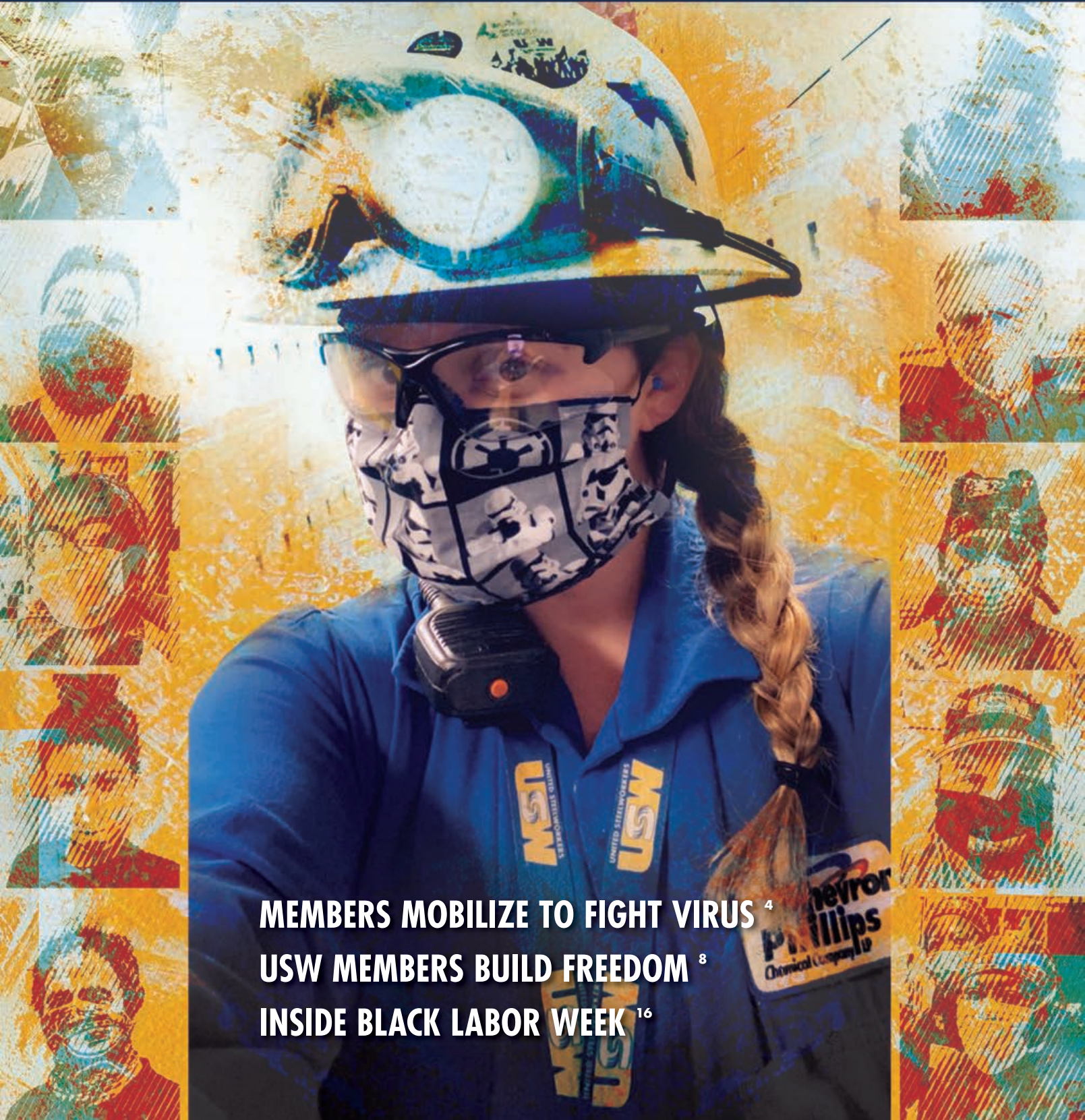


# USW@Work

A Publication of the United Steelworkers

A Powerful Voice for Workers



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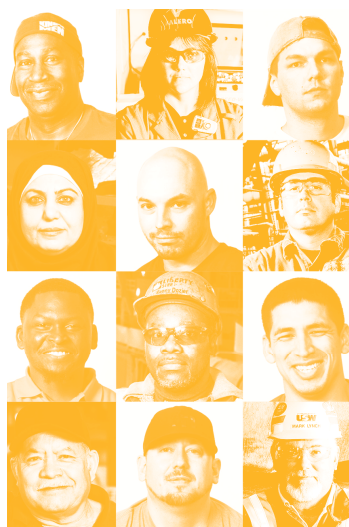
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**"NO GROUP OF WORKERS IN OUR UNION HAS FACED THIS CRISIS MORE PERSONALLY, WORKING DILIGENTLY UNDER EXTREME STRESS AND PRESSURE, AS HAVE OUR HEALTH CARE WORKERS. THIS HAS BEEN AN UNPRECEDENTED, ALL-HANDS-ON-DECK EFFORT."**

INTERNATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT FRED REDMOND, CHAIR OF THE USW HEALTH CARE WORKERS COUNCIL, ON THE UNION'S RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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## Holding ASARCO Accountable

About 1,800 union workers, including USW members, have engaged in an unfair labor practice strike since last fall at five ASARCO copper mining and processing facilities in Arizona and Texas.

ASARCO is a subsidiary of Grupo Mexico, a Mexico City-based mining conglomerate with a long history of environmental and labor problems in both countries.

Tougher immigration policies or a proposed wall will not stop Grupo management from attempting to exploit workers and poison the environment on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. But protections for workers, labor unions and the environment contained in the newly passed USMCA may present the best opportunity so far to make multinational employers answer for the way they treat workers and our communities.

Even in the midst of this health and economic crisis, we will continue to make every effort to hold ASARCO accountable for its behavior, and we thank our fellow USW members for their continued support.

*Alex Terrazas, president, Local 937  
Tucson, Ariz.*

## Show Your Solidarity

I wanted to offer a word of encouragement to my union brothers and sisters. When you are in a meeting and a manager or group of managers starts to scrutinize a fellow union member, especially when there is a company policy that both sides know about, please remember to stand up for your fellow union members. Defend them as you would want a fellow union member to defend you. When union members defend each other, it demonstrates our union solidarity to management.

*Steve Charboneau, Local 3937  
Phoenix, Ariz.*

## USW Councils Aid Bargaining

Forming a USW BASF Council was the best action our BASF locals could take to improve our contracts. It brought together groups representing sites we never would have had contact with because they were from different business groups.

Secondly, the council gives locals a heads-up on what BASF is asking for at the bargaining table. It's a really good communication tool, and it would be hard to negotiate with BASF without the council.

It's hard to deal with a multinational like BASF. The company is huge, and just a handful of sites are unionized. BASF tries to play one site against the others. Just to be able to tell the council this is what BASF is telling us helps. It makes the company be more honest on the direction it's trying to go.

With the council, management understands it is not

dealing with a small group. It is dealing with all of us, and we have the pressure we can bring as a group.

In between the council calls and yearly meetings, we discuss issues. If something happens at one site, we can call other council members and talk about it. We get ideas on how to handle an issue based on our discussion with the other council sites.

Most importantly, we know each other and can trust one another. We're more like friends getting information from each other than council members.

*Doug Watts, Local 13-620 unit chair, Geismar, La.  
Wil Lynn, Local 10-074 unit president, Monaca, Pa.  
Keith Gilmer, Local 10-074 trustee, Monaca, Pa.  
Tommy Daniels, Local 9-237 president, Middle Georgia, Ga.*

## The USW Was There For Us

I am so grateful and proud to have the support of my husband's brothers and sisters in the USW. My husband, Randy Zec, worked at NLMK Pennsylvania in Farrell, Pa.

Our world was turned upside down when Randy got sick and was suddenly hospitalized. The union stepped up and helped me with everything from dealing with sick leave to collecting funds to help us make ends meet. This was not a short-term situation, as Randy was in multiple hospitals for four months. Then, the unspeakable happened, and Randy suddenly passed away. Again, the union stepped up with support, helped with paperwork, collected funds, and also showed up in overwhelming numbers at Randy's memorial service.

I just wanted to let everyone know how great the people of the USW are. I am so proud of the workers and the union at NLMK. Thank you for everything you did for us.

*Diane Miller-Zec  
Masury, Ohio*

## A Model for Other Unions

On Sept. 19, 1981, I joined my friend Rich Breaun (later USW general counsel), the USW marchers, and more than a quarter-million other unionists for Solidarity Day on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Forty years later, the USW leaders, staff and members remain a model for other unions. In the face of challenges from inequality and racism to the coronavirus, they combine solidarity, integrity and strength.

*David Jonathan Cohen, former executive director  
of the Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO,  
and associate USW member*

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# MEMBERS MOBILIZE TO CONFRONT VIRUS

Local 318 President John Seckrettar, right, delivers PPE supplies to workers at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Jersey.

## WORKERS IN EVERY INDUSTRY STEP UP IN FACE OF UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS

**U**SW members in every industry and every community across North America mobilized like never before this spring to fight the spread of the coronavirus and to aid workers and families suffering from its far-reaching health and economic effects.

In addition to health care workers on the front lines, the union’s paper workers, metal workers, utility workers, public employees, custodial workers, pharmacists, retail clerks, transportation workers and others rolled up their sleeves to make sure Americans had the products and services they needed to weather the crisis.

“USW members are always there to answer the call, to do the important work that needs to be done, day in and day out,” said International President Thomas M. Conway. “Stepping up when people need help – that is what the Steelworkers have always done best.”

Chief among those who continued to work to manufacture products essential to battling the spread of the virus were the USW’s paper locals.

As toilet paper, paper towels, tissues and sanitary wipes were disappearing from grocery shelves, USW members worked

diligently to keep supply chains moving.

The USW represents more than 8,500 workers who make bathroom tissue for well-known brands including Scott, Cottonelle, Angel Soft, Quilted Northern and Costco’s Kirkland line.

As the crisis neared its peak, Local 4-2 member T.J. Cutler said his mill in Fort Edward, N.Y., got an order for 1.5 million cases of toilet paper.

“Not sure why T.P. is the thing, but we will make it,” Cutler said.

Similarly, Local 646 members,



**USW members are always there to answer the call, to do the important work that needs to be done, day in and day out,” said International President Thomas M. Conway. “Stepping up when people need help – that is what the Steelworkers have always done best.”**

including President Eric Jarvis, showed up each day to produce linerboard for boxes at the PCA mill in Valdosta, Ga. They are among the thousands of USW members, from Maine to California, who make the packaging necessary to keep vital supply lines moving.

“If we don’t make boxes, then the grocery stores don’t have groceries,” Jarvis said. “You can see the pride in the workers doing their jobs out there.”

That doesn’t mean it has been easy. Each worker who left home every day took a risk, putting their own well-being on the line to aid others.

“It gets a little rough,” said Colt Kovatch, vice president of Local 14693 at the International Paper plant in Eighty Four, Pa., which makes boxes for food and drug companies, plastics manufacturers and online retailers. “We might not be the front-line workers, but we’re right there behind them.”

International Vice President Leann Foster, who oversees the USW paper sector, said the union worked with locals across the United States to make sure that any worker who was personally affected by the virus continued to be paid and that those workers who stayed on the job had the necessary equipment and safety protocols to remain healthy.

The union pushed for steps that included deep cleaning of work stations, installing body temperature scanners,

staggering start times, reconfiguring plant layouts to ensure social distancing, and moving time clocks outside factory doors to alleviate crowding.

“These are uncertain times for everyone,” Foster said. “We are all working hard to keep workers from every industry and their families safe, healthy and secure.”

Besides paper, members in steel, glass, aluminum, chemicals and other industries continued to report for duty, making the materials needed to keep other industries running, including the shipbuilders in Local 8888 in Newport News, Va., and the Steelworkers at ArcelorMittal and other companies who provide them with materials.

From refinery workers like those in California’s Local 5, to grocery clerks like the members of Pennsylvania’s Local 1408-80, to salt makers like those in Kansas’ Local 12606, USW members everywhere pitched in whatever ways they could.

Even members in industries that were not deemed “essential” stepped up in a big way. As the virus quickly spread, it was clear that health care workers and hospitals were in danger of running short on supplies, especially personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gowns and gloves.

In Portland, Maine, members of Local 366 at all-American-sourced clothing manufacturer American Roots, and workers from other unions teamed up to quickly convert the factory so the company could make masks and gowns for health care workers, while allowing workers to remain a safe distance away from each other.

“I asked for a show of hands from who would be willing to come back to work once we were able to produce PPE products,” said American Roots co-owner Ben Waxman, a former union organizer. “Every single hand went up.”

The Twin Rivers paper mill in Little Falls, N.Y., staffed by Local 1300 members, supplied American Roots with the paper it needed for the PPE products.

At other USW workplaces, companies retooled their production lines to begin making much-needed products like hand sanitizer, hospital beds and life-saving ventilators.

Members of Local 10-670 in Lititz, Pa., who normally produce Listerine and other personal hygiene products,

and members of Local 562-02 in McIntosh, Ala., who normally produce industrial chemicals, were among the hundreds of USW members across the United States who instead began churning out hand sanitizer, another product that stores couldn’t keep on their shelves.

At Batesville, Ind., health care supplier Hillrom, members of Local 525U worked tirelessly to produce intensive-care beds and ventilators for the most vulnerable coronavirus patients.

When the Tito’s Vodka distillery in Texas began making sanitizer instead, the members of Local 390 at Mohawk Fine Papers Inc. joined the cause by making labels for the bottles. And later, the upstate New York paper mill workers began lending their skills and machines to make gowns and masks for pop-up clinics and treatment centers throughout the hard-hit state.

Members of Local 00721 at Braskem America’s facility in Neal, W.Va., along with their counterparts at a facility in Marcus Hook, Pa., took their efforts even further – living inside their plant for a month to produce as much PPE material as they could. Members took turns working 12-hour shifts while the company provided beds, food and other necessities.

The work of USW members to confront the virus didn’t end at their factory gates. Members also made donations of food, money and supplies to some of the nation’s most devastated communities. As they always do, Steelworkers made sure their neighbors and communities weren’t left behind.

Local 9-0425 members, along with the North Carolina AFL-CIO Eastern Piedmont Central Labor Council, donated boxes of gloves to Vidant North Hospital in Roanoke Rapids, N.C. Through the work of Local 15253 and President Joe Padavan, Pennsy Supply, a Lancaster, Pa., construction company, donated 1,300 N95 respirators to the nearby Hershey Medical Center.

Those stories, and hundreds of others like them, were repeated in USW communities across the country.

Secretary-Treasurer John Shinn said that the spirit of cooperation that defined USW members during the crisis demonstrated the importance of USW locals working together to confront challenges year-round, no matter what

“I asked for a show of hands from who would be willing to come back to work once we were able to produce PPE products,”

“Every single hand went up.”

Ben Waxman



American Roots co-owners, top, Whitney Reynolds and Ben Waxman, with Local 366 members, Anaam Jabbar, left, and Maria Lutina.

they may be. That success, he said, highlights the value of the union’s company and industry councils and other collaborative efforts.

“It’s been inspiring to see members, local union leaders, staff representatives and others throughout the union stepping up and working together in so many ways, regardless of industry, regardless of location,” said Shinn, who oversees the union’s chemical sector bargaining. “Not only have our members and leaders been doing vital work in their facilities, but they’ve also worked hard to confront employers when necessary and make sure that their co-workers are as safe as they can be.”

# HEALTH CARE WORKERS ON THE FRONT LINES

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread rapidly this spring, thousands of USW health care workers were on the front lines, putting their own well-being at risk to care for others.

“No group of workers in our union has faced this crisis more personally, working diligently under extreme stress and pressure, as have our health care workers,” said International Vice President Fred Redmond, who oversees the union’s Health Care Workers Council. “This has been an unprecedented, all-hands-on-deck effort.”

While millions of Americans were under stay-at-home orders, laid off or working reduced hours due to the crisis, those on the front lines – in hospitals and other health care facilities – were doing the opposite, working ever-longer hours and leaving home each day to face the deadly disease head-on.

From New Jersey to California, from Minnesota to Pennsylvania, and in every local union hall in between, USW members didn’t hesitate to answer the call.

Histologic technologist Ty Wolk, president of Local 9600 at Oroville Hospital in northern California, said she and her 750 USW co-workers saw rapid changes in their workplace culture when the outbreak began.

Initially, Wolk said, hospital administrators encouraged workers not to wear face masks and face guards so they wouldn’t scare patients. The union, however, pressed for, and won, a num-

ber of important safety protocols.

Now, masks and face shields are standard for nurses treating coronavirus patients. Rooms and equipment are cleaned more frequently. The number of nurses treating virus patients is strictly limited to reduce exposure. Workers monitor their body temperatures regularly and use sanitizers upon entering and exiting the facility.



**FRACTION OF HEALTH CARE WORKERS  
THAT SAID THEY HAD ENOUGH PPE.**

SOURCE: MARCH SURVEY, NATIONAL NURSES UNITED

“The day to day here has been challenging, to say the least,” Wolk said. “But they’ve implemented a lot of the things we’ve asked for.”

As the pandemic grew, front-line workers like Wolk and others faced another crisis: a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), particularly N95 respirators.

A National Nurses United survey in March found that only about a third of health care workers said they had enough PPE to deal with the outbreak.

When Wolk saw a USW report about clothing makers in Local 366 at

American Roots in Portland, Maine, converting their factory to produce PPE, she contacted the company and had hundreds of masks delivered from her union siblings on the other side of the country.

“It’s been frustrating,” she said. “But without the union, it would be much harder.”

Despite their challenges, USW members continued to work tirelessly to care for their patients and never wavered in their commitment to safe workplaces, continuing to fight for every bit of help they could get.

That fight is essential, because if significant numbers of health care workers were to become sick or forced to quarantine, the result could be devastating for entire communities.

“For years, we have been asking for guidelines,” said Mindy Sholler, a grievance officer for Local 158 in Kittanning, Pa., whose unit includes 375 hospital workers. “If you are not union at this point, it’s a very scary time.”

The presence of the USW has made her facility safer, Sholler said, while also protecting patients, their families and neighbors.

Sholler said that while members point to wages and benefits as good reasons for a union, ensuring proper safety equipment and standards has been the true union difference this time.

“It’s your conditions of employment that protect you in the workplace,”

she said. “And now we’re seeing that, because we are in a pandemic.”

DeJonae Shaw, a nurse and member of Local 7600 at Kaiser Permanente in California, said her day-to-day duties and those of her co-workers evolved in the wake of the pandemic.

Shaw said she witnessed first-hand the continued dangerous shortage of PPE, even weeks after the pandemic brought about a federal disaster declaration, along with billions of dollars in additional funding for hospitals.

“It’s a very scary time right now,” Shaw said. “In order for us to continue to be a beacon of light, to continue to be a pillar of strength, we need all the supplies that we can get.”

As hospitals’ PPE shortages made national headlines, some workers became increasingly fearful of speaking out publicly about the crisis for fear of losing their jobs.

In response to those fears, the USW joined dozens of other advocacy organizations in sending a letter calling on the American Hospital Association to ensure that health care workers could continue to fight for the safety of their co-workers and their patients.

“Attempts to cover up these shortages by muzzling health care workers who are on the front lines of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic are reprehensible and reckless and endanger public health,” the letter read.

In addition, the USW called upon the president to invoke the Defense Production Act to ramp up manufacturing of health care equipment, and called on members and employers in other industries to retool operations in order to produce the much-needed PPE.

International President Thomas M. Conway said the shortages of PPE and other medical equipment underscored the need for leaders in Washington, D.C., to step up their support for American manufacturing.

“There is the fundamental problem that we just aren’t making things anymore here in America,” said Conway. “So, now we find ourselves in a scramble trying to find and produce what we need.”

“The federal government should have been the leader on this,” said Conway, “and so far they’ve refused to do that.”

## USW FIGHTS FOR ECONOMIC RELIEF, SAFETY MEASURES

USW members, officers and staff worked tirelessly this spring to ensure that the nation’s response to the coronavirus outbreak would not leave workers behind. This included those still on the job and those who were laid off.

“This is going to be an ongoing crisis, and its economic effects will be long and far-reaching,” International President Thomas M. Conway said as the virus began to spread.

The USW, along with the AFL-CIO and other partner organizations, pushed hard for a robust package of relief bills. Those efforts were largely successful, resulting in legislation that provided for medical care for virus patients, paid sick and family leave, emergency funding for hospitals, stimulus payments of \$1,200 to taxpayers, and unemployment compensation bolstered by an extra \$600 per week.

Still, despite those efforts, loopholes remained. Too many employers were left out of the family leave provisions. OSHA failed to quickly issue emergency health and safety standards for essential employers. Front-line workers in many locations lacked essential personal protective equipment (PPE), and a shortage of testing supplies led to widespread uncertainty about when the crisis might end.

“Lawmakers in Washington, D.C., and around the country need to make certain that the long-term effects of this pandemic don’t leave American workers and families to continue to struggle,” said International Vice President Roxanne Brown, who oversees the union’s legislative efforts.

USW members remained active throughout the crisis, addressing those issues wherever they could at the state and local levels. Union activists across the country called on state legislators and governors to close loopholes and keep fighting for workers.

At their workplaces, members entered into bargaining with employers to push for expanded health care and sick leave provisions, strict safety protocols and access to necessary PPE, among other issues.

The USW worked hard to keep members informed and prepared throughout the process, holding virtual town-hall meetings, electronic Q&A sessions, conference calls and other events to share information, answer questions and assist workers on the front lines and in essential industries.

As the virus continued to spread throughout April and into May, it was clear that the effort to protect and support workers through the pandemic was going to be a long-term fight, but one on which the USW would not give up.

“Too many Americans are still worried – about their health, the health of their families, about losing their jobs, or about how they are going to pay their bills in the coming weeks and months,” Conway said. “These are the people we must always put first, not corporate executives and Wall Street millionaires.”

### RESOURCES FOR MEMBERS



The USW is working nonstop to protect the health and well-being of all workers and their families. If you need help or have questions about safety and health in your workplace, the federal stimulus measures, unemployment compensation or other issues related to the COVID-19 outbreak, visit [www.usw.org/COVID19](http://www.usw.org/COVID19).



# BUILDING FREEDOM

**USW members  
contribute to the  
nation's defense**

**A**s he walks through the Newport News Shipyard in Virginia, Steelworker Vince Harris marvels at the mammoth aircraft carriers and submarines under construction. He takes comfort knowing that these powerful behemoths will guard America for decades to come.

“As a veteran myself, I know we need a strong defense,” said Harris, a member of the shipyard’s support operations crew. “It makes me

proud to work here, and see what’s being done.”

To protect the homeland, America’s military must have the most reliable, best-equipped fighting machines in the world. USW members build and supply them.

Harris and about 10,000 other members of Local 8888, the USW’s largest U.S. local, are the only shipbuilders in the nation producing nuclear-powered carriers for the Navy, and they work at one of only two yards capable of building nuclear subs.



Across the country, thousands of other USW members produce steel and aluminum for Army vehicles, Navy vessels and Air Force fighter jets; make ammunition for the Army; and generate the fuel that powers planes, ships and subs.

All make a direct contribution to America's security.

### **Patriotic Work**

"These workers, many of whom served in the military themselves, do patriotic work," said International President Thomas M. Conway, who served as a sergeant in the U.S. Air Force and who chairs the Veterans of Steel Council. "America is safer – and our service men and women are safer – because of the expertise and work ethic they bring to their jobs every day."

Local 8888's workmanship received national publicity on April 4 when the U.S. Navy commissioned its newest nuclear sub, the 377-foot-long, 7,800-ton USS Delaware, built at Newport News over three years. Initially, thousands of people were set to attend the commissioning event in Wilmington, Del., but the traditional ceremony had to be scrapped due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Because they have so many capabilities, from anti-ship and anti-submarine warfare to surveillance and battle group support, Virginia-class subs like the Delaware are considered one of the most lethal weapons in America's arsenal.

In coming years, America's armed forces will rely even more heavily on USW members.

Last year, the Pentagon awarded a \$22.2 billion contract – its largest ship-building project ever – for nine more nuclear subs. At least five will be delivered from Newport News. The shipyard also has orders for two new carriers, and it's working on a new type of sub.

"We always say we're building freedom," said Milton D. Bates Jr., a welder who's worked at the shipyard for nearly 34 years. "It's as simple as that."

### **Veterans of Steel Program**

Harris and Bates are among hundreds of veterans at Newport News. The pair organized Local 8888's chapter of the USW's Veterans of Steel program, which provides special resources to members who served in the military.

The shipyard likes to hire veterans, said Harris, who served four years in the

Air Force and 23 years in the Virginia Air National Guard.

"Most of us are well-disciplined, and we are task-oriented," Harris said. "That's what makes us successful shipyard workers. We produce the quality work that is expected of us."

At sea and on land, service mem-



bers' lives and missions depend on the unflagging craftsmanship of USW members. Every screw, every weld, must perform in the worst conditions that combat or weather can unleash.

"We take that responsibility very seriously," said Robbie Stoots, president of Local 8-495, whose members make propellants at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant in Radford, Va. To underscore the importance of the work, he said, new hires watch videos showing how the Army uses their products.

Stoots and his co-workers appreciate the sacrifices America's soldiers, sailors and airmen make. But the respect is mutual, Stoots said, noting Army com-

manders at the arsenal consider USW members "critical to the war fight."

### **Manufacturing is Important**

To keep America's armed forces in top shape, the nation must maintain a robust manufacturing sector, warned Pete Trinidad, president of Local 6787,

whose members work at ArcelorMittal's Burns Harbor, Ind., plant.

"Would you want to go out to sea on an aircraft carrier or a submarine made with Chinese steel or Korean steel?" asked Trinidad, a former Marine, citing quality concerns with foreign-made products.

Workers at ArcelorMittal – represented by Local 6787 as well as Locals 1165 in Coatesville, Pa., and 9462 in Conshohocken, Pa. – make much of the steel that goes into the ships and subs built at Newport News.

Members from Coatesville even melted down steel from the old John F. Kennedy aircraft carrier, decommissioned in 2007, and recycled it for use in the new Kennedy now being built at Newport News.

In addition, USW members at ArcelorMittal make steel for other Navy vessels, including destroyers and smaller, highly maneuverable littoral combat ships, designed for operations near shore.

They also supply the Army's M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and the MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicles designed to withstand improvised explosive devices.

### **Honorable Work**

When the Navy last fall commissioned the littoral combat ship USS Indianapolis on Lake Michigan, near the



Burns Harbor plant, some Local 6787 members attended. It was a rare opportunity to get an up-close look at a vessel built with their steel.

“It was pretty cool to be able to go and see something they helped create,” said Steve Dujmovich, who works in the plate mill and serves on the local’s grievance committee.

At Arconic’s plant in Davenport, Iowa, members of Local 105 produce aluminum for amphibious assault

vehicles, armored trucks and the gunner-protection turrets atop tanks.

“It’s kind of an honor to be able to do that,” said Jerry Porter, a former Local 105 officer who retired after 41 years at the plant formerly operated by Alcoa.

When Porter began working at the plant, he made aluminum for armored personnel carriers. He left to serve in Vietnam, where he drove those vehicles, and then returned to the plant after his discharge.

Pride in defense-related work and respect for veterans go hand in hand at Davenport. Local 105 members put flags on veterans’ graves; host “Frank’n Friday” cookouts for soldiers at the nearby Rock Island Armory; and support community “Stand Down” events that connect veterans with social services.

“We always want to honor them, to recognize them and to help out those who are struggling in our community,” Local 105 President Brad Greve said.



## Powering Jets and Ships

Jarrett Wa'a sometimes smiles when he sees U.S. warships churning the Pacific Ocean off Honolulu. That's because he helps to keep them moving.

At the Par Hawaii refinery near Honolulu, Wa'a and other members of Local 12-591 generate the military-grade fuel that keeps fighter jets in the air, ships under sail and heavy equipment operating. They deliver that fuel through miles of pipes to Joint Base Pearl Har-

bor-Hickam, headquarters of the Navy's Pacific Fleet and home to 11 ships, 18 subs and six squadrons of planes.

From that base, America's armed forces project power throughout much of the globe.

"We all have an understanding of Hawaii being a strategic place in the world," said Wa'a, a pipeline operator and the local's unit chairman. Supplying fuel to the armed forces "is our way of serving them and helping them," he said.

Two of the new nuclear subs to be built under the Navy's biggest-ever shipbuilding project will be named the USS Arizona and USS Oklahoma, in honor of two of the battleships sunk during the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor.

If those subs are built at Newport News, USW members will treat the mission as a labor of love. "It's like raising a kid," Harris said.



UNITED STEELWORKERS  
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 YOUR VOICE**  
 #USWVOICES



**USW LAUNCHES GRASSROOTS EFFORT FOR MEMBERS TO GUIDE POLITICAL PROGRAM**

As the 2020 U.S. presidential election approached, the union launched a groundbreaking nationwide campaign to gauge the opinions of active and retired USW members and to use the information it gathered from the rank and file to guide its work through this fall’s elections.

USW members responded by the thousands to a comprehensive survey and turned out at 170 town halls across the United States to voice their opinions on topics ranging from health care to retirement security to union organizing rights.

“This is an extremely important election for the labor movement,” said International President Thomas M. Conway. “Because we’ve been under an assault for a long time, and we need to make sure we’re moving in the right direction.”

Conway said that the campaign, known as “Your Union, Your Voice,” was a conscious effort by the USW to make the union’s policy efforts more transparent and inclusive. With that in mind, the USW also shared with members and locals the extensive questionnaire that it sends to candidates to determine how their values line up with the values of USW members.

“The last time we went through this in 2016, there were some concerns about how the union selects who we’re going to fight with, and fight for, and endorse,” Conway said. “This time around, we wanted to be very clear with each other about how we’re going to make those decisions.”

Simply put, Conway said, the USW will support candidates who support the issues that workers care about. All candidates will be given a chance to let the union know where they stand. Those who don’t support workers’ rights, or who don’t respond to the USW’s outreach at all, won’t get the union’s support this fall.

“We want everyone to play a role,” Conway said. “In order to make our political program a success, we need Steelworkers from all across the country, in every industry, to provide us with their feedback and opinions on the issues.”

USW members made sure that happened. Directors, officers and staff hosted meetings throughout every U.S. district to hear directly from them about the issues that matter most.

The Granite City, Ill., area, home to the late International President George Becker as well as to U.S. Steel’s oldest factory and a number of other USW

workplaces, played host to four town hall events.

“I really appreciate the leadership giving us a voice before they endorse,” said Dennis Barker, vice president of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees Chapter 7-34-2 and a longtime member of Local 1899 in Granite City. “It was a chance for us to voice our opinion.”

The information that the USW gathers from the survey and during the town hall events will help to drive the union’s process of endorsing candidates, both for the presidency and down-ballot offices, and will also help to determine how the USW targets its annual get-out-the-vote effort this fall as it seeks to drive up turnout for pro-worker candidates in key areas around the country.

“The past few years have seen a rapid erosion of workers’ rights,” Conway said. “Politicians supported by corporations and millionaires stripped away labor protections, put Americans’ pensions in jeopardy and pushed affordable health care further out of reach. This year, we must elect candidates who will put working families first.”

For Echo Carson, a member of Local 690L in Auburn Hills, Mich., the town hall provided an opportunity for her to



hear from members of other locals and from other industries in District 2, and to bring what she learned from them back to the members of her local.

She said the discussions also helped show why down-ballot elections, such as those for governor, the Senate and Congress, can also directly impact workers' rights.

"We were first educated and then asked for our thoughts," Carson said. "Hearing why the core issues matter to other members really drove the point home of why voting is so important – and not just voting for the president."

Carson also said that the town halls and the surveys helped to build trust in the USW's decision-making when it endorses candidates, a process that may have been something of a mystery for members in the past.

"Hearing about how a politician gets the USW endorsement is important," she said. "It builds trust. Knowing that the union did the research and they can trust that the endorsed candidates are invested in our interests will help members to feel more confident in voting."

While the union was able to hold nearly 200 meetings and discussions, even more were planned, but the nationwide spread of the coronavirus

in mid-March led to cancellations and postponements in a number of districts.

**“WE WANT EVERYONE TO PLAY A ROLE. IN ORDER TO MAKE OUR POLITICAL PROGRAM A SUCCESS, WE NEED STEELWORKERS FROM ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY, IN EVERY INDUSTRY, TO PROVIDE US WITH THEIR FEEDBACK AND OPINIONS ON THE ISSUES.”**

INT'L PRES. **THOMAS M. CONWAY**

"It's unfortunate that we didn't have the opportunity to hold as many events as we hoped so far, but overall, between the member surveys and the town halls, the effort has been a success," said International Vice President Roxanne Brown, who oversees the union's political and legislative programs. "Our goal was to meet members where they are – in their hometowns, in their union halls – to find out what they care about, and let those priorities guide our decisions."

Brown said that the surveys and discussions showed that health care,

retirement security and bargaining rights are among the most important issues for members.

Janet Hecker, a member of Local 5 who has worked at the PBF Energy Refinery in Martinez, Calif., for 39 years, said she hopes that the union continues to reach out directly to the rank and file.

"It serves to help the membership feel more valued within the greater union," she said.

Cordell Chaney, president of Local 7-00184 at Superior Essex in Fort Wayne, Ind., said the process also gives members a clear idea of how the union makes decisions about which candidates to support.

"These candidates are going to do right by labor, or at least say they would," Chaney said. "And if they don't, we won't endorse them again. We hold them accountable."

Holding elected officials accountable to the USW members who supported them is part of what makes the union's legislative and policy programs so strong, Conway said.

"The feedback we have gotten will help us focus our legislative efforts," Conway said. "We'll be able to tell candidates exactly where we stand – and where they must stand – if they want our support."



# A Legislative Graveyard: THE U.S. SENATE

MCCONNELL LEADS EFFORT TO BLOCK  
PASSAGE OF PRO-WORKER BILLS

Despite the series of stimulus and relief packages Congress quickly passed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic this spring, the Republican-led Senate continues to block dozens of pieces of legislation passed by the U.S. House that would improve the lives of American workers and their families.

The House has passed bipartisan legislation to protect pensions, improve worker safety, expand union rights, improve access to health care, raise the minimum wage and combat sexist salary disparities, among many other measures.

All of those bills passed with support from members of both parties in the U.S. House, but Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who almost single-handedly controls the Senate's legislative agenda, has dubbed himself the "Grim Reaper" of Congress, vowing that none of them will even be up for debate as long as he is in charge.

"None of those things are going to pass the Senate," said the Kentucky Republican. "They won't even be voted on."

McConnell's stonewalling has

resulted in a backlog of hundreds of bills and created an unprecedented level of legislative stalemate. The 116th Congress, elected in November 2018 and in office through January, 3, 2021, has passed only 91 bills in its first 15 months, making this the least productive period in the Capitol in at least 50 years.

"At a time when American workers need leaders working for them and standing up for them, it's truly sad that the Senate has deliberately chosen to do the opposite," said International Vice President Roxanne Brown, who oversees the union's legislative efforts from her office in Washington, D.C. "Protecting workers and retired Americans should be the No. 1 priority."

International President Thomas M. Conway said that the stagnant politics of the Senate has too often stood in the way of progress for a large majority of American workers.

"Safer workplaces, minimum wage increases, access to affordable health care, retirement security – these are all issues that have broad public support," Conway said. "These bills are not – or at least should not be – controversial at all."

In particular, the Butch Lewis Act, a measure to shore up failing multiemployer retirement plans, ought to enjoy broad support from both sides of the aisle, Conway said. The bill establishes a program to provide low-interest loans to struggling plans, money that the bill calls for the plans to pay back.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat, introduced the Butch Lewis bill in the Senate on the same day the House passed it. That was in July 2019. Nearly a year later, the Republican-led Senate continues to sit on that bill and hundreds of others.

While the overwhelming majority of pension plans are adequately funded, without a solution like the one Butch Lewis provides, more than 1.3 million retirees in about 150 multiemployer plans would be facing the possibility of losing the retirement security they worked for decades to build.

One of those retirees, Glen Heck, 78, spent 28 years as a USW paper worker in Campti, La., and served as an officer in Local 13-1331. His pension plan – the PACE Industry Union-Management Pension Fund – is projected to

"NONE OF THOSE THINGS ARE GOING TO PASS THE SENATE."

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER MITCH MCCONNELL



be insolvent in as few as 10 years.

Over the years, USW members like Heck often negotiated lower wage increases or smaller bumps to other benefits at the bargaining table in order to protect their pensions. Now, he and others worry about how they would pay their bills if those pensions were left to fail.

"We've done bailouts and tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires," said Travis Birchfield, who traveled to Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress on behalf of members of Local 507 in Canton, N.C., who work at Evergreen Packaging. "Nobody's trying to get rich here. We're just trying to get our retirements."

The collapse of retirement plans for millions of Americans could have far-reaching economic effects.

"Retirees have told us they're going to lose their houses, they can't pay their medical bills, and they are panic-stricken. The rug has been pulled out from under them," said Karen Friedman, executive vice president and policy director for the Pension Rights Center, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates on behalf of American retirees and their families.

And the Butch Lewis Act is just a drop in the bucket when it comes to the legislation that the McConnell-led Senate is ignoring.

"From raising the minimum wage to ensuring equal pay, we have passed legislation to raise wages. And we have passed legislation to protect and expand health coverage and bring down prescription drug prices," said House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer. "We continue to urge Senator McConnell to take up our bills, many of which are bipartisan."

Besides Butch Lewis, the Senate has also refused to act on the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act, which would address the growing problem of violence against health care workers by requiring health care and social service

employers to implement violence-prevention plans.

Since 2012, violence in the health care industry has increased by 30 percent.

"It is past time for these workers to have the protections they need," said Conway. "We hope Mitch McConnell does what's best for them."

### Some of the House-passed measures languishing in the Senate include:

- **THE PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE (PRO) ACT**

Bill would remove unnecessary barriers to union organizing and establish stronger penalties for companies that illegally block workers' efforts to gain union protections.

- **THE PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT**

Bill would provide workers with greater transparency about salaries and expand mechanisms to fight pay disparities based on sex.

- **THE RAISE THE WAGE ACT**

Bill would gradually raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour and establish a mechanism for automatic increases in the future.

- **THE EQUALITY ACT**

Bill would protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination in a number of areas, including employment.

- **THE PROTECTING AMERICANS WITH PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS ACT**

Bill would ensure access to health insurance for millions of Americans.

- **THE CORPORATE TRANSPARENCY ACT**

Bill would prevent the use of anonymous shell companies like those often employed to keep illegal activities hidden from law enforcement.

Individually, each of those measures would offer additional protections for American workers and their families. Many would inject much-needed money into the economy at a critical time. Taken as a whole, the Senate's refusal to even consider any of them represents a betrayal by Majority Leader McConnell and those who support his historic level of inactivity.

"For far too long, workers have been left behind, and the lack of action in Washington is yet another example of our leaders putting the interests of millionaires and billionaires ahead of the needs of American families," said Conway.

"Workers deserve the dignified retirement they earned. They deserve access to affordable health care and the right to a voice in the workplace," he said. "It's time for members of the Senate to start doing the job they were elected to do and deliver on these promises."



UNITED STEELWORKERS



UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS

# We, Too, Are America:

*A Look Inside*  
**BLACK  
LABOR  
WEEK**

Shay Mann and  
Timothy Brazzel

E.J. Jenkins

Top to bottom: Joel Maya, Liz Cuevas, DeJonee  
Shaw and Danny Magallan

More than 80 USW activists from across the United States spent five days communicating and creating change in Gary, Ind., in February as part of the ninth annual Black Labor Week.

The event, which has become more of a movement, was created by Local 1014's Ephrin "E.J." Jenkins in 2011. His vision was to bring multiple generations and intersections of USW members together to start conversations around issues facing the Black community in order to debunk false narratives

and establish real-life connections.

"We're able to talk to each other for a week, bond with each other, share our stories and listen to other people's stories," said Jenkins. "We're missing that connection, and this week is a chance to reverse that."

Jenkins' hometown of Gary has been hard hit by a collective storm of white flight and loss of lucrative steel jobs over the past few decades. Part of the week's goal, for the USW activist who works at U.S. Steel's Gary Works, is to open the eyes of those whose communi-

ties don't face similar struggles.

"It puts you directly inside a place that a lot of people refuse to go to and all because of the negative stereotype that's been created by the media and politicians," he said. "This lets you get inside that and see the lack of resources and the help that's needed, and we put ourselves in a position to change it."

Melissa Barrios of Local 7600, which represents roughly 7,500 health care members at Kaiser Permanente, a hospital system based in Southern California, attended Black Labor Week this year for





the first time with that very goal —building bridges.

As a first-generation immigrant, Barrios believes solidarity and understanding between marginalized communities are vital in the many fights they face.

“I’ve always had a passion to help my community but haven’t had the resources or skills to do that,” Barrios said. “This lets me venture into another community and see the similarities between us so I’m better equipped to fight for all of us.”

Throughout the week, the members participated in a wide variety of activities, including a series of panel discussions about issues such as gender dynamics and mental health. They also watched and discussed the documentary “16 Shots,” about the fatal police shooting of Laquan McDonald in nearby Chicago.

The Steelworkers spent a large portion of their time out in Gary, visiting with veterans, organizing and stocking food pantries, and talking to students at the area’s remaining schools.

Justin Watkins of Local 2695, at the Gary Works Mill, knows firsthand what it’s like being a student in the city that has declined rapidly. It inspires him to remain connected to the community, and Black Labor Week offers him a chance to do that.

“Any time I have, I like to give back and talk to the kids,” said Watkins. “It’s about giving them encouragement, because we could all use it, especially as a kid growing up in this town.”

The activists remained busy throughout the week and marked its conclusion with a keynote speech by A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) President

Clayola Brown. Jenkins said he had no idea the event would grow as much as it has, even expanding beyond Gary, with Steelworkers in Buffalo hosting their own Black Labor Week for the past few years as well. Other USW districts are also in the initial stages of piloting programs.

But it took a lot for it to get to this point, and Jenkins wasn’t always so sure he could keep going. He said his union siblings who help him organize the event are the ones who have supported him through it all.

“A lot of people put a lot of time and energy into making this week great,” Jenkins said.

Another person who has helped keep Jenkins motivated is USW International Vice President Fred Redmond, who attended the last two days of this year’s event. Redmond said it’s important that Jenkins and his fellow members organize this event because it’s also a chance to shed light on the area that is home to many significant Black labor leaders, including the union’s first Black vice president and the first Black vice president of any major labor union, Leon Lynch.

“The history in Gary as it relates to Black Steelworkers is immense,” said Redmond.

Next year, 2021, will be Black Labor Week’s 10-year anniversary, and Jenkins hopes that the event continues to expand and ignite change, as well as camaraderie.

“We just need to keep creating conversations,” he said, “and we’re going to be all right.”



Photo by Joel Maya

**SOLIDARITY  
WORKS**

**VISIT  
USW.TO/PODCAST  
TO HEAR A PODCAST  
ABOUT BLACK LABOR  
WEEK**

The leaders of the rejuvenated United Steelworkers Press Association have begun to chart a course for the future.

The executive board of the USW's communications network, made up of writers, photographers, webmasters, designers and editors of local union newsletters and websites from across the United States and Canada, met in Pittsburgh earlier this year to determine how to improve upon the work that they do.

"Labor has never had an easy story to tell, but it's our job to tell it," International President Thomas M. Conway told the group during its February meeting. "Part of that job is to agitate, and part of that job is to educate."

The tools that USPA members use to do that work have expanded considerably over the years. The group has established style and ethics guidelines, as well as trainings, templates and other standards to ensure that all union communications are clear and consistent.

Founded in 1966, the association originally was a collection of members who produced only traditional ink-and-paper publications. Over the past

# STEELWORKERS PRESS ASSOCIATION

## — Looks to the — FUTURE

two decades, the group has gradually widened its focus to include websites, email, social media, video, text messages and other communications tools.

"The role of labor communications has changed exponentially," said Van Tenpenny, a rubber worker who serves as financial secretary of Local 1155L in Morrison, Tenn., and as president of the USPA. "Today's local union communicators must use multiple platforms to engage our members. The days of focusing on a singular communication tool have passed."

The USPA board has been holding regular meetings and conference calls throughout 2020 to examine the ways in which the union delivers information to rank-and-file members and to determine how union leaders can more effectively

communicate with every member of the union.

The group also hopes to update its online "tool kit," originally established in 2000, for USPA members to access templates, photos, graphics and other material for use in local newsletters and websites.

Over the years, the USPA has held a series of confer-

ences and training sessions and has presented local communicators with dozens of awards recognizing their best work. That work has helped to improve and grow the union's communications network, especially as online tools have become more widespread.

Conway said that communicating with members is central to everything that the union does, and that he is committed to supporting the USPA's work and making sure that good communication flows both ways, from the union's top officers to rank-and-file members, and vice versa.

"You've got to keep stories flowing to us, and we'll keep stories flowing to you," Conway said. "We have stories to tell in this union every day."

Back row: Mike Williams, Ryin Gaines, Angela Colaizzi, Shannon Devine, Connie Mabin, International President Thomas M. Conway, Van Tenpenny, Scott Weaver, Lori Bookwood, Jess Kamm Broomell, Kim Miller, Lance Wyatt and R.J. Hufnagel – Front Row: Tim Sweeney, Sarah Dolph Smith, Bernard Jenkins, Pam Thompson, Gordon Nichols, John Carter, Corey Ingram and Ryan Baker



# CHEMICAL SAFETY *in Jeopardy*

## USW URGES CONGRESS TO SUPPORT BOARD'S MISSION

The USW wants Congress to fully support the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB), created 30 years ago to investigate chemical-related industrial incidents but currently starved for funds and manpower.

"It is important for Congress to show continued bipartisan support for the CSB and its mission to protect working people and American communities," Steve Sallman, assistant director of the USW's Health, Safety and Environment Department, told a Senate oversight committee.

"Our union believes that every worker should return home at the end of their work day with the same health and quality of life they had at the start of the day," Sallman testified. "The Chemical Safety Board's mission and investigations are imperative in reaching that goal."

The USW is the most prominent union in oil refining, chemicals, rubber, plastics, paper, steel and other metals – the industries most likely to experience a catastrophic chemical incident.

The CSB faces an uncertain future despite having been authorized by the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 to investigate catastrophic chemical incidents and identify their cause or causes.

The CSB is an independent fact-finding agency that provides advice and recommendations to companies, regulators and unions but lacks regulatory authority. It has become a catalyst for safety improvements through its investigations, reports and educational safety videos, which the USW frequently uses for member training.

### Small Agency, Big Job

The CSB has fewer than 50 staff and an annual budget of about \$12 million, which Sallman called a bargain

considering its important work.

The cost of four CSB-investigated disasters – a 2013 explosion that killed 15 and injured 160 at a fertilizer company in West, Texas; the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill that killed 11 and injured 17; a 2012 Chevron Richmond, Calif., refinery fire that sent more than 11,000 residents to hospitals; and the 2005 BP Texas City, Texas, refinery explosion that killed 15 and injured 180 – ranged from \$247 million to \$32 billion.

Yet, the Trump administration has repeatedly tried to defund and eliminate the CSB. Meanwhile, the traditionally five-member board in February dwindled to just one, Kristen Kulinowski, before the Senate confirmed Katherine Lemos as the new chair in March. Shortly thereafter, Kulinowski announced her intention to leave the board May 1, once again leaving the board with a single member.

"Regrettably, this administration has failed to support the agency," U.S. Sen. Tom Carper (D-Delaware) said. "In fact, each and every one of the president's last three budgets have called for the board's elimination. Fortunately, though, Congress has rightfully rejected President Trump's repeated efforts."

In a related issue, the USW in January filed a legal challenge to the federal government's decision to gut the Chemical Disaster Rule, a suite of Obama-era regulations intended to prevent chemical disasters.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) capitulated to industry demands when it rescinded crucial provisions of the rule's risk-management regulations, including measures to prevent foreseeable catastrophic incidents.

"Eliminating these requirements will allow a profit-hungry industry to police itself while putting workers, first responders and the public at risk," USW International President Thomas M. Conway said.

## Last Line of Defense

Given the administration's rollback of the Chemical Disaster Rule, Sallman said the CSB "stands as one of the last lines of defense in providing root cause analysis investigations and recommendations to prevent future catastrophic incidents."

The CSB's many investigations include an ongoing study of a massive explosion last June 21 at the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery in South Philadelphia, where alert USW members averted a community disaster by diverting thousands of gallons of highly toxic hydrofluoric acid away from the fire.

Despite their heroic responses, more than 1,000 USW members are out of work after the refinery was shut down by management rather than being restored and returned to service.

Uncontrolled hazards can, and do, shut down workplaces. "In today's economy, we cannot afford to lose living-wage jobs, not to mention the impact this has had on the surrounding communities and businesses," Sallman said.

Witnesses testified that the CSB's professional staff currently lacks enough investigators to do a complete job. In some cases, the board has been so understaffed that important investigations remain unfinished.

Two of the unfinished investigations were at USW sites – a 2009 fire and release of deadly hydrofluoric acid at the Citgo refinery in Corpus Christi, Texas, and a 2010 explosion at a former Horsehead Zinc plant in Monaca, Pa., that killed two workers and closed the facility.

## Another Disaster

On April 15, another disaster struck when an explosion shut down the pulp mill at the non-union Pixelle Specialty Solutions paper facility in Jay, Maine. While no injuries were reported, the blast was another reminder of the vital role agencies like the CSB play in protecting workers.

"We are concerned that the shortage will lead to an increased backlog of open investigations and the inability to deploy to needed investigations," Sallman said.

CSB recommendations are often applicable across industries and have led to changes in industry practices or updated regulations, including new rules in California for safety at oil refineries, Sallman said.

# PLANNING *Forward*

USW LOOKS TO IMPROVE OIL BARGAINING PROCESS



International President  
Thomas M. Conway



NOBP Chair  
Mike Smith



Photos by Steve Dietz

The USW must take a more proactive approach to bargaining with the oil industry in order to achieve the best possible wage, benefit and language improvements in upcoming rounds of negotiations.

International President Thomas M. Conway made the case for change in his opening address to delegates to the 2020 National Oil Bargaining Conference held in Pittsburgh this March.

“We are sort of entering a new era here,” Conway said. “The nature of the way that we’ve been doing oil bargaining is going to change pretty fundamentally.”

Those changes will include strengthening company councils and improving communication and solidarity from the local level through the company and international levels, to build the union’s strength from the ground up, he said.

The union also may begin its next round of bargaining by identifying a new lead company to replace Shell. The global company has led bargaining in the industry for decades, but has made efforts to cut down on the number of refineries it owns.

“We really need to think forward,” Conway said.

## Preparing for Challenges

Brandi Sanders, a member of Local 13-1 at Marathon’s Galveston Bay refinery in Texas, said USW members should look to turn the challenges they face into positives.

“As the oil industry changes its business model, we will be adapting, which means changes to the oil program,” Sanders said. “There are currently a lot of unknowns on the horizon. Among the unknowns are opportunities.”

The USW could potentially bargain a successful pattern agreement with a company like Marathon, but that company also is facing challenges, including an attack from Elliott Management Corp., an activist hedge fund manager that has expressed an interest in breaking Marathon into three separate companies.

“They don’t care about workers,” Conway said of Elliott. “They care only about stock prices.”

Conway urged the delegates, who

collectively represent about 30,000 USW members, to consider those challenges as they elected members to the union’s National Oil Bargaining Program (NOBP) Policy Committee. Consisting of one rank-and-file member and one alternate from each of five geographic regions, the committee will develop policies and proposals that will guide the union through its next negotiations with the industry in 2022.

The newly elected NOBP committee members, their locals and workplaces can be found on the following page.

Mike Smith, who took over as chair of the NOBP at the beginning of 2020 following the retirement of Kim Nibarger, said he hoped that members would strike a balance on the committee.

“I want to give members a chance to share their years of experience, and also prepare the union for the next generation,” Smith said.

In addition to panel discussions and company council meetings, the conference included several days of training sessions on topics such as bargaining health care and building power through

internal organizing, as well as NOBP regional meetings that included the policy committee elections.

Sanders, elected to represent Region E on the committee, said she and other members will focus on building solidarity and expanding collaboration through company councils.

“There was a large focus placed on building strong company councils, which are vital to the program now and in the future,” she said. “I believe we strategically worked within our respective councils and each established a foundation for collaboration.”

### Productive Over Years

The USW finalized the current national pattern agreement in January 2019 following bargaining with Shell. That pattern covers more than 30,000 oil refinery, petrochemical plant, pipeline and terminal employees in 220 USW bargaining units.

Despite the USW’s 2015 oil industry strike, the union’s relationship with longtime bargaining leader Shell has largely been productive over the years. Still, the company’s behavior globally is sometimes “shocking,” Smith said.

That’s why the union has continually expanded its efforts to build solidarity across borders and oceans, through partnerships like Workers Uniting, which includes more than one million workers in Unite the Union in Great Britain and Ireland, and the IndustriALL global federation, which represents 50 million workers in more than 140 countries.

It’s essential to confront multinational companies wherever they do business, Smith said as he welcomed two guests to the conference who have helped USW members do just that.

“In this globalized workplace, we are internationalists, or we are nothing,” said Tony Devlin, the officer in charge of the oil sector for Unite the Union. “Worldwide collaboration and solidarity are the only way forward.”

Devlin said global partnerships have paid dividends with better contracts in oil, as well as in other industries such as steel, aluminum, pharmaceuticals and paper. The alliances have also helped fight for fair trade, which helps all workers, he said.

“I and Unite will stand with you in the fight for workers’ rights in the oil refining sector and beyond,” Devlin said.

### Basic Rights Neglected

For Diana Junquera Curiel, director of the energy sector for IndustriALL Global Union, those fights extend beyond the bargaining table to countries, such as Nigeria, where workers often do not even enjoy the basic right to form a union.

The world economy includes more than 650 million workers who earn less than a living wage. As a particularly egregious example, the CEO of Shell makes 6,000 times the wages of an oil worker in Nigeria, she told the delegation.

“There are not enough good-paying jobs, and there is not enough money going to workers,” Curiel said.

When workers make less than living

wages, multinational companies are the ones that benefit, she said. Similarly, any time workers fight to gain union rights or wage increases, their victories have a ripple effect for other workers.

Curiel said that through concerted action, the labor movement has been able to force Shell to slowly change its anti-worker behavior around the world. She urged USW members to help maintain that momentum by supporting an upcoming global day of action against Shell on June 10. Keep an eye on the USW web and social media sites for more information as that date gets closer.

“All of you here are an economic and political actor with power and influence,” she said.



Eric Sweeney, Casey Wardell, Mike Edelbrock, DeVon Crawford, Kevin Herbein, Mike Smith, Eric Roy, Robert Cammarn, Shannon Kelley, Brandi Sanders, Robin Tokach

## NATIONAL OIL BARGAINING PROGRAM POLICY COMMITTEE

Delegates at the 2020 USW oil bargaining conference elected the following members and alternates to the NOBP Policy Committee:

### REGION A

(Ill., Ind., Mich., Ohio, Wis.)

Member Mike Edelbrock, Local 624, BP Husky, and Alternate Eric Sweeney, Local 1-626, Ineos

### REGION B

(Ala., Conn., Del., Fla., Ga., Ky., Mass., Md., Maine, Miss, N.C., N.H., N.J., N.Y., Pa., S.C., Tenn., Va., Vt., W.Va., R.I.)

Member DeVon Crawford, Local 10-234, Monroe Energy, and Alternate Kevin Herbein, Local 4-898, PBF

### REGION C

(Iowa, Kan., Minn., Mo., Mont., Neb., N.D., S.D., Wyo.)

Member Robin Tokach, Local 10, Marathon, and Alternate Robert Cammarn, Local 241, HollyFrontier

### REGION D

(Ark., Ariz., Calif., Colo., Hawaii, Idaho, N.M., Nev., Ore., Utah, Wash.)

Member Casey Wardell, Local 12-578, HollyFrontier, and Alternate Shannon Kelley, Local 12-6, Chevron

### REGION E

(Ala., La., Okla., Texas)

Member Brandi Sanders, Local 13-1, Marathon, and Alternate Eric Roy, Local 750, Shell



# 'YOU HAVE TO *Love* THE *Union!*

Photos by Steve Dietz

## ***Members of South Carolina Local Create Essential Medical Components***

**T**he members of Local 1811-01 at Qure Medical in Rock Hill, S.C., don't necessarily face life-or-death situations every day, but the work they do and the products they make have helped countless others facing dire circumstances.

"People are counting on us," said Local President Latoya Thompson. "These are extremely important products that we make."

Though they are essential, Qure's products are the kind that might go largely unnoticed by patients in hospitals and doctors' offices – rubber stoppers for syringes, seals for medicine bottles, and valves, tubes and other components for intravenous drug-delivery systems and catheters.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus this spring, the work of Local 1811-01 members has proven to be indispensable.

The demand for Qure's products has doubled in recent weeks, Thompson said, and workers have embraced their role as employees of a life-sustaining business.

"Members are dedicated to their work, and they are willing to keep coming to work because they know the importance of what we're doing," Thompson said. "We know that there are people whose lives are depending on us."

USW members at Qure turn out dozens of different products each day, many of them by operating one of the factory's 60 molding presses, pieces of equipment that range from 150 to 800 tons in size.

"Our main objective is quality in everything that we do," said Thompson, who works as a process inspector for Qure.

### **Dedication to Safety**

As they turn out their products, the 140 USW members at Qure must also ensure not only that the pieces are durable and sized to precise measurements, but that they are clean and safe enough for use in sterile environments.

"Our role is to find out very quickly if a machine should continue to operate," Thompson said.

For visitors to the 60,000-square-foot factory, the workers' dedication to quality, safety and cleanliness is obvious. The shop floor is pristine, and USW members, outfitted head-to-toe with protective clothing, work hard to

ensure that there are no defects.

USW member Gloria Morales is one of many such inspectors. She spends her days checking and testing products coming off the line several times over to determine whether they meet specifications and whether they contain any flaws or particulate matter such as dust that could endanger a patient during a medical procedure. Any questionable pieces are set aside and recycled.

"We don't just make parts. We make parts that save people's lives," said factory manager Mike Ledford.

Since the coronavirus pandemic began, the workers at Qure have taken their commitment to health and safety to another level. Thompson said members follow strict social distancing protocols. The company has hired additional staff to regularly deep-clean work stations, machines and break areas. Qure has installed hand-sanitizing stations, HEPA air purifiers, hands-free door operators and other devices throughout the facility.

### **The Union Difference**

In addition to safety and health, the USW's presence at the factory helps to further the work force's dedication to quality control, said press operator Dale Smith, who served as local union president before Thompson's election.



LaKisha Mitchell



Rashad Simpson



Tracy Ledford

“We’re always talking about the difference that the union makes,” Smith said, noting that the workers hold brief open meetings before starting each shift to discuss any incidents or issues, especially those concerning safety. Workers are free to talk about anything on their minds.

“We’re constantly talking. That helps a lot,” he said. “It used to be us against them. Now, it’s more like it’s just us.”

Ledford agreed that the company’s relationship with the USW has evolved to become more positive and collaborative in recent years.

“It’s a challenging environment,” he said, “but everybody works very hard at what they do.”

### Facing Anti-Union Forces

The hard work from 9 to 5 isn’t the only challenge facing the USW membership. With South Carolina’s anti-union “right-to-work” laws allowing employees to get the benefits of USW membership without paying dues, Local 1811-01 is constantly organizing to remain strong.

“A lot of people don’t know about the union,” Smith said, noting that the local takes advantage of contract language that allows union leaders time to meet with new hires to talk to them about the benefits the USW offers.

“We get them motivated about everything that the union does for them,” Thompson said of the new hires.

“District Sub-Director Larry Murray and Latoya [Thompson] have instilled the thought process of ‘strength through unity’ into the local,” said District 9 Director Daniel Flippo. “Strength and unity are the main factors in Local 1811-01’s growth in membership. They



know and believe in what they are doing and make it happen every day.”

The local’s efforts to build its membership have paid off. While several years ago membership once hovered just over 50 percent, it now stands at more than 90 percent.

Terry Stevenson, the local’s recording secretary and a 9-year employee at Qure, said that it helps that the wages

and benefits that the USW union contract provides are significantly higher than those at other employers in the area, which lies just south of Charlotte, N.C., not far from the state line.

“You have to love the union,” Stevenson said.

The local also makes sure to tell prospective members that the USW provides a level of job security that workers won’t find in non-union shops, Thompson noted.

Without a union, “companies can terminate you for any reason,” she said. “There’s no guarantee of anything.”

Because of right-to-work (for less) laws, many companies in the Carolinas and the surrounding states are less attuned to workers’ rights, from scheduling to discipline to safety, said local Vice President James Brice.

“Especially in the South, the company will push you around if you don’t have a union,” he said.

Thanks to the USW, that’s not a problem at Qure, where company managers spend their days walking the shop floor, making sure workers have all the tools they need to turn out top-quality medical components.

“We have issues,” Thompson said, “but we work our way through them.”



USW urges

# Investment in Infrastructure

*Brown Tells Congressional Leaders Plan Could Create 10 Million Jobs*

The USW has stepped up its call for leaders in Washington, D.C., to agree on a significant increase in federal investment in infrastructure projects, a commitment that would create jobs across every sector of the economy while improving the lives of all Americans.

“Every delay from inadequate infrastructure undermines worker productivity and allows for our global competitors to reap the benefit,” International Vice President Roxanne Brown

told the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee’s Subcommittee on Trade.

Brown pointed out the important role infrastructure plays in facilitating trade, and in maintaining American manufacturers’ access to both domestic and overseas markets.

The hearing at which Brown testified in February, entitled “Trade Infrastructure for Global Competitiveness,” came one week after Democrats in the U.S. House unveiled their “Moving Forward Framework,” a five-year plan to invest \$760 billion in the nation’s infrastructure.

That plan, Brown said, could spur 10 million jobs, reduce greenhouse gases and provide a much-needed jump-start for the nation’s economy, particularly in the manufacturing sector.

Since legislators unveiled that plan, the coronavirus pandemic spread across the country, underscoring the need for a large investment in new jobs once the health crisis dissipates.



In response to the crisis, House Democrats amended their initial framework to include an additional \$10 billion for community health centers, as well as for a federal program to pay water and utility bills for low-income Americans during health emergencies.

Still, until Republicans in Congress and the Trump administration show a willingness to compromise on an infrastructure plan and how to pay for it, the House plan will remain in limbo.

“It is unfortunate that for all the rhetoric about the need to improve domestic infrastructure, there has been a continued stumbling off the blocks by Congress and the administration,” International President Thomas M. Conway said in his testimony in March before the Congressional Steel Caucus.

In her testimony to the Ways and Means panel, Brown emphasized an often overlooked aspect of infrastructure – upgrading U.S. shipping ports, railways and other transportation systems to ensure that American manufacturers can continue to meet customer demand and ensure global competitiveness.

“We strongly urge Congress to increase the country’s role in the transportation infrastructure,” Brown said. “American manufacturing should be the first priority in an effort to improve export infrastructure facilitation. Our nation needs massive public investment in rebuilding our crumbling and overburdened roads, bridges, rail lines, ports and more.”

Investments in transportation improvements not only would lead to an increase in exports, but also would create jobs in manufacturing for workers who produce the materials needed for the upgrades. The program also would provide employment to those building the ships and other vehicles needed to carry cargo to its destination.

“If we are going to share our energy resources with the world, our workers need to share in the benefits by providing the materials needed for transport of the vital commodities,” Brown said.

In addition to ensuring access to markets, an infrastructure plan on the scale that the House proposed would spur demand for steel, aluminum, concrete, glass and other materials that USW members make. That would create jobs in those industries and in

ancillary industries that support those workers.

“Improving roads, bridges, water pipelines, internet access and other public assets will create thousands of good jobs and lead to sustainable economic growth in communities throughout the United States,” Conway said.

No matter what the final infrastructure bill looks like, it must include strong Buy American provisions to make sure taxpayers get the most out of their investment, said International Vice President David McCall, who oversees the union’s bargaining with the steel industry.

“If an infrastructure project is funded with America’s tax dollars, then the project should be built with American-made materials, using American labor and supporting American communities,” said McCall.

Conway pointed out that President Trump campaigned four years ago on the idea of committing \$2 trillion to

infrastructure projects. In April, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, he reiterated that suggestion, though no agreement had been reached by the time *USW@Work* went to press.

“The idea of a massive investment in infrastructure is long overdue, and provides an opportunity for the president to reach across the aisle and fulfill a campaign promise,” Conway said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that she was interested in working with the Trump administration and Senate Republicans on a compromise plan that puts Americans back to work and brings the nation’s infrastructure into the 21st century.

“We’ve had overtures from the administration on how we would go forward, and we’ll be working to get that done,” Pelosi said.

Still, with the Senate’s agenda controlled by Republican Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the prospects for a compromise remain uncertain.

“We need to make certain that any further actions we take are directly related to this public health crisis,” McConnell said in April, in response to suggestions that an infrastructure bill would be a welcome antidote to the economic struggles brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

Some in Congress say the bill could have an effect similar to the establishment of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in response to the Great Depression during the 1930s.

The WPA, a centerpiece of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal programs, provided jobs to millions of unemployed Americans in the midst of a massive economic crisis. The program resulted in the construction of more than 10,000 bridges, thousands of miles of roads, dams, electrical grids and other projects and ultimately changed the cultural and economic landscape of the nation.

U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, a Michigan Democrat who serves as chair of the Democratic Policy Committee, said infrastructure upgrades would help combat the effects of climate change, and that any bill the Senate considers must ensure that all materials are produced by American workers.

“It’s time to get serious about rebuilding America, growing our economy, and creating good jobs,” Stabenow said.



**“Every delay from inadequate infrastructure undermines worker productivity and allows for our global competitors to reap the benefit.”**

INT’L VICE PRESIDENT ROXANNE BROWN



Conway testifies before House Steel Caucus  
Photo courtesy The American Iron and Steel Institute

## PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE CONWAY CALLS ON CONGRESS TO SUPPORT STEEL INDUSTRY

The American steel industry and its workers need continued support from U.S. lawmakers to prepare for a sustainable future, International President Thomas M. Conway testified before

the Congressional Steel Caucus.

“As we look at the state of steel today, there are many challenges and opportunities that our union faces,” Conway told the caucus, a bipartisan House

coalition that promotes the health and stability of the domestic steel industry.

“By some metrics, the steel industry is strong. However, there are not only signs of weakness, but also looming threats that must be addressed to ensure we prepare the industry, its workers, and indeed, our country, for the future.”

The first step, Conway said, is to ensure that American workers are competing on a fair playing field with overseas competitors. While the Section 232 tariffs that took effect in March 2018 aided the industry in the short term, more consistent support for fair trade is necessary to ensure the industry remains on a long-term, sustainable course.

Conway focused his remarks on responding to global steel overcapacity and encouraging domestic demand. “It is also critically important to our union to ensure U.S. workers can benefit in this market by providing ways for workers to fairly represent themselves through collective bargaining,” he said.

On the positive side, Conway said imports are down, domestic steel investment is up, and U.S. workers are producing almost 10 million more tons of steel than in 2015. But, when compared to 2014, production is down by roughly 2 million tons.

“While the U.S. has reduced foreign



## COURT REJECTS BID TO END STEEL TARIFFS

A federal appeals court has rejected an attempt by steel importers to end the Section 232 tariffs that took effect in March of 2018, ruling that the duties are constitutional.

On Feb. 28, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit issued its determination that the tariffs, which amount to a 25 percent duty on foreign-made steel, were legal.

Still, the American Institute for International Steel, an organization representing steel importers who initiated the case, said it would appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The White House made the decision to impose the tariffs on steel and aluminum imports in March 2018 after the USW lobbied for years for relief from illegal dumping by China and others. Citing Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, the administration said the tariffs were necessary to protect the U.S. steel industry as a national security measure to prevent the United States from becoming entirely dependent on foreign sources for metals.

“Illegal foreign imports have hurt American workers and manufacturers for decades, costing us jobs and devastating communities. These tariffs were part of a much-needed effort to level that playing field and make sure we can continue to compete,” said International President Thomas M. Conway.

“These duties are only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to our fight for fairness, but they are an important one,” Conway said. “Steel is vital to both our national security, and to our economic security.”

imports in a stable demand environment, the lack of demand growth in steel means we are not maximizing our country's potential to produce U.S. steel for domestic purposes," Conway said. "The industry is nearing sustainable operating capacity numbers, but profitability is down as the global economy and lack of demand catch up to the near-term relief that the (Section) 232 tariffs provided."

### Job Training Needed

Noting that there are over 400 million tons of excess steel capacity in the world, Conway said the United States cannot let Section 232 tariffs be the only defense against predatory practices and overcapacity.

"We need to work with our allies to secure multilateral disciplines to reduce steel overcapacity and sanction bad actors," he said. "Steel remains vital to our economy and our national security."

Steel plants are seeing significant investments by the industry. New technologies will undoubtedly improve efficiencies and lower manpower needs. Fewer jobs, Conway said, mean layoffs and a need for federal assistance in job training.

It currently, for example, takes U.S. Steel's Mon Valley Works in Pennsylvania four hours to build a coil of steel.

## // STEEL REMAINS VITAL TO OUR ECONOMY AND OUR NATIONAL SECURITY. //

New technology in the pipeline will produce a coil in four minutes.

"These workers cannot be cast aside like equipment," Conway said. "Lawmakers must work with labor to ensure a strong and vital manufacturing workforce for our current and future economies. We have to ensure workers impacted by technological advancement have every opportunity to succeed."

### Steel Executives Testify

Joining Conway in testifying before the caucus were industry executives John Brett of ArcelorMittal USA, Rich Fruehauf of U.S. Steel, Lourenco Goncalves of Cleveland-Cliffs Inc., Leon Topalian of Nucor, Jim Charmley of Bull Moose Tube, Barbara R. Smith of Commercial Metals Co., and David Zalesne of Owen Steel Co.

Goncalves, whose company, Cliffs, is in the process of purchasing AK Steel Corp., said that due to loopholes and

exceptions, the 2018 tariffs are proving to be an inadequate response to global overcapacity, a problem driven largely by excess production and dumping by China.

The tariffs, instituted by the Trump administration as a U.S. national security measure, did not apply to electrical steel laminations and cores used in transformers and motors, he said. This led to an "absurd level of circumvention," which in turn has threatened jobs in the U.S. steel industry, Goncalves said.

Besides fair trade, another key to maintaining a vibrant domestic steel industry, Conway said, is ensuring consistent, strong demand for its products. Congress can spur that demand by making much-needed investments in the nation's infrastructure and transportation systems and ensuring that such projects come with Buy America provisions.

The framework unveiled in January by House Democrats could create 10 million jobs, help mitigate climate change and ensure that American manufacturers have a reliable network for use in shipping their products around the world.

"If we are going to share our energy resources with the world, our workers need to share in the benefits by providing the materials needed for transport of these vital commodities," Conway said.

## UNITED STEELWORKERS: ADMINISTRATION UNDERMINES AMERICAN WORKERS

As the spread of the coronavirus brought waves of economic hardship and anxiety to the nation this spring, the USW accused the Trump administration of turning its back on American workers by delaying the collection of tariffs on certain imports for 90 days.

"This was a gift that major importers and global businesses had been demanding for weeks but was repeatedly disavowed by the administration, including by the president himself," International President Thomas M. Conway said in the wake of the announcement, which does not affect tariffs on imports

from China or steel and aluminum tariffs imposed under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act.

"Auto workers in Michigan whose plants are either shuttered or have been repurposed to make ventilators for COVID-19 victims, glassworkers in Ohio, workers making shoes in Wisconsin, and millions of other workers in every state, are questioning why importers are being given this gift," Conway said, "when they have been told that this administration's and this president's priority is to 'Buy American.'"

The USW argued that protecting good jobs for workers was a more

immediate and important goal than allowing multinational corporations to save some short-term cash.

"It's indisputable that the United States must take bold, decisive action to protect its economy, but the beneficiaries of these actions must always be workers and their families," Conway said.

"Millions of retail workers who have already been laid off will be hard pressed to find any benefit in this new 'liquidity' as they wait for unemployment benefits and wonder how they're going to put food on the table, make their rent or mortgage payments or afford health care," he said.



## USW FIGHTS FOR ALUMINUM JOBS

Even as the spread of coronavirus this spring forced the cancellation of many in-person meetings and events, the USW continued its important work protecting members from unfair trade.

In late March, International Vice President Roxanne Brown provided written testimony to the International Trade Commission on behalf of the approximately 3,700 USW members in the aluminum industry, whose livelihoods

## COMPANY TO PAY \$1 MILLION FINE FOR FALSE 'MADE IN USA' LABELS

The Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), an organization the USW founded in partnership with employers that produce American-made goods, was instrumental in the first-ever financial penalty issued against a company for wrongly labeling their products as "Made in the USA."

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) said that it reached a settlement with Williams-Sonoma Inc. to pay a \$1 million fine to settle claims that its Goldtouch Bakeware, Rejuvenation products and some furniture sold by its Pottery Barn subsidiary were made entirely in the United States. In fact, the products were imported.

The AAM, founded in 2007, has consistently lobbied the FTC to investigate and punish companies that incorrectly label their products.

"Cheaters like Williams-Sonoma don't want to do all the hard work that's

are jeopardized by dumped and illegally subsidized common alloy sheet imports.

"Normally, this hearing would have taken place face-to-face, but as we all take precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19, we've had to adapt so that we can advance our union's vital mission," Brown said.

Brown said that over the past two years, increasing volumes of common alloy sheet imports surged into the United States from 18 countries.

"The virus is rightly getting a great deal of attention from top lawmakers and the media, but that doesn't mean that unfair trade has disappeared or that we can relent in our struggle for a level playing field," she said.

Brown testified that a deluge of unfairly traded aluminum threatens USW members, including those at Aleris Corporation in Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia; Arconic in Iowa; Constellium in West Virginia; and Jupiter Aluminum in Indiana.

"We will never stop fighting to save our members' jobs or to protect the benefits of our retirees," Brown said.

behind a 'Made in USA' label," said AAM President Scott Paul. "But they know that 'Made in USA' is a good selling point. It can be good for business. It's a great ad campaign."

Paul said that the FTC, which investigates such claims, has found dozens of cases over the years of false or misleading labels claiming that products were American-made, but this was the first time the agency had issued a financial penalty.

The FTC warned Williams-Sonoma about its labels in 2018, but the company continued the practice.

"This is a historic step forward," Paul said.

Conway said AAM is an important partner in the USW's constant efforts to protect good manufacturing jobs.

"We will continue to support AAM as they keep up this good work," Conway said. "The FTC should always be tough on companies that try to break the rules."



The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) opened 2020 with rulings that continue its systematic campaign under the Trump administration to roll back workers' rights to form unions and engage in collective bargaining.

In February, applying a new precedent for the first time, the NLRB allowed a chemical company to change its employee attendance policy without negotiating with a USW local in Arkansas.

In that case, the board overturned an earlier administrative law judge's ruling that Huber Specialty Hydrates had violated federal labor law by unilaterally amending its rules for disciplining workers for being absent or late without bargaining with its union.

In ruling against Local 4880, the board said a provision in a collective bargaining agreement between Huber and the local gave the company the right to adopt "reasonable rules and policies" without negotiations.

Then, in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic this spring, the board continued to undermine workers, ordering a halt to all union elections and hearings, a move that drew a sharp rebuke from union leaders, including AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

"This was unthinking at best and surely the product of an ideological zeal that has marked your tenure as chairman," Trumka wrote in a letter to NLRB Chairman John Ring.

# PRO-BUSINESS DECISIONS CONTINUE

## NLRB Rule May Limit Organizing in Health Care and Services



The NLRB, an independent agency charged with administering the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), was established to protect the rights of working people to join together to improve wages, benefits and working conditions through collective bargaining. In practice, the board is politically sensitive, changing its rulings depending on the political party that controls the makeup of the board.

President Trump in March announced his intention to re-nominate Marvin Kaplan of Kansas to the NLRB, a move to keep the agency under Republican control. He also pledged to re-nominate Democrat Lauren McFerrer of Maryland, whose term expired in December.

Also in February, the board appeased the U.S. Chamber of Commerce by reversing a 2015 ruling on joint employment to limit the ability of employees at fast-food restaurants and staffing firms to organize.

### Stricter Standard

The rule, opposed by labor unions and supported by employer groups, establishes a stricter standard for when a worker can claim to be employed by two separate businesses, such as a national restaurant chain and a franchise store operator or a cleaning business and a property owner.

The new joint employer rule “might not immediately have a large effect upon existing bargaining units in the USW’s traditional industrial sectors but will be an impediment as the union organizes in other sectors, such as services and health care, where the opportunities to subcontract entire parts of an operation are greater,” said General Counsel David Jury. “It will also encourage employers to seek additional

ways to fissure the existing workplace, all to the detriment of workers looking to join together with others in their workplace who might be employed by other contracting firms.”

More than 8 million U.S. workers are employed as independent contractors or through staffing firms. Another 7.6 million workers are employed at franchised businesses, such as McDonald’s restaurants, Dunkin’ coffee shops and Marriott hotels.

The final rule on joint employers is scheduled to take effect on April 27. It overturned an Obama-era standard that business interests feared would open the door for contract employees and workers at franchise businesses to form unions, although few did so under the 2015 decision.

The AFL-CIO and individual labor unions sought a standard that would allow employees of a local franchise or staffing firm to also be considered employees of a corporation or national brand. That would give them the ability to bargain with a major employer over wages, benefits and work conditions.

The new rule goes too far, AFL-CIO Associate General Counsel Maneesh Sharma told *The Wall Street Journal*, noting that wages and other terms of employment are often dictated in contracts between the companies.

“Employees can’t meaningfully bargain over terms and conditions of their employment if they can only bargain with the contracting firm,” Sharma said.

### Fight for \$15

The joint employer issue gained attention with the Fight for \$15, a political movement that began in 2012 to advocate for the federal minimum wage to be raised to \$15 an hour, from the cur-

rent rate of \$7.25 an hour, set in 2009. The campaign has involved strikes by fast food workers and workers in child care, home health care, airports, gas stations and convenience stores.

As reported in previous issues of *USW@Work*, beginning in 2017, when Republicans appointed by President Trump gained a majority on the board, the NLRB has issued a steady stream of pro-employer decisions that accelerated last year.

Last December, the board restored an employer’s right to end dues check-off once a contract expires and ended speedy union election procedures championed by the Obama administration.

// EMPLOYEES CAN’T MEANINGFULLY BARGAIN OVER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT IF THEY CAN ONLY BARGAIN WITH THE CONTRACTING FIRM. //

It also set a new standard saying it is lawful for employers to require confidentiality in workplace investigations, and approved a controversial settlement that had scuttled the agency’s nationwide, joint employer case against McDonald’s and its restaurant franchisees. The board also proposed a rule change that would strip collective bargaining rights from 81,000 university graduate students.

Workers lost the right to use work email to discuss unions, collective bargaining and other workplace matters in a flurry of year-end NLRB decisions favoring employers.

# MAJOR WORK STOPPAGES



After decades of declining strike activity, major work stoppages surged upward in the United States in 2018 and 2019, a signal that the economy was not working for everyone, even before the devastating coronavirus outbreak.

Prior to the widespread economic effects of the pandemic, when President Trump touted the economy as “roaring” and unemployment was below 4 percent, working Americans were “not seeing the kinds of robust wage growth that those at the top have seen for decades,” said Heidi Shierholz, a senior economist with the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a think tank that advocates for working families.

The resurgence in work stoppages over the past several years occurred despite government policy that was designed to make it difficult for many workers to effectively engage or use their right to strike.

EPI is supporting the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, a comprehensive labor law reform bill that passed the House on Feb. 6 but faces an uphill battle in the Republican-dominated Senate.

“Corporate influence has eroded labor law and allowed worker protections to stagnate,” said Margaret Poydock, an EPI policy associate who co-wrote the strike report with Shierholz. “We need fundamental labor law reforms like the PRO Act

in order to bring worker protections into the 21st century.”

## Median Worker’s Wage

The wage of the median worker is about \$19 an hour, or roughly \$40,000 a year. Inequality, meanwhile, continues to rise as the people who already have the most are seeing stronger gains.

Large strike-related activity sharply rose in 2018 with 485,200 workers involved in major work stoppages of 1,000 or more participants, a nearly 20-fold increase from the 25,300 workers recorded as striking by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in 2017.

The surge continued in 2019 with 425,500 workers idled in major work stoppages, according to BLS data. Over those two years, the number of workers in big strikes averaged 455,000, the highest in 35 years.

The BLS data has limitations. The agency includes information only on major work stoppages that involve 1,000 or more workers and last at least one full work shift. That approach excluded 2018 walkouts by thousands of Google workers who left work for less than a day to protest the company’s handling of sexual harassment complaints.

BLS data also does not distinguish between strikes and lockouts, which are initiated by management. EPI considers the BLS major work stoppage data as a proxy for data on major strikes.

# HIT 2-YEAR HIGH

## Large Work Stoppages

In 2019 alone, there were 10 work stoppages involving at least 20,000 workers at corporations including AT&T and General Motors, and amongst public school teachers. None of them was a lockout.

The largest work stoppages by number of workers during 2018 and 2019 involved teachers at elementary and secondary schools in states including Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, North Carolina and West Virginia.

There was widespread community support for those teachers who struck to improve their pay and working conditions. Students and their parents protested in solidarity at schools and state capitols.

Teachers were paid a record 21.4 percent less in weekly wages than similar college graduates in 2018. As teaching wages fall further behind, EPI said, it will hurt the ability of schools to teach and undermine the ability of students to learn.

As 2019 was nearing its end, some 1,700 workers belonging to the USW and seven other unions began an unfair labor practices strike against ASARCO in Arizona and Texas, idling copper mining, smelting and refining operations. That strike was continuing as *USW@Work* went to press.

The ASARCO workers walked out after rejecting an offer that would, except for a small part of the bargaining unit, continue a freeze on wages that have not gone up for 11 years, along with increasing health care costs, freezing pensions, and cutting a key bonus program.

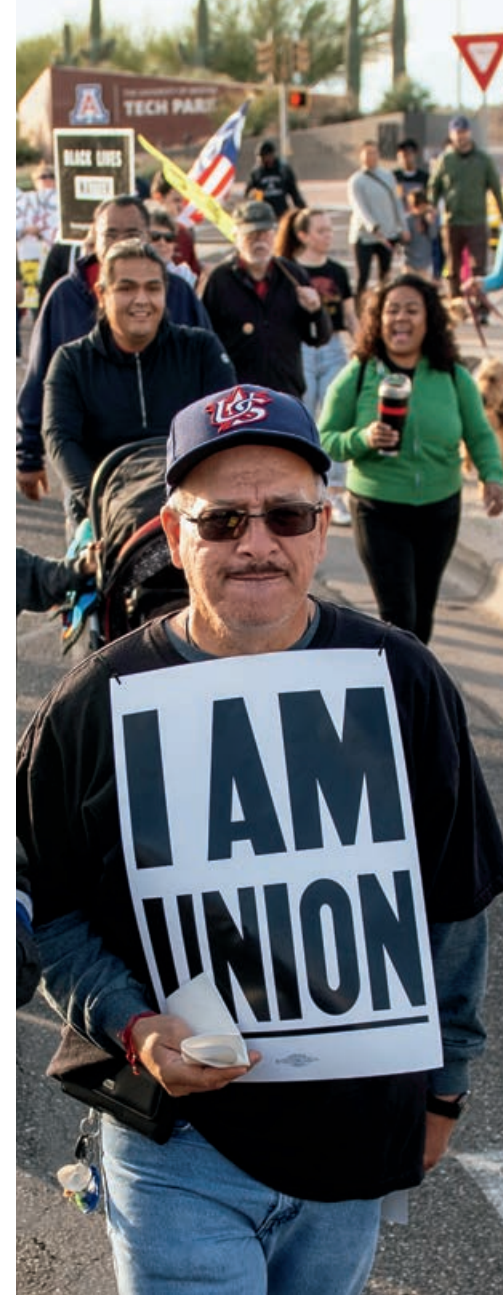
At first blush, it may seem odd that major work stoppages increased during a period of time when, until recently, unemployment had been historically low. The EPI report suggested that the increased activity likely stemmed from two factors.

“First, workers know that if they are fired or otherwise pushed out of their jobs for participating in a strike, they are more likely to be able to find another job,” the EPI report said.

“Second – and perhaps even more important – working people are not seeing the robust wage growth that one might expect with such a low unemployment rate, and wage levels for working people remain low, with many families struggling to make ends meet.”

Working people, EPI said, are likely concluding that if an economy that had been booming prior to the coronavirus outbreak was still not providing enough leverage to meaningfully boost wages, they must join together to demand a fair share of the economic pie.

“This sharp rise in job actions in recent years is the direct result of the realization of working people throughout the United States that the economy was simply not producing enough gains for them,” EPI Vice President John Schmitt said. “They may have a job, but their earnings are failing to keep pace, and the inequality in our economy continues to rise.”



# FIGHT FOR *Better* STANDARDS

## RULE ON BERYLLIUM REGULATIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION, SHIPYARDS REVISED

**M**ore than 42 years after the USW began a fight to improve protections for workers exposed to highly toxic beryllium, new Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations are finally in place.

Despite the success, the USW remains concerned that shipyard and construction workers may not be protected from beryllium exposure in the future at the same level as general industry workers covered by the new, tighter national safety regulations.

The fight for worker protections against beryllium exposure is a story of cooperation, said Health, Safety and Environment Director Mike Wright, who joined the fight for improved regulations in 1977, just days after he began working for the union.

It took many years of persistence and collaboration between the union and a leading producer of beryllium and beryllium alloys for the OSHA regulations to develop.





“The collaboration didn’t make it easy,” Wright said. “But it did make it possible.”

International Vice President Fred Redmond told the tale of the beryllium struggle at last summer’s Health, Safety and Environment Conference, where he urged management to work with the union on safety issues.

“Saving workers’ lives and limbs is a vital moral goal. And that should be enough,” Redmond said. “But just in case it isn’t, let me point out another benefit – the bottom line. Lawsuits over the deaths of workers and people in the community can bankrupt even a giant corporation.”

Beryllium is a useful material that is light, strong, rigid, non-magnetic and dangerous to work around. Workers exposed to particles, fumes, mists and solutions from beryllium-containing materials may develop chronic beryllium disease, a potentially disabling or even fatal respiratory disease.

### Symptoms Slow to Surface

It can take months or years after exposure for symptoms, including shortness of breath, fatigue, weight loss, fever and night sweats, to appear. In addition, beryllium is a carcinogen and exposure may also damage the liver, kidneys, heart, nerves and lymphatic system.

About 62,000 U.S. workers are exposed to beryllium. Most work in general industry operations such as beryllium metal and ceramic production, nonferrous foundries and fabrication of products made from beryllium alloys, according to OSHA. The agency estimates 11,500 of those workers may be exposed to beryllium through abrasive blasting in construction and shipyards.

In 1977, the beryllium industry resisted the union’s efforts. Industry lawyers then ridiculed workers who testified and maligned some who died. In addition, lawyers claimed records that would have supported workers’ testimony were lost in a flood, but records supporting the corporate position were recovered. In 1978, the rulemaking process ended with the exposure standard unchanged at 2 micrograms per cubic liter of air.

In 2010, after a series of newspaper

articles outlined the dangers of beryllium, a new corporate health and safety director who knew the union spoke to his corporate management about working with the USW.

The articles by the Toledo Blade, an Ohio newspaper, detailed how workers and community residents were poisoned by exposure to beryllium. The industry was facing lawsuits and believed an upgraded OSHA standard would be helpful.

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**“SAVING WORKERS’ LIVES AND LIMBS IS A VITAL MORAL GOAL. AND THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH.”**

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By 2012, the USW and a major producer submitted a joint recommendation to OSHA for a revised comprehensive standard, including a proposed regulatory text. The proposal was classified for general industry only.

To add shipyards and construction then would have required broadening the negotiations with the beryllium industry to include representatives of those sectors. Wright said the USW always encouraged OSHA to extend the standard to protect shipyard and construction workers.

The rulemaking took another four years. A final set of standards, issued on Jan. 9, 2017, contained many elements of the USW’s recommendations. Shipyards and construction were included.

### Provisions Revoked in 2018

However, on June 27, 2018, OSHA proposed to revoke all the ancillary provisions of the shipyard and construction standards – everything but the new permissible exposure limit and the short-term exposure limit. The agency solicited comments, and the USW and others opposed the proposal.

On Dec. 12, 2018, OSHA began en-

forcing most provisions of the beryllium standard for general industry, except for engineering controls. Nearly a year later, on Oct. 8, 2019, OSHA determined that the ancillary provisions of the shipyard and construction standards would not be revoked after all. Instead, OSHA proposed to modify them to be less costly and burdensome to employers.

The dozens of proposed changes address definitions, methods of compliance, respiratory protection, personal protective clothing and equipment, hygiene areas and practices, housekeeping, medical surveillance, hazard communications and recordkeeping.

The USW, which represents workers at the Huntington Ingalls shipyard in Newport News, Va., does not support the changes for shipyard and construction workers that conflict with the already approved general industry standards.

“There was never any justification for failing to protect shipyard and construction workers to the same level as workers in all other industries,” Wright said in comments delivered to OSHA last Nov. 7. “The employers and trade associations who advocated mutilating the two standards failed to prove any convincing evidence during the comment period because no such evidence exists.”

The proposed changes for shipyard and construction workers are predicated on the belief that the only significant operations potentially involving exposure to beryllium in shipyards and construction are abrasive blasting using slag-derived blasting agents, and a limited amount of beryllium-copper welding, Wright said.

Wright called the assumption dangerous and said OSHA makes that assumption in no other health standard. USW-represented workers build complex nuclear aircraft carriers and submarines at Newport News. In his comments, Wright asked if OSHA can legitimately assume that beryllium alloys, ceramics or other compounds will never be used on an aircraft carrier or a submarine.

“Can the agency even assume they are not used now, given that many of the assemblies and components of these vessels are classified?” he asked.

## Retired Director Golden Dies at 83

Jack R. Golden, a union organizer and retired USW district director, died on March 4 in Pasadena, Texas. He was 83.

Golden chaired bargaining with ASARCO Copper Group from 1986 to 1999, and with BHP Copper in 1996. He led bargaining with Reynolds Aluminum.

Golden also chaired bargaining with CF&I Steel, a division of Oregon Steel Mills now known as Rocky Mountain Steel, in Pueblo, Colo., from 1997 to 1999 during the start of one of the longest disputes in USW history.

The dispute began in October 1997 when 1,100 workers walked off the job to protest CF&I's unfair labor practices. The strike became a lockout in 1998 after members agreed to return to work but then were refused reinstatement. The dispute ended in 2004 and led to one of the largest back-pay orders in the history of the National Labor Relations Board.

Golden was born on July 15, 1936, in Pell City, Ala., where he played football and basketball in high school and participated in the Future Farmers of America.

In 1954, he took a job at General Electric in Oxford, Ala., and became an active member of the International Union of Electrical Workers Local 716. He served the local as grievance committee chairman and president.

In 1963, Golden joined the AFL-CIO staff as an organizer in Texas for the Industrial Union Department, where he worked on USW campaigns. He joined the USW in 1965 as a staff representative serving Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas, then District 37. He was named assistant director in 1980.

In 1984, Golden was appointed director of District 37 when Edgar Ball was appointed International Secretary. After a 1995 restructuring, Golden was named the first director of the new District 12.

As an IEB member, Golden played a role in establishing the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR). He retired in 1999, and was inducted into the Texas Labor Hall of Fame in 2008.



## Gerard Still Fighting for Workers

Retired International President Leo W. Gerard has continued to lend his voice to the effort to aid workers and families in need.

After stepping down last summer following 18 years leading the USW, Gerard joined the board of directors at Highmark, a health care and insurance provider based in Pittsburgh. Since then, he has been influential in advocating for those in need across that nonprofit's network, which includes 4.5 million people in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Ohio and West Virginia.

Through his unpaid position on the board, Gerard has also helped to direct the organization's charitable funds to various organizations, including a \$100,000 donation to the Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization, which aids USW families recovering from natural disasters and other desperate situations. He also was able to direct a smaller contribution to Variety-The Children's Charity, an organization close to his heart that provides essential equipment to special-needs youth.

"None of us should be surprised by these actions," said Gerard's successor, International President Thomas M. Conway. "Leo has always had a big and generous heart."



## Minnesota Nurses Ratify First Contract

After voting to join the USW in January 2019, 19 registered nurses at Essentia Health Northern Pines Hospital in Aurora, Minn., are now members of Local 9439 upon ratifying their first contract agreement on March 16.

The members won annual wage increases as well as improvements in holiday pay for part-time nurses, increased continuing education funding and an increase in pay for surgery team leads.

Kathy Johnson, a nurse who has worked at Essentia for 11 years, said one of the most important gains the workers made was the ability to use their collective voice.

"You actually can speak up if something isn't right or fair," said Johnson, a member of the unit's negotiating committee. "With a union, you're more easily heard by management."

## AFL-CIO Pledges Solidarity with ASARCO Workers

The AFL-CIO Executive Council in April adopted a statement pledging solidarity with workers on strike against unfair labor practices at ASARCO and condemning Grupo México's violations of labor, human and environmental rights.

A delegation of USW members from ASARCO met with AFL-CIO leaders in February 2020 in Washington, D.C., and the statement follows up on that conversation.

The AFL-CIO statement recounts examples of the worst labor, safety and environmental issues at ASARCO and its corporate parent, Grupo México, and expresses support for the workers' struggle.

"The AFL-CIO is fully committed in its support for striking miners at ASARCO," the statement reads. "The AFL-CIO also will communicate with members of Congress, the executive branch, the Mexican government, and candidates for the 2020 presidential and congressional elections to seek a resolution for the nearly 1,800 miners who safely and responsibly mine some 66 percent of U.S. copper output."

## On-Site Clinic Serves Domtar Workers

For the workers at the Domtar Corp. facility in Ashdown, Ark., getting access to quality health care is now as simple as showing up for work.

For the past several years, the members of Locals 13-1327, 1329 and 1329-01 at the paper and fluff pulp mill have had access to an on-site health and wellness center that provides a range of services exclusively to them and their families, including preventative care, X-rays and treatments for illnesses and injuries.

Over the past two years, more than 80 percent of the plant's workers have made at least one visit to the clinic, run by QuadMed, which provides care at a lower cost than nearby minute clinics. Domtar said that the health care clinic has received 99 percent positive reviews from patients.



## USW Marks International Women's Day

The USW on March 9 marked International Women's Day and the 100 years since the 19th Amendment granted American women the right to vote with a statement affirming the union's commitment to advancing equality in workplaces and communities around the world.

The statement recognized that labor unions have an important role to play in the continued fight against discrimination, wage inequality and gender-based violence.

"It is 2020, and our country is still grappling with a pernicious pay gap," said International Vice President Roxanne Brown. "A woman is paid just 81 cents for every dollar paid to a man, and that number is even lower for women of color. On top of that, women are consistently over-represented in low-wage and vulnerable employment positions, while their skills and talents are often under-utilized."

Unions offer women access to more predictable schedules, fair pay and quality health insurance, but broader legislation is necessary to create a cultural shift. Advancements such as paid parental leave, protections against workplace violence and stronger, more easily enforced labor laws are vital for the United States to achieve gender equality.

"In November, thanks to the brave protestors who led the battle for women's suffrage, we will have a say in the future of America," said International Vice President Leeann Foster. "Our union will continue to support legislation and representatives who fight for the dignity and respect of women and all vulnerable communities."

## Writers Guild Staff Joins USW

About 20 staff members of the New York City-based Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE) are now Steelworkers after they voted unanimously in February to ratify their first contract.

The contract included wage increases and enhancements to vacation and other benefits.

The WGAE is a labor union that represents writers in film, television, print and online media.

## USW, ATI Extend Contracts to February 2021

As employers began cutting production and laying off workers during the coronavirus pandemic this spring, the USW agreed to extend its existing contract with ATI for one year.

As uncertainty surrounded the global steel market during the outbreak, ATI withdrew its offer for a new contract and replaced it with an offer of an extension. The current agreement now runs through February 28, 2021.

Under the terms of the extension, ATI will make a \$500 lump sum payment to each employee who was accruing seniority on March 1, 2020. The contract covers more than 1,600 members of 10 local unions across the United States.

"Obviously, we are not completely satisfied with what we see as a temporary solution to the issue of negotiating a new, fair labor agreement," said International Vice President David McCall. "At the same time, the security and protection our contracts provide are worth a lot to our members and families, especially at this time of uncertainty."

"It is impossible to predict what the future holds, but certainly, we can expect to bargain from a position of greater strength after the global COVID-19 pandemic passes," said McCall, who chaired the USW's ATI bargaining committee.

The USW reached its current agreement with ATI in 2016, following an illegal six-month lockout, which resulted in significant wins for USW members.



## USW Joins Los Mineros Anniversary 'In Spirit'

For the past 13 years, USW members have joined thousands of Los Mineros members for a march through the streets of Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexico, to commemorate two Mineros brothers who were murdered by police during a 2006 strike at the steel mill.

This year, the coronavirus pandemic may have stopped USW members from marching, but it didn't stop their solidarity.

"The Steelworkers are not able to march with you physically this year, but we continue to march with you in spirit, as always," International President Thomas M. Conway wrote in a letter to Los Mineros President Napoleón Gómez Urrutia.

On Feb. 19, 2006, an explosion rocked a Grupo Mexico-owned coal mine, killing dozens of workers. Only two bodies were recovered before the government sealed the mine. Gómez, now a member of the Mexican Senate, denounced the workers' deaths and called for strikes across the country.

Vicente Fox, then president of Mexico, ordered police and military forces to attack strikers, killing Hector Álvarez Gómez and Mario Alberto Castillo.

Fox's government leveled false charges of fraud against Gómez, forcing him to spend more than a decade in exile in Canada with help from the USW. The USW entered into a strategic alliance with Los Mineros in 2005.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

You may also email the information to [membership@usw.org](mailto:membership@usw.org)

# IN MEMORIAM

In observance of Workers Memorial Day on April 28, the United Steelworkers remember those who lost their lives at USW workplaces during the past year.

NAME	AGE	DATE OF DEATH	COMPANY
Cedric Barnett	31	8/23/2019	Northern Indiana Public Service Co.
Justin L. Bell	36	5/6/2019	Corning Glass
Vincent Bigonnesse	30	9/22/2019	ArcelorMittal
Dave Bupp	46	7/17/2019	IPSCO Koppel Tubulars
Antonio Castro	25	12/18/2019	Graphic Packaging
Charlie Clark	33	4/8/2020	Century Aluminum
Shawn Anthony Clements	43	8/15/2019	Compass Minerals
Eric Connor	29	6/16/2019	Gerdau Ameristeel Inc.
Mark Ellison	65	2/28/2020	PCI Nitrogen
Michael Lee Elston	63	9/11/2019	Talbert Manufacturing
Howard Tim Ewing	58	8/19/2019	Huntington Ingalls, Newport Shipyard
Christopher P. Farnham	44	11/18/2019	Calumet Shreveport Refining LLC
Benjamin Fisher	29	7/27/2019	Northern Indiana Public Service Co.
Frank Freer	46	4/8/2020	U.S. Steel (Gary Works)
Cody Griffin	29	10/10/2019	Northern Indiana Public Service Co.
David Hanna	46	9/17/2019	Sterling Steel Co. LLC
Daniel Jacques	64	11/24/2019	Garda
Brian LeClerc	56	11/18/2019	Gorham Paper & Tissue LLC
Kenny Lee Mattson	51	11/5/2019	ArcelorMittal, Minorca Mine
Dylan Montjoy	46	4/28/2019	Lemare Lake Logging Ltd.
Daniel Moreau	60	10/5/2019	Margarine Thibault
Sara Murawski	30	12/10/2019	Central Marine Logistics (Agent for ArcelorMittal USA)
Sean Redden	48	1/28/2020	BF Goodrich Tire
Everett Leon Rogers	59	3/26/2020	Panhandle Eastern Pipeline Co.
Mario D. Ruffolo	63	1/15/2020	Garda Canada Security Corp.
Jere Smith	54	2/29/2020	Verso Corp.
Travis Storozynsky	31	2/20/2020	Telus Communications
Giovanni Teran	23	2/11/2020	ExxonMobil
Johnnie Twiner	77	11/16/2019	Engineered Place

**\*NOTE:** An unknown number of USW members have died from coronavirus in the ongoing pandemic. Some were essential workers and may have contracted it at work. We mourn their loss and the loss of all victims of this cruel disease.

