a slippery vertical shaft ladder as rising water nipped at his heels.

Mining communities in the Marquette Range, a rock formation that has produced iron ore since around 1846, marked the anniversary with several events meant to honor those who died in the Barnes-Hecker collapse and in other mining disasters.

USW Locals 4950 and 4974, which represent mines operated by U.S. Steel and one owned by ArcelorMittal, voted in late 2016 to ratify a new contract with Cliffs Natural Resources covering about 2,000 USW members at iron ore mines in Michigan and Minnesota. The agreement runs through Oct. 1, 2018.

The members at Cliffs were determined to make sure that we did not allow this crisis to erode the progress we’d made over decades of bargaining,” said District 11 Director Emil Ramirez, who led the Cliffs negotiating team.

“The safety rules we have today are written in blood. They truly are,” said Heino, who works out of the trucking 4,000 feet deep in a vug, which unleashed a torrent of water into the mine. Mud, timbers and other debris quickly followed. Paquette said the Barnes-Hecker was a wet mine that used pumps to expel water. Also, rain was unusually heavy that fall and had saturated the ground.

“We’ll never know,” he said. “We’ll never be able to get back down there. We only guess,” he said.

The remembrance closed on Nov. 5 with a candlelight vigil held in an unheated Cliffs Shaft Mine Museum as a reminder of the families who gathered in the cold on the evening of the tragedy.

The greens from the service were taken to two local cemeteries and placed on the graves of the miners whose burial places are known.

“It’s good to be back,” Hill told the Duluth News Tribune.

Steve Lere, a longtime UT employee and member of Local 6860, said the expansion is the biggest he has seen since the 1970s.

In addition to three Cliffs facilities, the iron range is home to two USW-represented mines operated by U.S. Steel and one owned by ArcelorMittal.

Lere returned to work right after Labor Day. By then, some 500 USW members had been laid off for a year.

In addition, U.S. Steel announced in late 2016 that it would restart its Kearsarge iron ore facility in Kewatin, Minn., this March after an 18-month layoff.

“That’s what happens here. Business can pick up really quick,” said Lere. He said UT’s investments, along with a 10-year contract with ArcelorMittal, should mean “another good run.”

“We’re on the verge of getting back to prosperity,” he added. “We should be able to sustain employment for another generation.”

That’s good news for some 3,000 USW members in the industry, and their communities. “Everyone benefits when we’re running, from the car dealers, to where we’re living, from the schools to the housing industry,” Lere said.

IRON MINING REGION REMEMBERS 1926 DISASTER

A 11:20 a.m. on Nov. 3, 1926, churches in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula rang their bells 51 times, once for each man leaving the rest entombed in the mine. Only 10 bodies were recovered, leaving the rest entombed in the mine, which is closed off from public view.

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That’s good news for some 3,000 USW members in the industry, and their communities. “Everyone benefits when we’re running, from the car dealers, to where we’re living, from the schools to the housing industry,” Lere said.
The sound of thunder echoed through the large ballroom as more than 600 USW activists pounded their fists on tables and clapped their hands in a rousing display of solidarity. A rallying cry of “Union!” rang out with great fervor as Labor Heritage Foundation Executive Director Elise Bryant led the crowd in a stirring introduction. That kind of passion and drive remained intense throughout the entire 2016 United Steelworkers Civil and Human Rights Conference that was held this past December in Birmingham, Ala. For Lisa Wilds of West Virginia, the event was her first since the USW announced its merger last year with her longtime employer of 28 years, the Steelworkers Union (GMP).

For Lisa Wilds of West Virginia, the event was her first since the USW announced its merger last year with her longtime employer of 28 years, the Steelworkers Union (GMP). “I was born in 1964, so I don’t remember much from the civil rights movement. But I will be an advocate against racism forever now,” Wilds said. “The same things we fight for in our union we need to fight for in our communities—dignity and respect for all.”

Growing strong together
Steelworkers worked all day doing just that—growing strong together—by participating in brainstorming sessions, goal-setting activities, and more. The conference also held a film screening of the documentary “13th,” which powerfully showcases the direct link between slavery and the current tragedies of mass incarceration and police violence. For Wilds, this was the event’s most influential moment.

“I felt like someone pulled me out of the dark and into the light,” Wilds said. “I’m going to do everything I can as loud as I can to put an end to this systemic division.”

Pledges of commitment
Other Steelworkers followed that declaration of commitment with pledges to serve their communities in many different ways. Gwin Booker of Local 804 plans to organize fellow members to travel to Birmingham in order to visit the many museums, institutes, and landmarks of the civil rights movement to learn the history. Jamie Mante, vice president and chair of the grievance committee at Local 12775 in Porter, Ind., wants to help raise money to buy school supplies for teachers who lack proper funding. Mike Daniels of Local 1167 in New Bern, N.C., pledged to employ Martin Luther King Jr.’s doctrine of choosing love as one’s weapon in the fights ahead for justice.

Steelsworkers show their support for Brazilians and former President Dilma Rousseff by holding signs saying “Down with Temer.”

Global solidarity was a resounding refrain throughout the week as Steelworkers were joined by alliance members including UNITE the Union, the National Confederation of Metalworkers (CNM/CUT) of Brazil, the National Confederation of Metalworkers (CNM/CUT) of Brazil, and more. Steelworkers seized every opportunity to learn and grow together as they packed the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel conference rooms wall to wall for classes and panel sessions throughout the week.

Some workshops focused on topics such as Islamophobia, mass incarceration and criminal justice reform, immigration, LGBTQ discrimination, and disability rights. As a major leader in the labor movement, International Vice President Fred Redmond believes it is vital for the union to take on these social justice issues and fight on behalf of all Americans.

“We’re a fighting union,” Gerard said. “It may be different, but we’ve gone through bad times before. And we have to take our anger and put it somewhere where it will make a difference. It’s not about you anymore—it’s about the future.”

Some of the many guest speakers throughout the week included actor and labor activist Danny Glover, AFL-CIO Vice President Tefere Gebre and Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II. Barber concluded the conference with a speech that brought the audience to its feet. It was as though he lit a fire in them with his powerful words and unstoppable force of optimism.

He spoke with hope in regards to the future of the civil rights movement and rang out matching orders for all Steelworkers and activists around the country.

“We don’t have the time to live in despair,” Barber declared. “We are the heirs of moral dissenters. We must move forward together—and not one step back.”

The theme of this year’s conference was “Seize the Day; Change the Future,” and Steelworkers seized every opportunity to learn and grow together as they packed the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel conference rooms wall to wall for classes and panel sessions throughout the week.

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When AK Steel idled a blast furnace and related steelmaking operations in late 2015 at its mill in Ashland, Ky., the Institute for Career Development (ICD) went into action.

The joint labor-management training program extended the hours of its learning center to help USW members apply for jobless benefits and get the training or upgraded skills they need for new careers if that proves necessary.

“We had 650 people hit the street at one time,” said Mike McCormick, ICD coordinator for members of Local 1865 in Ashland. “We all did whatever we had to do. It was a team effort.”

Ultimately, McCormick figures some 350 members took or are taking courses at the ICD learning center in Ashland and at post-secondary schools in the region while they wait to see if their jobs at AK return.

“To me, it’s one of the best programs since health insurance,” McCormick said. “People are taking advantage of it. It’s got the ability to change lives. It’s very, very good.”

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“Tuition assistance Eligible members can receive up to $2,000 per year for customized courses, and $1,800 per year in tuition assistance at an accredited college or university. Customized courses are those classes that are taught locally, normally onsite, to a group of members who are interested in a particular subject.

After the layoffs at Ashland, some Local 1865 members studied process controls at a community college with the hope of mining or on a local oil refinery. Others studied industrial maintenance, became certified commercial drivers or took up basic crafts like electricity and welding. Some switched to nursing and other health care occupations.

At press time, about 210 people were working at Ashland on a product line for the automotive industry. The furnaces at the mill remained on hot idle, providing some hope that work would return.

There’s a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel,” McCormick said. “They are still keeping the stoves hot, and that means there is a possibility.”

For their efforts with ICD, McCormick and his assistant, E.J. Black, received the ICD’s Lynn Williams award, which is named for the late International President who championed the program.

The award was presented at the ICD’s biennial national conference held last November in Mobile, Ala. The conference included workshops on labor-management committee relations, the legal and financial responsibilities of ICD committees and how to effectively communicate to members.

At the conference, McCormick participated in a panel discussion on helping workers when unemployment hits. He was joined by Marshall McElroy, training coordinator for Local 1899 at U.S. Steel’s Granite City works in Illinois, and Fran Arabia, former president of Local 1196 at ATI’s newly modernized mill in Brackenridge, Pa.

They discussed the impact that layoffs and a brutal lockout at ATI had on their members and the various kinds of assistance that the ICD was able to provide to them.

Time and motivation

All three panel participants spelled out a familiar bottom line: though it’s a difficult time and motivation can be hard to come by, those members who used their career development benefit to gain new skills came out better in the end.

After U.S. Steel laid off most of its approximately 1,500 workers at Granite City in late 2015, USW members began taking courses to help them get other jobs while they wait to see if the mill returns to normal production levels. A few hundred people returned to work in January.

“What I learned from all this is you may think everything is good at your place right now, but believe me it is coming,” McElroy said. “It came right to our front door and kicked it down.”

Participation in the ICD program at ATI’s Brackenridge location picked up when USW members were illegally locked out of work for six months from 2015 to 2016 during a bitter contract dispute.

As the lockout progressed, an increasing number of members at Brackenridge signed up for classes including computer education, commercial driving, heavy equipment operation and building trades like heating, plumbing and air conditioning.

Arabia said the lockout, which ended in 2016, showed the benefits of the ICD program. “When the chips are down, you have a chance to get re-educated,” he said.
In 2002, the local union and plant management at the 3M facility in Guin, Ala., were told by corporate management that their facility would close unless workplace safety improved. Local 9-675 took the challenge and introduced Triangle of Prevention (TOP), a union-led, company-supported safety program that led to dramatically reduced recordable injuries.

“When TOP was introduced, management and union came to an agreement to work together. That agreement still holds today,” said Local 9-675 TOP representative Milton Simmons.

As a result, safety improved. The closure was rescinded and the 300-employee 3M Guin plant is thriving as part of the company’s Traffic Safety and Security division. The Guin facility manufactures reflective road signs and pavement marking materials sold around the world. It also produces reflective products used in paints, vehicles, as well as glass bubbles and ceramic microspheres used in paints, coatings and other products.

Today, Guin boasts one of the best safety records in the company. The recordable injury rates now average two to three a year, a dramatic drop from numbers in the mid-40s at the time closure was threatened.

“We started TOP around June 2003 and began to see a difference about a year later,” said Calvin Bozeman, the local’s first full-time TOP representative and current assistant to Simmons. “TOP has training, a way to report (incidents), and the formula to get hazards fixed before they take their toll and add to the recordable roster,” Simmons added.

**Started with OCAW**

TOP began with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) as a response to a string of catastrophic fires, explosions and toxic releases in the U.S. petrochemical industry in the 1980s and 1990s. A team of union health and safety activists, workers themselves, were enlisted to develop a worker and union-driven program to counter fatalities in consultant-driven safety programs typically, such programs focus on workers and their behaviors as major causes of occupational injuries and illness rather than finding and fixing process hazards.

TOP became part of the USW through the 2005 PACE merger. PACE itself was created by the 1999 merger of OCAW and the United Paper Workers International Union.

The TOP program was well established by 2002 when workers and members of management in Guin were looking for a way to avoid consolidation or plant closure. Prior to TOP, Guin had never engaged in health and safety training except compliance.

As part of its introduction, 3M agreed to create a full-time TOP representative, who acts as the liaison between the program, the local union, local management, health and safety committees, the national TOP program leaders and the International Union.

Within TOP, site-based instructors are trained by the union to then teach their fellow union members as well as non-bargaining employees. Training focuses on the core ideas of TOP and the practical workings of the program.

**Union involvement**

At Guin, the initial trainers were union members rather than management, which helped with rank-and-file acceptance. Eventually, equal numbers of union and management personnel were trained in the systematic process of investigating and reporting incidents and near misses, finding the hazards that were the root cause of problems and fixing them.

As hazards in the factory began to be repaired, more workers on the floor started reporting problems to the TOP team.

“The year before we started we had about four related safety reports,” Bozeman recalled. “After the first year, after TOP, we had maybe 200.”

The most recent annual training at Guin included a two-hour walkthrough of the facility, which allowed working members to investigate departments and areas other than their own.

This approach helped the Guin team identify potential hazards and work together to eliminate them. In one example, an exit sign for emergencies was blocked in one department. The pathway was cleared.

Over time, the union, its members and other employees became more engaged in hazard identification, reporting, prevention and control.

“Before TOP, our people thought safety was the company’s responsibility,” Bozeman said. “After TOP, they felt it was theirs. We took ownership.”

Union leadership is the foundation of TOP and is one of three basic elements. The second element includes systems of safety and incident investigation. Measuring and tracking incidents are the third piece.

Sharing lessons learned is another key goal. Local TOP representatives and alternates connect with each other and the TMC staff through monthly phone calls and an annual conference. “The program is built on sharing information between sites,” TOP Program Coordinator Steve Doherty said. “We are able to share ideas, successes and deal with barriers that arise in day-to-day activities at individual sites.”

Conference agendas typically focus on training, incident investigation and communication. It’s also an opportunity for new training materials to be rolled out and evaluated, and for new and potential participants to learn about the program and build a support system.

The most recent TOP conference was held last September in conjunction with the 2016 Health, Safety and Environment Conference in Pittsburgh. It was the first time TOP recognized individual sites for accomplishments. Local 13-423 at the Motiva refinery in Port Arthur, Texas, received the Fallen Workers Memorial Award. Local 13-750 at the Motiva refinery in Convent, La., received an award named for Glenn Erwin, who was instrumental in developing TOP.

Another goal of the program is to continually evolve to fit the needs of current and new or prospective sites.

“The TOP program can adapt to the facility and existing programs and structures of safety committees and staffs,” Doherty said. Doherty gave this example: “Local 1-912 at PBF in Toledo, Ohio, has a group of hourly safety advocates that works in conjunction with TOP. While they are separate in their duties, they are also trained as TOP investigators and trainers to cross over between programs. That leads to fluid communication between all facets of the safety activities in the facility.”

**Industry advisers**

TOP evolves with input from an advisory group made up of members elected by other member representatives within their industry sector. Advisory working groups focus on four priority areas: refresher training, collaboration between TOP and local union leadership, building solidarity and a collective voice through advanced communication, and program awareness and conference planning.

Lorne Peralta, the TOP representative for Local 13-477 at the Chevron Ortonie Co.’s Oak Point plant in Belle Chase, La., said the program has had a positive impact at his workplace.

Peralta expects the final figures for last year will show a 30 percent decrease in incidents compared to 2015 at the plant.

“The membership knows this is their program,” Peralta said.

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**Look for Trouble**

The USW has two safety programs, both of which offer USW members and their employers an alternative to behavioral-based, blame-the-victim programs supplied by for-profit consultants.

Triangle of Prevention (TOP) is the older and more established program. Looking for Trouble (LFT) is a newer program that has been featured in past editions of USW@Work. The two differ in their elements and funding mechanisms.

“We want to give local unions and their employers a choice because the same program might not be right for every workplace,” said Mike Wright, director of the USW’s Health, Safety and Environment Department. “Both are effective, successful programs.

For information on TOP and LFT, contact the Health, Safety and Environment Department at 412-562-2580 or safety@usw.org.
Osha Issues Final Beryllium Rule

Ending decades of inaction, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) delivered a long-awaited new standard limiting workplace exposure to beryllium and beryllium compounds, which can cause devastating lung diseases.

The new final rule, issued on Jan. 6 with support from the USW and a major beryllium producer, will require employers to take practical measures to protect an estimated 62,000 workers from serious risk. The USW, which represents several thousand workers who use beryllium alloys and beryllium-containing products in several industries, applauded the development.

“This has been a long time in the making,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “This rule will protect workers who are exposed to beryllium in general industry, construction and shipyards and ensure that controls are put in place to prevent future occupational illness from developing.

Lighter than aluminum and stiffer than steel, beryllium is used in the aerospace, electronics, energy, telecommunications, medical and defense industries, as well as shipyards and construction industries.

However, it can be highly toxic when beryllium-containing materials are processed in a way that releases airborne dust, fumes or mist into workplace air that can be inhaled by workers.

ATI Named in NLRB Complaint

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) issued a complaint against Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI) in response to charges the USW filed when the company laid off seven workers at the ATI powder metals facility in Robinson, Pa.

Management instituted the temporary layoffs last June in retaliation for the workers’ participation in a successful organizing campaign, said District 10 Director Bobby “Mac” McAfflile. The workers have since returned to their jobs, and the complaint ultimately resulted in a settlement that included back pay for the laid-off workers.

“It is unfortunate – rather than taking the rational approach and accepting the workers’ choice – a company decides instead to intimidate and retaliate against its own employees,” McAfflile said. “All workers have the right to make their voices heard in the workplace, and none of them should be faced with threats and intimidation as a result.”

Following the successful resolution of that complaint, the USW filed new charges related to the dismissal of a USW member who had worked on the union’s organizing campaign. The NLRB has yet to hear that case.

Redmond Receives MLK Award

International Vice President Fred Redmond was honored for his social justice and community service work at the 2017 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Awards in Washington, D.C.

Hosted by the AFL-CIO, the Jan. 13 event also celebrated the service of U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Ohio AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Pierrette “Petez” Talley, and several other activists and change makers.

Federal-Mogul Workers Strike Ends

About 330 USW members at Federal-Mogul in Van Wert, Ohio, went on strike in mid-November after rejecting the vehicle safety component company’s last, best and final offer that included cuts to pension and health care benefits.

Members of Local 14742 walked the picket line for nearly three weeks, receiving overwhelming community support. The two sides continued to meet, and members voted in favor of an improved contract proposal on Nov. 30 and returned to work.

USW Members Support Caterpillar Workers Facing Job Losses in Europe

Members of USW Local 1343 at Caterpillar in Milwaukee stood in solidarity with their union members in Europe who took action in November to protest the company’s cutbacks.

In September, the brutal and incomprehensible reality of Caterpillar’s restructuring plan sent shockwaves across Europe, with the company announcing its intention to close some plants and lay off workers.

The company’s plan threatens about 2,500 jobs directly, along with thousands more in the surrounding communities of Belgium (Gosselies) and Northern Ireland (Monkstown). Even more European workers are increasingly concerned about the future of their workplaces and jobs.

In response to these threats, trade unions from around the world, along with the IndustriALL European Trade Union and IndustriALL Global Union, delivered the message to the company: Stop the social and industrial CATastrophe!
Cement Council Charts Course for Future

A bout 40 USW members who work in the cement industry spent two days in Pittsburgh in November, building solidarity, sharing information and charting a course for the future of the USW Cement Council.

The council, which members revived in 2015, represents more than 140 union units and more than 6,000 members in the cement industry. Members shared with each other stories of successes and failures at the bargaining table, health and safety concerns, and ideas to improve communication among locals. The meeting also included a lengthy discussion of imports and how they are affecting the North American cement industry, as well as a training session on new rules governing silica dust exposure.

The group also held a Skype conference call to support locked-out members of Local 816 at LafargeHolcim in Texas Island, Canada.

The council agreed to set aside time to meet during the International Convention in April and to schedule another Cement Council meeting for the fall of 2017.

Bringing together workers in the same industry to share information and ideas to improve communication among locals.

The group includes seven USW locals and one UAW local. Smaller locals are encouraged to join.

Alton Steel, USW ratify new labor deal

USW members at Alton Steel in Alton, Ill., voted to ratify a new contract that runs through Sept. 30, 2018, and covers about 260 hourly workers.

The previous contract expired Sept. 21, 2015, but both sides continued to bargain while operations at the 2.6 million-ton-per-year special bar quality mill continued.

“The agreement is fair and equitable to both parties and provides support for the business against the effects of unfair trade, while protecting important benefits for the members,” said Terry Wooden, president of Local 3643.

The USW has represented the workers at Alton Steel since 1988.

Dow, DuPont Workers Share Concerns

Union leaders representing thousands of employees from Dow Chemical and DuPont companies from the United States and around the globe met last fall in Kentucky to discuss issues common at their facilities.

The unions spent four days sharing collective bargaining ideas, identifying mutual obstacles and brainstorming potential solutions.

Delegates discussed a number of issues, primarily the proposed merger and split of the two companies and the potential effect on employees’ pensions, benefits and insurance. Other topics included workplace safety, organizing, and the need for proactive communications.

Landry Elected

International Vice President at Large Carol Landry was the first woman ever to win election as a vice president of the IndustryAll Global Union, which represents 50 million workers worldwide.

Landry is part of a new leadership team that was elected at the second IndustryAll Global Union Congress in October in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Her new title is vice president, North American region.

Despite coming from 99 countries, elected Jorg Hafmann from Germany as IndustryAll president. He comes from the German metalworkers’ trade union, IG Metall, where he is also president.

Voters from Brazil elected General Secretary. He is from the Brazilian metalworkers’ union, CNM/CUT, where he was secretary of international relations.

IndustryAll fights around the world for a new economic and social model that puts people first, based on democracy and social justice.

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NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES COVERED BY A UNION SECURITY CLAUSE

This notice is provided to all employees covered by the USW collective bargaining agreement. The USW does not use their locked-in fees for direct representation of any non-member employee.

The USW represents employees who are subject to a union security clause, which means that all employees are required to pay union dues as a condition of employment.

Upon perfecting properly a notice of objection, the objector is entitled to an advance reduction of a portion of his or her union security obligation commensurate with expenditures unrelated to collective bargaining activities, as required by law.

The USW does not agree with those Rules. However, without intending to waive its position that its organizing activities are non-representational activities, the USW does not agree with those rules.

Therefore, an objector will be charged 79.45% of the regular dues and other fees that they are entitled to claim as non-representational activities.

An eligible employee who objects to the USW expending money for nonrepresentational activities such as charitable or political activities may choose to perfect a notice of objection. Paragraph 2 of the Procedure states: “To perfect a notice of objection, the individual must send an individually signed notice to the International Secretary-Treasurer of the USW.”

Therefore, an objector will be charged 79.45% of the regular dues amount. Each objector will be given a detailed breakdown between representational and non-representational activities with a report by an independent auditor.

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

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

Granite City Mill Slowly Rebounding

The USW’s Gerdau Council, created in 2005 in response to the proposed merger and split of the two companies and the potential consequences for nonrepresentational activities such as charitable or political expenditures unrelated to collective bargaining, as required by law. International Secretary-Treasurer Stanley W. Johnson has determined, based upon expenditures for the calendar year 2015, that the reduction percentage under the Procedure is 10.93% (20.55% if organizing expenditures were to be included)

The Procedure holds that organizing activities are non-representational activities. The USW does not agree with those rules. However, without intending to waive its position that its organizing activities are non-representational activities, the USW does not agree with those rules.

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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 _________

For USW glass workers, union history and solidarity run deep. See page 8.