

Volume 10/Issue 2
Fall 2024

Covering the news of the United Steelworkers in District 11

USW REPORTER



A record-breaking 139 United Steelworkers (USW) union officers, committee members, and activists from Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming participated in the 15th annual District 11 Charley Richardson Educational Institute, held Sept. 8-13 at Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge in Deerwood, Minn. Twenty instructors and presenters also took part in the event.

The institute offered a range of courses aimed at building skills and educating USW officers and activists over a four-year period. General sessions covered various USW programs designed to support union members and their families.

First-year participants studied USW and labor history, basic contract administration, grievance handling, and communications and public speaking.

Second-year attendees focused on mobilizing around safety and health, confronting workplace changes, and effective communications and continuous bargaining.

Third-year courses included an in-depth look at the USW constitution, local union by-laws, duties of union officers, and information on the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Participants also explored research methods and costing for bargaining.

Fourth-year students concentrated on the arbitration process, presenting an actual case in a mock hearing during the Friday closing session.

Organizers lauded this year's participation as a milestone, with expectations already building for next year's institute. Registration details for the 2025 event will be sent to local union presidents and recording secretaries in April.



YEAR 2



YEAR 3



YEAR 4



THE DIRECTOR'S DESK Cathy Drummond, District 11 Director

This summer has been a busy and productive season for our members in District 11, marked by several new bargaining victories, key conferences that brought together members from multiple major USW sectors, and numerous educational and informative events for union members.

Make Your Voice Heard

As we approach fall, one of the most critical actions members can take is to register to vote and ensure your voices are heard at the polls.

This election is one of the most significant in our lifetimes, particularly for those of us in labor. To learn more about the USW's core issues, voter registration procedures based on your location, and other important voting resources, visit USWVoices.org.

Mining Conference

In July, District 11 hosted about 100 members from across the union for the USW's second international mining conference.

Under the theme "Digging Deeper: Mining to Manufacture Our Future," attendees collaborated on shaping a sustainable future for the industry.

The conference featured discussions of the USW's "Principles for Responsible Mining" and presentations from USW officers.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, now Vice President Kamala Harris's running mate, also addressed the gathering. Additionally, members toured US Steel's Minnesota Ore Operations facility on the Mesabi Iron Range in northern Minnesota.

Member Education

Many of you are already familiar with John Lepley, a longtime member of the international union's education department.

Please join me in congratulating John on his recent promotion to Director of the USW Education Department. With John at the helm, our member education programs are in great hands.

Looking ahead, the USW will host a virtual training session for local Recording Secretaries.

Keep an eye on the website for updates.

This training will cover the duties of local recording secretaries, especially regarding the upcoming 2025 International Elections, among other critical topics.

For additional educational requests, members are encouraged to contact the District 11 office at 612-623-8045.

Upcoming Events

This fall, we have several important events on the horizon:

- ▶ A public sector conference will be held in Pittsburgh from Dec. 2-5.
- ▶ The USW Constitutional Convention will take place in Las Vegas from April 7-11, 2025.

Stay tuned for more details on registration and hotel accommodations.

For more information on these and other events, visit usw.org/events.

Mag 7 Plant Closure

The closure of the Mag 7 aluminum smelter (formerly Noranda) in Marston, Mo., in January displaced over 400 members of Local 7686.

In May, a federal court complaint was filed due to the company's failure to issue the proper WARN notice. This is in addition to the unfair labor practice charges filed by the USW over unilateral changes to sick leave, health care, and retirement benefits.

Those charges are still pending with Region 15 of the NLRB.

U.S. Steel-Nippon

The USW continues to oppose the sale of U.S. Steel to a subsidiary of Japanese steelmaker Nippon.

The union's grievances over the proposed sale are currently in arbitration, and no ruling has been issued as of this writing.

Members can receive updates by texting USS to 47486.

Bargaining Updates

We've seen some significant victories at the bargaining table this summer:

Members of Local 13214 at the Genesis soda ash mine in Green River, Wyo., ratified a new contract after tough negotiations.

Along with wage increases, members secured stronger safety protections to address concerns over exposure to coal and silica dust. Congratulations to Local 13214 members!

Approximately 400 members of Local 11-63 at Sappi in Cloquet, Minn., won a new contract after challenging negotiations.

The agreement reinstates a 90/10 health care plan, includes wage increases of more than 10 percent over three years, and provides a \$5,000 signing bonus.

In Hibbing, Minn., 35 members who work as home care and hospice employees at Fairview Range Medical Center ratified their first union contract following 11 months of bargaining and an anti-union campaign.

Battle at Essentia

Members of Local 9460 continue their fight with Essentia Health. The union's contract, which covers 785 members in Duluth, Superior, and remote workers across 17 states, expired on July 1.

Key issues include OSHA violations resulting in more than \$27,000 in fines, and the employer's attempts to eliminate the wage grid, remove step increases, assign workers to multiple departments, and permit non-union workers to perform union work.

Once again, I encourage every member to check your voter registration status and plan to vote in November's election. The stakes are high, and we have a unique opportunity to shape the future of our workplaces and communities.

Stay strong, stay informed, and stay involved!





USW District 11 Activists Rally Support for a Fair First Contract at Edgewood

Bargaining a first contract for a newly organized unit can be both exciting and frustrating.

Workers at the Edgewood senior living facility in Cheyenne, Wyoming, recently voted to organize a union to negotiate fair working conditions.

Edgewood, based in Grand Forks, North Dakota, initially resisted engaging in good faith negotiations with the United Steelworkers (USW). However, a network of dedicated union activists organized a rally outside their headquarters, which appears to have changed the course of bargaining.

Bargaining from Grand Forks over Zoom, Edgewood management seemed too far from the action in Cheyenne. USW, AFL-CIO staff, activists and others decided to bring the fight to Edgewood.

Dan Jackson, a USW Local 560 member from Bobcat in Gwinner, North Dakota, worked to raise awareness about the ongoing situation at Edgewood during the North Dakota AFL-CIO Convention in June. Local 560 even organized to bring a busload of union members and their families 120 miles to Grand Forks.

Local 560 had retirees, Next Generation, solidarity committee members, and their families riding together. Many made signs on the trip to Grand Forks, which took a few hours.

Activists from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers' International Union (BCTGM), North Dakota United (Teachers), Iron Workers, USW and community supporters packed the corner of downtown Grand Forks for an hour of chanting, marching, and showing support for a fair first contract for the company's Cheyenne workers.

A delegation of union supporters attempted to deliver a petition to management at Edgewood Healthcare Headquarters. Despite peering out of their windows during the rally, executives refused to meet union members at the door.

Although bargaining is still slow and much work remains, the impact of the rally is clear. Now, instead of being forced to negotiate outside of work hours in sessions that sometimes only lasted 15 minutes, the union committee is excused from work for full days of meetings.

We are making progress on contract language in negotiations, though we are prepared to continue applying pressure to secure a fair first contract for the workers at Edgewood.





Community Service Committee Hard at Work

The USW Local 307 community service committee has been busy already this year! Recently they volunteered their time to sort food for the Harvesters' annual "Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive." Their effort aims to address food insecurity in our community and ensure that those in need have access to nutritious meals.

The local volunteers took the initiative to sort out the food donations that were left by community members for postal delivery pick up. Their time and efforts were crucial in ensuring that the donations were organized efficiently and could be distributed effectively to those in need.

The selfless attitudes and dedication demonstrated by the committee members are truly commendable. Their commitment to giving back to the community and making a positive impact on the lives of others is inspiring.

Becky Mickey, Lynn Mickey, Ben Barnes, Committee Chair Kenny Williams, Chris Morris, Matt Jones.

Rapid Response Update



As this year's legislative session in Washington, D.C., comes to a close, we are still pushing hard to pass legislation that will help USW members who have been negatively impacted by unfair trade practices.

Across the U.S., more than 5,000 USW members have lost their jobs, and in District 11 alone, that number is close to 1,000.

As union workers, we fight for our jobs. However, when layoffs occur due to trade decisions made in Congress or the illegal dumping of goods by countries like the People's Republic of China, workers should have access to the resources necessary to retrain for careers in other industries.

The Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program provides vital job training benefits for workers who lose their jobs due to dumped and subsidized imports, tariff changes, or trade agreements.

These impacts are constant as companies outsource labor and import goods, undermining good-paying, family-sustaining domestic jobs. Neither USW nor our employers want to see layoffs and facility closures.

We have historically worked together to ensure that impacted workers receive TAA benefits. Specifically, TAA offers up to two years of job training for eligible workers, helping them acquire new skills and increase their employability in changing industries.

According to a U.S. Census Bureau study, TAA recipients earn an average of \$50,000 more in income over a 10-year period compared to workers who did not participate in the program.

This highlights the long-term economic benefits of TAA participation. Employers also recognize the critical need for retraining programs, as demonstrated by a recent Manufacturing Institute study, which estimates that 2.1 million manufacturing jobs will go unfilled by 2030 — largely due to a skills gap in the current workforce.

Watch for Action Calls in the near future, so you can help ensure this critical legislation passes and support our members who need it most.

USW District 11 Members Tackle Industry Challenges at INTERNATIONAL MINING CONFERENCE

MINNEAPOLIS — The Second USW International Mining Conference brought together hundreds of miners from across the U.S. and Canada, including more than 30 representatives from USW District 11, for a three-day event in held July 22-24, 2024.



The conference opened with remarks from USW District 11 Director Cathy Drummond and featured a keynote speech by Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

A bus of delegates was taken up to tour the US Steel Minnesota Ore Operations facility in Mt. Iron, Minn. Minntac is the largest integrated taconite mine in North America. The attendees were given a tour of the enormous pit along with the taconite processing plants. Following the tour, USW Local 1938 hosted a wonderful BBQ and gifts for everyone.

Walz reaffirmed his unwavering support for the middle class and emphasized the critical role of taconite and non-ferrous mining in Minnesota's economy. His address was well-received by attendees, who applauded his advocacy for workers and the mining industry.

Director Drummond also led a roundtable discussion focused on challenges faced by women in the mining industry. Representatives from major mining companies Rio Tinto and Cleveland-Cliffs acknowledged the difficulties women

encounter, particularly regarding tough working conditions, and discussed ongoing efforts to improve their work environments.

A broader roundtable of mining companies highlighted the importance of mining precious metals necessary for the transition to a greener economy. The discussion underscored the belief shared by both industry leaders and the USW that non-ferrous mining can be done safely and in an environmentally responsible manner when workers are represented by unions.

The roundtable participants stressed that mining in the U.S. and Canada is a humanitarian issue and should be conducted by union members, rather than relying on countries like Indonesia and China, where child labor and poor environmental practices are common.

Chris Williamson, Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), also

addressed the conference. He reiterated the Biden administration's commitment to supporting miners' health and safety in the workplace, reinforcing ongoing efforts to protect workers' rights and well-being.

The conference featured two days of workshops on topics ranging from health and safety to advancements in mining technology, effective bargaining tactics, and the history of labor in the mining sector.

District 11 members participated in breakout sessions focused on specific sectors, including iron ore and metallurgical coal. The sessions, led by District 11 Staff Representative John Arbogast, addressed issues such as permitting reform, outsourcing, underinvestment in maintenance and plant upgrades, and collaboration with environmental agencies.

Participants also shared strategies for strengthening partnerships with Indigenous communities.

The event concluded with a renewed sense of solidarity and commitment to addressing the challenges facing the mining industry in North America.





District 11 Delegates

USW National Paper Bargaining Conference Highlights Industry's Impact

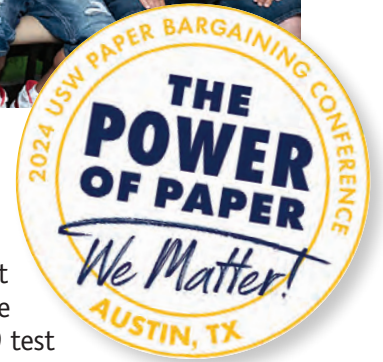
The 10th USW National Paper Bargaining Conference convened in Austin, TX from August 5-8, 2024, setting forth the bargaining and safety agendas and establishing a work plan for the next two years.



This year's theme, "The Power of Paper: Why We Matter," underscored the significant yet often overlooked role of paper products in daily life.

From receipt paper at checkout lines and gas stations nationwide to the tips of swabs in COVID-19 test kits used by millions globally, the paper sector's influence is pervasive.

The conference aimed to highlight the sector's critical contributions and reinforce the importance of its workforce, emphasizing why the industry matters now more than ever.



On July 27 USW Local 662 participated in the Leprechaun Days Parade.

Financial Officer and Trustee Training

After the May 2024 local union elections, District 11 offered financial officer and trustee training for new and re-elected officers in four locations: Minneapolis, Des Moines, Columbia, and Riverside, Mo.

Auditors from the United Steelworkers (USW) International provided instruction on proper financial record-keeping to ensure compliance with the Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS) and the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959 (LMRDA), commonly known as the Landrum-Griffin Act.

The LMRDA applies to unions representing private-sector and U.S. Postal Service employees.

District 11 also announced plans to offer an online class focused on the duties of recording secretaries, in accordance with the International Constitution and bylaws for stand-alone local unions and amalgamated local unions.

This training is scheduled for late September and October.

Health, Safety and Environmental Issues Take Center Stage

Health, safety, and environmental (HSE) protections are some of the most crucial things workers need to lead prosperous lives. Without them, wages, benefits, and time off mean little.

Members from the U.S. and Canada spent time discussing and learning about topics that they deal with in their workplaces every day. Attending the conference alongside our members were representatives from various USW represented companies. They were able to see the importance of working together to keep their facilities safe for all employees.

Marshal Cummings, President of Local 13214 facilitated classes alongside former Assistant Secretary of Labor and MSHA head Joe Main. He also spoke alongside the current Assistant Secretary of Labor and head of MSHA, Chris Williamson. When asked about his time at the conference he stated "Never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined that a small-town boy, following in the footsteps of my father and grandfather as a miner, would be standing on that stage. Growing up, I spent summers working on a ranch until football season started. My dad instilled in me a strong work ethic, teaching me that it's possible to set records for tons mined in a 12-hour shift without compromising safety."



Marshall Cummings and Mayra Rivera introduce President McCall.

During the opening of the joint union/employer session, brothers and sisters who paid the ultimate price since the last conference were recognized. The presentations highlighted that even a strain or sprain is too high a price, let alone the loss of a life, for a slight improvement in the quarterly report.

The USW invests heavily in HSE and they fight for improved language during every negotiation to make sure that our members are safe on the job. At the USW Health and Safety Conference, members gained the tools to make their workplace safer, but more importantly, they gained the understanding that we're just getting started!



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Cathy Drummond, Director
Jeff Hartford, Assistant to the Director
Karen Stockton, Executive Administrative Assistant



3433 Broadway Street NE, Suite 315
Minneapolis, MN 55413
Phone612-623-8045
Fax.....612-331-4266

Sub-District 1 Office

3433 Broadway Street NE, Suite 315
Minneapolis, MN 55413
Phone612-623-8003
Fax612-331-4266

Staff: Brian Ecker, Travis Lohmann, Robert Ryan, Justin Recla, Tom Ricker, Joyce Russotto, Liza DeCoursey

Sub-District 2 Office

3675 South Noland Road, Suite 310
Independence, MO 64055
Phone.....816-836-1400
Fax816-836-0312

Staff: David Rizzuto, Greg Tate Jr., Robert Tripp, Donnie Gibson, Stacey Andersen, Terri Pierce

Staff Office

415 Jones Street
Eveleth, MN 55734
Phone.....218-744-2757
Fax218-744-7926

Staff: John Arbogast, John Kesler, Michael Woods, Michele Fredrickson, Will Wilkinson, Tiffany Olson

Staff Office

3307A Hollenberg Drive
Bridgeton, MO 63044
Phone.....314-209-0613
Fax314-209-0662

Staff: Cameron Redd, Ronald J. Wilkey, Bill Campbell, Ruth Wilson

Send comments and suggested articles to:
D11news@usw.org



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Serving Up Solidarity



Members of Locals 13214 and 15320 helped out for the South West Labor Council's Labor Day picnic in Rock Springs, Wyoming.

Let's Hear from YOU!

USW@Work is published two times a year. If you would like to submit editorial content for the next issue, please e-mail your files to **D11news@usw.org**.

Also include a telephone number or active e-mail address in case we need additional information. We will try to include all submissions and we reserve the right to edit information in order to fit the allocated space.

GET INVOLVED

CIVIL RIGHTS
David Rizzuto
USW District 11 Civil and Human Rights Coordinator
816-836-1400 phone
816-836-0312 fax
515-490-1277 cell
drizzuto@usw.org

Response Coordinator
3433 Broadway Street NE
Suite 315
Minneapolis, MN 55413
612-623-8003 office
612-331-4266 fax
rryan@usw.org



EDUCATION COORDINATORS
Brian Ecker
becker@usw.org
Ron Wilkey
rwilkey@usw.org

SOAR
Bonnie Carey
USW District 11
SOAR Coordinator
Bettendorf, IA 52722
309-721-7908 cell
bonnie.carey@gmail.com

NEXT GENERATION
Will Wilkinson
USW District 11
Next Generation Coordinator
218-744-2757 office
701-630-0270 Cell
wwilkinson@usw.org

VETERANS OF STEEL
Travis Lohmann
USW District 11
651-338-0047
tlohmann@usw.org

ORGANIZING
For information on Organizing, please contact the District 11 office at 612-623-8045.

WOMEN OF STEEL
Michele Fredrickson
USW District 11
Women of Steel Coordinator
415 Jones Street
Eveleth, MN 55734
218-744-2757 office
218-744-7926 fax
mfredrickson@usw.org



RAPID RESPONSE
Bob Ryan
USW District 11 Rapid



WOS COUNCIL COORDINATORS

Christina Lehman—Iowa
125 NE Broadway Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50313
515-201-6134
local310wos@outlook.com

Misty Samples—MOKAN WOS
116 West Smith
PO Box 251
Hesston, KS 67062
316-253-2782
womenofsteeluswlocal11228@gmail.com

Marketa Anderson—WIMN-KOTA
502 SW 8th Avenue
Chisholm, MN 55719
218-403-0219
marketaanders@gmail.com

Tina Fife—WY/MT
PO Box 553
Lyman, WY 82937
307-747-4672
tfife78@gmail.com