

## WHY UNION

**"If it weren't for unions you would still have children working in mines for \$.10 an hour, 12 hours a day, seven days a week."**

**- Anthony Paul Mercurio**

One of my earliest memories from childhood is of my father dragging me away from the television to accompany him to a grocery store in our neighborhood. Although I protested loudly he insisted he needed me to go inside and buy a quart of milk. When we got to the store there was a picket line out front; the workers at the store were in the middle of a strike.

I asked my father, "Why do I have to go in?"

"Because I'm a union man and I won't cross a picket line," he said.

I didn't know a picket line from a chorus line at that age. I just knew the idea that my father didn't want to walk past a group of people carrying signs seemed a little weird to me. Years later, when I understood the principle at work, I asked my father why I, the son of a union man, should have been allowed to cross the line. His answer: "Because the family needed milk."

I relate this story because I think it speaks to the ambivalence that some of us may have about belonging to a union. We understand there are things we do that are sacred and yet we sometimes feel the need to bend the rules.

In 1969 our Local went out on strike for four months; the action was considered successful and among other things the union received a cost-of-living-adjustment/COLA built into the wage scale. I remember that one because I worked as a short order cook over the summer and handed my paycheck over to my father at the end of every week.

Years later, I joined Merck and became a member of this Union. In 1984 I experienced my first strike, a four month affair where we walked over the issue of a two-tier wage system, a system which seeks to undermine and create dissension within the rank and file. The majority of our members thought this completely unfair. We lost that battle but no one can say we didn't try.

Since that time I have watched our Union and other unions fight a war of attrition with not only this Company but corporations all around America. Union membership has seen a decline (although 2007 saw an uptick), is under 10 percent and falling and the disparity between the haves and have-nots in this country is the greatest it's been since the Great Depression. In 2007 the richest 1% controlled 34.6% of the wealth in the United States. Those numbers continue to grow worse.

In 1827 several trade unions in Philadelphia banded together to form the Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations, the first labor organization to unite workers of different crafts. Since that time there have been struggles throughout American history, often bloody battles, by workers to join unions in order to give working people a fair shake and an equal say on how to distribute and reward the fruits of their labors. In its heyday the American Labor Movement, through collective bargaining, was able to shorten the length of the workday, secure

generous provisions for so-called fringe benefits, including holidays, vacations and sick leave, company-financed insurance, pension, health and welfare plans, and automatic wage increases.

None of these benefits came without a fight.

The history of American Labor is too long to summarize here other than to note the need to understand that unions have always been about the fight to earn a dignified day's work to support one's self and family. It's about respect. That's it in a nutshell.

There is a lot of discontent on this plant site regarding the new United Steelworkers dues structure now in play. This dissatisfaction is understandable and is not to anyone's liking, including the Local leadership. These words are not written to justify the increase but simply to remind membership that the only reason we earn a good wage and have excellent benefits is because we belong to a union. Period. End of story.

This country is in trouble. No matter what positive signs or indicators you read about in the papers or what you hear on TV and the radio, when 15.4 million people are without jobs or have simply given up looking for work, things are bad. The USW is about the Big Picture, about lobbying Congress and the President and the Media to force a dialogue with businesses about creating good manufacturing jobs here in the United States. About educating and building an energized labor movement that demands better of our government and the people we work for. Our position is that if a corporation wants to keep jobs here they should be rewarded with tax breaks and if they want to move jobs overseas they should be penalized accordingly. We won't say this strategy has been successful so far, but at least we are trying.

Sometimes we make decisions that are not consistent with union principles. Just like my father did when he had me cross that picket line as a child, sometimes we operate in that gray area between the black and white because we need to do things according to our best interests. It can be a slippery slope but in the end, I believe, we need to adhere to a core set of beliefs.

Whenever I am asked the question "what good is a union" I always think about what my father told me when I walked a picket line with him in 1984. The quote at the beginning of this piece was his response. My father was old enough to remember the Great Depression, child labor and exploitation; if we don't stick together we'll soon have children, maybe our children, working once again in the mines.

- Paul Anthony Mercurio



# WHO ARE THE UNITED STEELWORKERS?

The USW is 1.2 million working and retired members throughout the United States, Canada and the Caribbean, working together to improve our jobs; to build a better future for our families; and to promote fairness, justice and quality both in the workplace and in our societies. Our Union is a resource: an organization that provides education, research and representation to help us achieve those goals; a network made up of hundreds of thousands of workers, united to face the challenge of an ever-changing workplace in a constantly changing world.

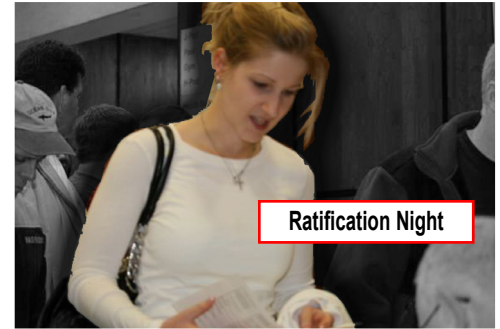
**Many Industries, One Strong Union** - In the USW, diversity isn't some politically correct buzzword for the new millennium. It's a tradition as old as our union itself. Just two years after our founding convention in 1942, the Aluminum Workers of America voted to join our Union, and the USW wasn't just for Steelworkers anymore.

The Aluminum Workers was only the first of nine unions to join the USW. Each brought a new wave of diversity, eventually spreading Steelworkers through virtually every industry, and making the USW the most diverse union in North America. Today, USW members don't just produce ore in the nation's mines and steel in our mills. We make auto parts, tires, bricks, books, glass, cement, furnaces, air conditioners, furniture, potato chips, even submarines and aircraft carriers.

Steelworkers work in banks and credit unions, legal clinics and offices, hospitals and nursing homes, hotels and restaurants, warehouses and manufacturing plants, mines and mills, security companies, colleges and universities, airports and resorts, in just about every job imaginable. We're all

steelworkers - not just because of where we work, but because we know the importance of strong, democratic representation on the job.

For more information visit: [www.usw.org](http://www.usw.org).



## LOCAL NEWS

© Two new USW-led Safety Committees have been formed in Rotovirus and MMR bringing our total site wide to 19 committees. If you are interested in forming or joining a committee contact Debbie Yakscoe at x20185.

© We continue to have members disciplined and terminated for alleged documentation falsification. Members need to understand that getting it right the first time is critical to our business. If you are unsure about what you are signing for; the timeliness of what you are signing for, or are asked to falsify a document STOP and ask your supervisor. If the answer you receive is not satisfactory, contact your Shop Steward or the union office.

© We have some big inspections coming up. In late March the Europeans and the British are due on site, followed later in the year by the Japanese, the Turks and the Swiss. All of these regulatory agencies are important in bringing business to West Point. The company has asked our help in making these inspections successful.

© Have an interesting story or idea for the newsletter or the webpage? Drop us a line in the union office at Newsletter/WP1-15 or contact Paul Mercurio x21009.

© Visit our website at [www.usw10-86.org](http://www.usw10-86.org)



## Unions 101

### What is a union?

A union is a group of workers who form an organization to gain:

- ☐ Respect on the job.
- ☐ Better wages and benefits.
- ☐ More flexibility for work and family needs.
- ☐ A counterbalance to the unchecked power of employers.
- ☐ A voice in improving the quality of their products and services.

### How do people form a union?

When workers decide they want to come together to improve their jobs, they work with a union to help them form their own local chapter. Once a majority of workers shows they want a union, sometimes their employers honor the workers' choice. Often, the workers must ask the government to hold an election. If the workers win their union, they negotiate a contract with the employer that spells out each party's rights and responsibilities in the workplace.

### Does the law protect workers joining unions?

It's supposed to - but too often it doesn't. Under the law, employers are not allowed to discriminate against or fire workers for choosing to join a union. For example, it's illegal for employers to threaten to shut down their businesses or to fire employees or take away benefits if workers form a union. However, employers routinely violate these laws, and the penalties are weak or nonexistent.

### What kinds of workers are forming unions today?

A wider range of people than ever before, including many women and immigrants, is joining unions - doctors and nurses, poultry workers and graduate employees, home

health care aides and wireless communication workers, auto parts workers and engineers, to name a few.

### How do unions help working families today?

Through unions, workers win better wages, benefits and a voice on the job - and good union jobs mean stronger communities. Union workers earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers and are more than likely to receive health care and pension benefits than those without a union. In 2007, median weekly earnings for full-time union wage and salary workers were \$863, compared with \$663 for their nonunion counterparts. Unions lead the fight today for better lives for working people, through expanded family and medical leave, improved safety and health protections and fair-trade agreements that lift the standard of living for workers all over the world.

### What have unions accomplished for all workers?

Unions have made life better for all working Americans by helping to pass laws ending child labor, establishing the eight-hour work day, protecting workers' safety and health and helping to create Social Security, unemployment insurance and the minimum wage. Unions are continuing to fight today to improve life for all working families in America.

### What challenges do workers face today when they want to form unions?

Today, thousands of workers want to join unions. The wisest employers understand that when workers form unions, their companies benefit. But most employers fight workers' efforts to come together by intimidating, harassing and threatening them. In response, workers are reaching out to their communities for help exercising their freedom to improve their lives.

- Source: AFL-CIO website.

# UNION ADVANTAGE BY THE NUMBERS

Union workers earn higher wages and get more benefits than workers who don't have a voice on the job with a union.

Union workers' median weekly earnings \$908  
 Nonunion workers' median weekly earnings \$710  
**Union wage advantage 28%**

Union women's median weekly earnings \$840  
 Nonunion women's median weekly earnings \$628  
**Union wage advantage for women 34%**

African American union workers' median weekly earnings \$749  
 African American nonunion workers' median weekly earnings \$581  
**Union advantage for African Americans 29%**

Latino union workers' median weekly earnings \$774  
 Latino nonunion workers' median weekly earnings \$570  
**Union advantage for Latinos 50%**

Asian American union workers' median weekly earnings \$907  
 Asian American nonunion workers' median weekly earnings \$870  
**Union advantage for Asian Americans 4%**

Union workers covered by employer-provided health insurance 78%  
 Nonunion workers covered by employer-provided health insurance 51%  
**Union health insurance advantage 53%**

Union workers without health insurance 2.9%  
 Nonunion workers without health insurance 14.2%  
**Nonunion workers are four times more likely to lack health insurance**

Union workers covered by guaranteed (defined-benefit) pensions 77%  
 Nonunion workers covered by guaranteed (defined-benefit) pensions 20%  
**Union pension advantage 285%**

Union workers with short-term disability benefits 46%  
 Nonunion workers with short-term disability benefits 34%  
**Union short-term disability benefits advantage 35%**

-Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009/2010

## POP CULTURE: UNION HISTORY FILMS AND BOOKS

The following are some entertaining movies and books about the Labor Movement. Feel free to explore in your spare time.

- ☛ Matewan (1987) is an American drama film written and directed by John Sayles, illustrating the events of a coal-miners' strike and an attempt to unionize in 1920 in Matewan, a small town in the hills of West Virginia. Based on a true story.
- ☛ The Molly Maguires (1970) directed by Martin Ritt. Set in the late 19th century Northeastern Pennsylvania (Jim Thorpe, Pa.), this social drama tells the story of an undercover detective sent to a coal mining community to expose a secret society of Irish-American miners battling exploitation at the hand of the owners. Partly inspired by a true story, the film portrays the rebellious leader of the Molly Maguires and his will to achieve social justice. Sean Connery stars.
- ☛ In The Man Who Hated Work and Loved Labor: The Life and Times of Tony Mazzocchi, author and labor expert Les Leopold recounts the life of the late Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union leader. Mazzocchi's struggle to address the unconscionable toxic exposure of tens of thousands of workers led to the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and included work alongside nuclear whistleblower Karen Silkwood. His noble, high-profile efforts forever changed working conditions in American industry-and made him enemy number one to a powerful few.
- ☛ Silkwood (1983) is the story of Karen Silkwood, a metallurgy worker at a plutonium processing plant who was purposefully contaminated, psychologically tortured and possibly murdered to prevent her from exposing blatant worker safety violations at the plant. Directed by Mike Nichols/starring Meryl Streep, Kurt Russell and Cher.
- ☛ Battle in Seattle (2007). In November of 1999, Seattle broke into a full-scale state of emergency as thousands of peaceful protestors gathered in resistance to the World Trade Organization. The city's mayor, a SWAT cop on the streets and his pregnant wife, and four demonstrators are caught in the crossfire as their lives intersect in the ensuing riots. Director Stuart Townsend merges actual footage of the devastating chaos with great performances.
- ☛ Ravenswood by Tom Juavich & Kate Bronfenbrenner is a story about USW Local 5668, and how they survived a twenty month battle with Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation, proving that in the end, organized labor can still win in this country through tremendous commitment and solidarity. Local 5668 did not accomplish this alone but with help from the International; together they joined forces to wage one of the most sophisticated and innovative contract campaigns in the history of American unions. Their success was due to having an educated and united membership.
- ☛ Norma Rae (1979). A young single mother and textile worker agrees to help unionize her mill despite the problems and the dangers involved. Directed by Martin Ritt and starring Sally Fields, Beau Bridges and Ron Liebman. Fields won the Best Actress Oscar for her performance.

- Jimmy Beidler

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The truth about "right to work"

Does anyone really think that companies like Merck enjoy giving benefits? The answer is, NO. Right to work legislation is the elimination of collective bargaining. It allows employers to reduce wages, raise health care costs or eliminate employer based health care and defined benefit pension plans, all without your say. Who is behind right to work legislation? This list should scare you!

Center for Union Facts-notorious industry lobbyist and PR flak Richard Berman is now attacking unions through his latest front group, in the same way he's fought against drunk driving laws, health regulations, consumer protections, and minimum wage increases for years.

National Right to Work Foundation and Committee- is the country's oldest organization

dedicated solely to destroying unions

U.S. Chamber of Commerce- the nation's most powerful business lobbying organization, has been campaigning against unions, fair labor practices, and legal protections for America's workers for nearly a century.

Public Service Research Foundation and Council-these small, established groups supply their more prominent anti-union colleagues with research, polling, and propaganda to fight against the right of teachers and other public employees to have unions.

For-Profit Unionbusters- these professional consultants or lawyers profit off their ability to manipulate labor law, advising employers on how to thwart union organizing drives or how to get rid of workers' unions.

The Nation's economy, over the last decade, has made it easier for employers to gain the upper hand in collective bargaining. While you may

believe that your hourly rate has increased because of annual raises, the fact is the dollar has continued to devalue and products and services costs have increased. If you think you have it bad now, imagine being an "at will" employee. The employer, for any reason they dream up, can fire you with no recourse. While I agree that we may struggle at times, I can't fathom a working environment without the Union's voice, your voice, and our continued fight for our rights.

- Phil Hughes



## USW Safety and Health Committee

The USW Safety and Health Committee is the original union site safety committee and has been in existence for well over twenty years. The following are its current members.

Chair/Paul Mercurio/x21009  
 Co-Chair/Debbie Yakscoe/x20185  
 Mark "Isy" Snyder/26595  
 Phil Hughes/26555  
 Robin Drace/x25779  
 Joe Radosin/26072  
 George Walsh/x37860  
 Dan Peterson/27723/pg 1926  
 Mike Gauger/x30443  
 Brad Hamilton/27723/pg 2596  
 Mike Conroy/bldg. pg. 528  
 Mike Minner/bldg. pg. 522  
 Toni Randell/x31175  
 Dave Klokis/x22017 or x35124  
 BJ Joshi/35484  
 Mark Flicker/x27391

## 2011 Holiday Schedule

- ◆ January 3 - New Year's Day
- ◆ January 17 - Martin Luther King's Birthday
- ◆ February 21 - President's Day
- ◆ April 22 - Good Friday
- ◆ May 27 - Friday before Memorial Day  
(Floating Holiday)
- ◆ May 30 - Memorial Day
- ◆ July 4 - Independence Day
- ◆ September 2 - Friday before Labor Day  
(Floating Holiday)
- ◆ September 5 - Labor Day
- ◆ November 24 - Thanksgiving Day
- ◆ November 25 - Day after Thanksgiving
- ◆ December 23 - Day before Christmas
- ◆ December 26 - Christmas Day

## Communications Action (CAT) Team

The new CAT team has been formed and has been tasked to distribute bi-monthly CAT letters with bullet points aimed at getting important information to the membership. There will be 1000 copies distributed site wide bearing the CAT letter background and the signature of the President. Please share copies in order to save the trees.

Chair/Mike Grabowski  
 Co-Chair/John Beidler  
 Paul Mercurio  
 Mike Gauger  
 Greg Wolfle  
 Debbie Yakscoe  
 George Walsh  
 George Boyd  
 Naim Moore  
 Toni Randell  
 Jim Hofmann  
 Tony Greene  
 Mike Barei  
 Jim Beidler  
 Allen Adams  
 Linda Bunt  
 Robin Drace  
 Dan Peterson  
 Mark Flicker  
 Kisha Byrd

## LOCAL 10-00086 OFFICER AND CONTACT LIST

### Officers

President Mark "Isy" Snyder  
 x26595/215 527 6265  
 Vice President Phil Hughes  
 x26555/215 913 8271  
 Plant Chairman Dan Bangert  
 x20184/215 527 7331  
 Recording Secretary Paul Mercurio  
 x21009/215 527 6283  
 Secretary Treasurer Frank Deitzel  
 x20187/215 527 6271  
 Financial Secretary Mike Gauger  
 215 880 3653

### Sergeant-at-Arms

Greg Wolfle - pager: 27723/ext.4423

### Guide

Toni Randell - x31175

### Trustees

George Walsh - x37860  
 George Boyd - x24592  
 John Beidler - x27395

### Board Members-at-Large

Debbie Yakscoe (Site Safety Rep)  
 x20185/215 872 1787  
 Jim Hofmann - x26605  
 Tony Greene - x35109  
 Mike Barei - x28147 or 35787  
 Naim Moore - x23681

### Plant Committee

Phil Hughes - x26555  
 Bill Panetta - x22520  
 Mike Grabowski - x20186  
 Frank Deitzel - x20187

- Roles and responsibilities of the officers are defined in our By-Laws. If you don't have a copy of our By-Laws contact your Shop Steward or the union office.

### NEWSLETTER STAFF

- Writer/Editor: Paul Mercurio
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- Writer/Contributor: Phil Hughes
- Webpage: Jeff Harrington