

USW LOCAL 2958'S NEWSLETTER

# FORGED TOGETHER



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DON'T ALWAYS SEE**

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UNITED STEELWORKERS  
**USW**  
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*July / August 2026*

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**Forged Together Newsletter Feedback**

**READER SURVEY**

We are looking for better ways to communicate happenings within our local, but also help build community amongst our members. We hope you find the content of the newsletter worth reading, and we are always looking for feedback. If anyone has general questions, articles they would like to submit, hobbies they want to highlight, comments, ideas of topics to cover, side hustles you want to promote, questions for officers, useful information, or even to volunteer, e-mail us at: [usw2958news@gmail.com](mailto:usw2958news@gmail.com)

**SCAN HERE**



**MONTHLY MEETING**

JULY 23  
 7:30AM  
 1:00PM  
 3:30PM

**MONTHLY MEETING**

AUGUST 20  
 7:30AM  
 1:00PM  
 3:30PM



**Communications Team:**  
 Zach Keller, Paul Reehling, & Austin Thorpe

**Contributors:** David Hunt, Eric Gibson, Paul Wines, Andrew Betzner, & Joe Fields


We're looking for more brothers and sisters to join our communications team! This group helps put together the newsletter, helps update the website and social media, and shares what's really happening on the floor and in the Local. You don't need special skills. Just a little time, a good eye for what matters to members, and a willingness to help. If you've ever thought, "I could help with that," this is your chance to jump in and make a difference. Email us at [usw2958@gmail.com](mailto:usw2958@gmail.com) to volunteer!!

**SUMMER SOLIDARITY PICNIC 2026**

**JULY 25TH 12-5P.M**

**The Zone** - 111 W. Southway Blvd, Kokomo

15' Inflatable Tropical Water Slide  
 Foam Party (2pm - 3:30pm)  
 Burgers, Hotdogs, Chips, Refreshments






ARTICLE BY:  
AUSTIN THORPE

## LOCAL UNION VIEWPOINTS:

# SOLIDARITY IN ACTION: WHAT BP WORKERS ARE FIGHTING FOR AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR US



USW Local 7-1 workers at BP in Whiting, IN, are currently locked out. As you can imagine, reports on the key issues and proposals are conflicting. Workers are unwilling to compromise on several critical issues, including BP's desire to eliminate more than 100 local jobs, near-universal pay cuts across job classifications, and the surrender of seniority and bargaining rights.

BP, on the other hand, states that it is seeking a six-year agreement with raises only over the first four years and a lump-sum bonus. The company claims that only 65 jobs are affected, primarily scaffolding and HVAC positions. The work is being shifted to specialized contractors. Affected workers would reportedly receive a lump-sum payment and, "in some cases up to" one year of pay. Some could potentially return to work for the contractors.

That's right, they want to eliminate union jobs and replace them with contractors to perform the same work that their own qualified workers are more than capable of doing. BP wants our brothers and sisters to accept a contract whose length outpaces the period covered by their raises. As if that weren't bad enough, they also want to transfer work to outside contractors rather than using the skilled workers who already perform these jobs. All of this is being sold under the guise of "greater, long-term stability."

How does this affect us? If you think this is an isolated situation, you're mistaken. A company's obligation is to its bottom line, not to its workforce. Corporations prioritize stockholders' and executives' gains over the well-being of our brothers and sisters. We are the ones supporting our families, protecting our livelihoods, and securing our futures. Companies want cheap labor, not skilled labor. They want the work done, but not necessarily done safely. These companies must be reminded that safety comes before profits, that cheap labor is rarely skilled, and skilled labor is never cheap. We are united.

This is the very fight and the very tactics that we must be prepared to confront: poor offers, stalling, and lockouts. We need to prepare for the worst, because we are in uncharted waters. We don't know Acerinox, but Acerinox doesn't know us either. We must stand together, remain united, and stay strong. We must show the true meaning of SOLIDARITY and UNITY!



↓ ARTICLE BY  
ZACH KELLER

One thing I saw when compiling the member survey results about our CBA, was that I'm not sure how many people have been through or know what a contract negotiation is like. We have many new brothers and sisters added since the adoption of the contract in 2023. In the beginning, like most members, I understood the basic idea of negotiations, but I didn't fully appreciate everything that happens behind the scenes. We saw the bargaining updates, and eventually a contract to vote on. What we often don't see is the amount of preparation that takes place before anyone ever sits down at the table. Management arrives with labor relations specialists, attorneys, financial analysts, and operational leaders who have reviewed every proposal in detail. Nothing is accidental, and every word in a contract can have consequences for years to come.

After attending a collective bargaining class taught by Robert Bruno through the University of Illinois Labor Education Program in USW's Summer School and then being a part of the bargaining team, I have a much better understanding of just how much more complicated the process really is. In collective bargaining, negotiations are not just about demands and counteroffers. They are about power, legal obligations, strategy, and understanding where an actual deal can be reached. What happens at the table is only part of the story.

Long before negotiations ever begin, a lot of work has happened. The union team identifies problem areas in the current agreement, reviews grievances, looks at language that has created confusion or loopholes, gathers feedback from members, and starts setting priorities. Every issue matters, but not every issue can be treated the same.

## LOCAL UNION VIEWPOINTS:

# WHAT THE MEMBERSHIP DOESN'T ALWAYS SEE



Members may wonder why the union doesn't "just demand" certain things. Sometimes the answer is simple, because the law treats some subjects differently, and forcing the wrong fight can waste bargaining energy that should be focused elsewhere.

Mandatory subjects are the bread-and-butter issues most members immediately think of: wages, hours, overtime, benefits, discipline, seniority, and working conditions. These are issues both sides are legally required to bargain over. Permissive subjects are different. They may be discussed, but neither side is legally required to bargain over them.

That may sound like legal technical jargon, but it matters. Understanding that distinction helps explain why some member suggestions, even great ones, may never become a serious bargaining issue. Sometimes that's the reason a proposal can't gain traction.

Some concepts I learned about and found were crucial to understanding was the Zone of Possible Agreement, sometimes called ZOPA and BATNA, an acronym for Best Alternative To Negotiated Agreement.

In everyday terms, ZOPA is the space where a realistic deal can actually happen. Let's say we need at least a 15% raise over the life of the CBA to recommend an agreement, and management's real ceiling is 8%, there is at least a possible range where movement could happen. But if management is stuck at 4% and the union can't realistically accept less than 12%, there's no overlap. At least not yet. That's where our leverage comes in.

A bargaining committee cannot create leverage just by making a strong argument across the table. Management watches the shop floor. They notice meeting attendance. They notice participation.

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They notice whether members are engaged, informed, and united, or frustrated, disconnected, and divided. They notice how many people are wearing union shirts and supporting the rallies. The strength of negotiations does not come only from the people sitting in the room. It comes from the people standing behind them.

BATNA, or "Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement." is what each side can do if no deal is reached. The strength of each side's BATNA heavily influences bargaining power. A union with 100% membership (like we have), all members financially prepared for a strike, and public support generally has a stronger BATNA than a union that is divided or unprepared. Likewise, a company that can easily absorb a work stoppage may have a stronger BATNA than one facing customer and staffing shortages.

Management's BATNA may include continuing operations under the status quo or other legal alternatives.

The stronger your BATNA, the stronger your position at the bargaining table.

Bruno also discussed bad faith bargaining, a term that is often misunderstood. Bad faith isn't making a bad offer or saying "no" to union proposals. It occurs when one side goes through the motions of bargaining without genuinely trying to reach an agreement, though proving that can be much harder than many members realize.

One thing that really changed how I think about negotiations is understanding how much of the work happens away from the main table.

Members often picture bargaining as constant face-to-face debate between union and management. In reality, a lot of time gets spent in caucuses, dissecting language, debating strategy, evaluating and reviewing legality of proposals, and deciding whether an emotional response helps or hurts the bigger picture, as well as crafting counter-proposals.

Sometimes what looks like "nothing happening" from the outside is actually where the most important discussions are happening.

Another challenge is communication during negotiations. Members understandably want updates, but bargaining positions often change as discussions progress. When an early proposal or wage figure becomes public, people can begin to view it as an entitlement rather than a starting point. If that number later changes during negotiations, it can feel as though something was taken away, even though no agreement had been reached. That's one reason bargaining committees often balance transparency with the need to preserve flexibility at the table.

Bargaining can be painfully slow. That's often intentional. Management may delay to create frustration. The union may slow things down to avoid rushing into bad language. Long sessions do not always mean progress, and short sessions do not always mean failure. The final agreement is almost never a perfect document. Negotiations are about priorities, tradeoffs, and deciding where to spend your bargaining capital. Winning one major issue may mean giving ground elsewhere.

Negotiations are not something that happen *for* the membership. They happen *because of* the membership. The committee may be at the table, but the real power behind that table is the willingness of workers to stay involved and stand together when it matters.





ARTICLE BY:  
PAUL WINES

## LOCAL UNION VIEWPOINTS:

# SAVE OUR ERT

For 30 years, the Haynes International Emergency Response Team has stood ready to protect lives, property, and the environment. The question today is not whether the ERT is committed to its mission, the question is whether those controlling our budget are equally committed to protecting the people who risk their lives to carry it out.

The Haynes International Emergency Response Team is not asking for luxury items. We are asking for the tools required to do the job we were trained to do safely. If this team is allowed to fail because of neglected equipment, deferred replacements, and inadequate funding, then the dismantling of the ERT will not be the result of a lack of volunteers, it will be the result of a lack of commitment from those who control the resources needed to keep it alive.

"The greatest threat to the future of the ERT is not a chemical spill, or a medical emergency; it is the continued failure to invest in the people and equipment that stand ready to respond to them."

Over the years, the ERT has grown into one of the most highly trained emergency response teams in our industry. Every member volunteers their time to meet the demanding standards required for membership. From Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) certification to the highest levels of HAZMAT Technician training, our members dedicate countless hours to developing the skills needed to protect life, property, and the environment. These certifications and training programs are verified through the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, ensuring that our team meets the highest professional standards.

Yet despite the dedication, training, and commitment of our members, the greatest threat to the future of this team is not a chemical spill, or a medical emergency. It is the continued lack of financial support for the people and equipment expected to respond to those emergencies.

Over the past several years, we have lost members, lost training opportunities, and now have even lost our long-time training and meeting room. On June 17, 2026, we



we were informed that the room we have used for more than a decade will be reassigned as office space. While these losses are disappointing, they pale in comparison to the growing issue of equipment replacement and modernization.

For more than twenty years, I have watched this team slowly be asked to do more with less. The concern is no longer whether we can continue to operate today. The concern is whether we will be able to operate safely tomorrow.

Our medical response carts are approaching two decades of service. They spend weeks out of operation awaiting repairs and often sit exposed to the weather. Instead of replacement, they are repeatedly patched together in hopes of extending their life a little longer.

Our HAZMAT response truck, purchased with over 100,000 miles, has been kept operational through years of repairs and improvisation. There have been incidents when the truck was needed, yet it could not respond. Equipment had to be unloaded and transported by medical carts because the primary response vehicle could not perform its intended function.

These vehicles are not luxuries. They are not status symbols. They are mission-critical equipment that allows trained responders to reach emergencies quickly and safely.

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Consider what it has taken to obtain even the most basic resources:

- Two years to secure updated medical training books.
- Four years to obtain approval for replacement tires.
- Five years to receive a weatherproof storage box to protect medical supplies.

Meanwhile, the equipment we rely upon continues to age. Some of our SCBAs are nearly thirty years old. The manufacturer has lost NFPA certification for those units, replacement parts are increasingly difficult to find, and responders are left searching secondary markets simply to keep them operational.

This raises a question that every employee, manager, and executive should ask themselves:

*Would you trust your life to equipment that has been pieced together for decades?*

*Would you want the person responding to save your spouse, your child, or your coworker to arrive with equipment that should have been replaced years ago?*

The members of the ERT accepted the risks associated with emergency response when they volunteered. What we did not volunteer for was the unnecessary risk created by outdated equipment, deferred maintenance, and chronic underfunding.

The Haynes International Emergency Response Team is not asking for luxury items. We are asking for the tools required to do the job we were trained to do safely. If this team is eventually dismantled, it will not be because volunteers stopped stepping forward. It will be because the commitment to support them stopped coming from those responsible for providing the resources they need.

The question is no longer whether the ERT is willing to protect this company. The question is whether the company is willing to protect its ERT.



**EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE  
TEAM**



# METAL MAYHEM

LOCAL 2958'S EDITORIAL  
CARTOON FEATURE





Members considering a run for local union office should be aware of the meeting attendance requirement. Under the USW Constitution, candidates for Local Union Officer or Grievance Committee positions must have **attended at least one-third (1/3) of the regular union meetings held during the 24 months immediately preceding the month in which the election is conducted.** Certain absences may be excused and counted toward eligibility, including union business, work schedules, military service, illness, jury duty, or a death in the immediate family. Members seeking an excused absence will be required to provide documentation. The Election Head Teller will review attendance records and any applicable excuses when determining candidate eligibility.



ARTICLE BY  
PAUL REEHLING

### UNION HISTORY SPOTLIGHT

## EARLY TRADES UNION ORGANIZING IN 1837



The year 1837 was a pivotal moment in the history of labor organizing, as early trades unions began to influence worker solidarity and shape the future of collective action. During this time period skilled workers faced challenges brought about by industrial growth and economic setbacks.

Craftsmen, including carpenters, printers, shoemakers, and tailors, faced increasing threats to their livelihoods as machine production gained ground. In 1837 the United States faced a major crisis, unemployment was very high, wages dropped, and working conditions deteriorated. Workers endured longer hours, dangerous workplaces, and little protection, and they started looking for a solution. During this time many immigrants came to the US as well making it harder and harder to get a job as the competition for each job increased. Workers needed help, they needed a voice. This helped bring trades unions to the forefront giving them unity and a way to spark action.

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Early trades unions were formed by skilled workers seeking to safeguard their crafts and negotiate for better conditions. Unlike the unions of today, these organizations were often small and trade-specific. The unions of 1837 brought new organizational vigor and a focus on collective bargaining.

The General Trades Union of New York became influential in the years leading up to 1837. Bringing together tailors, printers, carpenters, and hatters, the GTU set a precedent for wider labor cooperation. By 1837, similar unions began to form in other major cities, reflecting a growing sense of solidarity and the spread of union organizing nationwide

Trades unions in 1837 came up with many strategies to advance their goals. Strikes were a primary tactic, used to protest wage cuts, excessive hours, and unsafe conditions. These unions started to coordinate their actions and were able to support their members during work stoppages. Other organized efforts included petitioning city councils, lobbying for legislation, and finding help for workers facing unemployment.

Union leaders knew that communication would help their cases and they needed public support, so they published newspapers and pamphlets to promote unity and bring worker grievances to light. They held public rallies and meetings to bring workers closer together and to allow them to share their experiences.

Unionization didn't come easily. Employers resisted unions and often used tactics like using strikebreakers or blacklisting workers to fight them. They even threatened

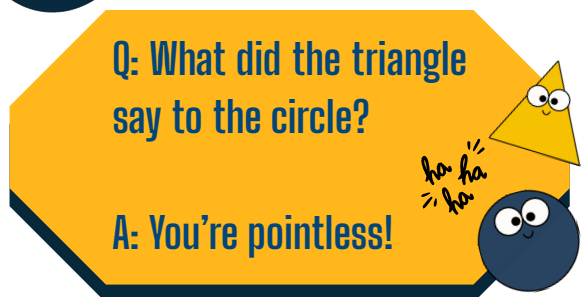
legal action and some viewed unions as illegal conspiracies. Disagreements within these early unions caused division and hindered the growth of unions as well.

But unions persevered. Strong leadership and member dedication helped sustain organizing efforts, setting important precedents for future labor movements and demonstrating that collective action could bring real benefits even amid adversity.

Organizing in 1837 resulted in some tangible gains such as wage increases, shorter hours, and improved working conditions. Union activity also raised public awareness of labor issues, sparking debates about worker rights and employer responsibilities.

These early Trades unions set the stage for later organizations and Unions, showing that together you can fight for your rights as workers much better than separately. This time period helped shape labor law and led to the recognition of basic workers' rights. There was resistance but perseverance proved affective.

We are able to fight for our rights and benefits today because of those first trades unions. They set the stage for what we have today and even though the battle between worker and employee still exists it is something that unions continue to do for us every day.





ARTICLE BY  
AUSTIN THORPE

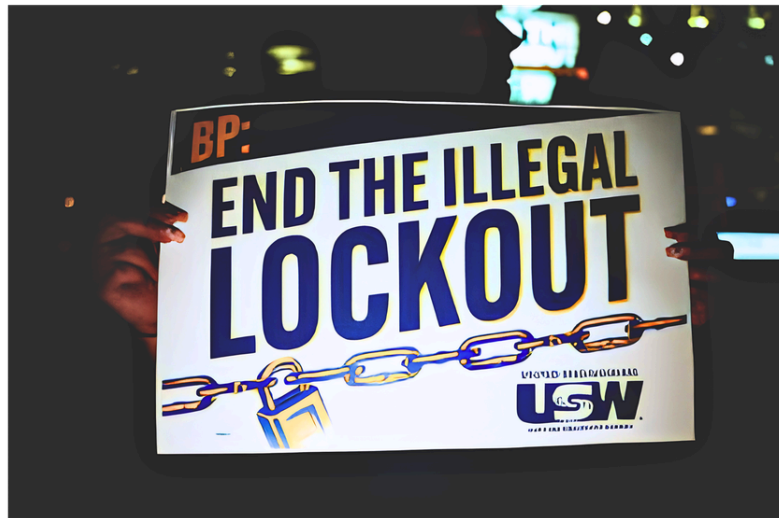
## UNION KNOWLEDGE SPOTLIGHT

# WHAT MAKES A LOCKOUT ILLEGAL? KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

So lately we've been hearing the term "Illegal Lockout" thrown around in ongoing contract negotiations of BP (3 months & ongoing) & NISPCO (April 2nd - May 1st). Well, what is it? What makes a lockout legal vs illegal? How much different is it from a strike? What are the repercussions of wrongfully locking out and striking?

What is it? Under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), lockouts are generally a legal "economic weapon" only after good-faith bargaining reaches a genuine impasse on the whole contract. During a lockout, the employer may hire temporary replacement workers to perform the work that the locked-out employees would normally do. The scope of a lockout can vary depending on the specific circumstances of the labor dispute and the employer's strategy.

Why would a company commit to a lockout if it is similar to a strike? A lockout can be seen as advantageous for an employer because it puts the ball in their court, allowing them to control the timing of the work stoppage. It may also allow them to continue operating the business with replacement workers. In contrast, a strike initiated by the employees may occur at an inconvenient time for the employer and may completely halt



operations. So while the results are essentially the same, the one in control is what makes the difference.

What makes a lockout legal? The employer must be "bargaining in good faith". Therefore, they must be genuinely negotiating with the union. It must be used as a tool to gain concessions in negotiations, and NOT to destroy the union. The lockout is generally initiated after negotiations reach a stalemate or the contract has expired. Lastly, the employer can hire temporary replacements, generally not permanent ones.

What makes a lockout illegal? If a lockout is used to evade bargaining, this

would not be bargaining in good faith; If the lockout is used to discourage union activity; If a lockout is initiated before an impasse has been reached, this would also not be bargaining in good faith; If the lockout goes against the lockout terms in the contract (if there are lockout terms in the contract).

Earlier, I talked about what makes a lockout legal. In the article, I mentioned that the employer must be bargaining in good faith. However, what does that mean exactly? Bargaining in good faith is the legal obligation that both the company and the union have under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).

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The NLRB says employers violate good-faith bargaining when they do things like:

- Make unilateral changes to wages, benefits, staffing, or working conditions before reaching a full agreement or a genuine impasse — unless the union is blocking progress, there’s a true emergency, or it’s a small recurring event (like an annual review) where they gave the union proper notice and a chance to bargain.
- Refuse to meet with the union at reasonable times and intervals.
- Surface bargaining or “piecemeal” bargaining — pretending to negotiate while stalling, refusing relevant information, or not seriously trying to reach a deal.
- Refuse to provide information the union requests that is relevant to bargaining or our terms of employment.
- Make changes to the contract without the union’s agreement during its term (unless the union clearly waived its rights or the change is truly minor).
- Bypass the union and deal directly with employees on bargaining issues (they can share accurate info about proposals, but not negotiate around us).
- Insist on illegal or permissive subjects to the point of impasse (e.g., trying to force the union to drop unfair labor practice charges or change internal union matters).
- Declare impasse too early or implement new terms without a real deadlock on the whole contract

*Special Rules on Lockouts and Contract Changes*

A lockout is only legal after genuine good-faith bargaining reaches a true impasse. Employers cannot lock out workers:

- To pressure the union into accepting an illegal proposal.
- Over a permissive (non-mandatory) subject.
- Before proper 60-day notice (90 days in healthcare) and mediation notice.
- If they haven’t made a serious effort to reach agreement.

This is why the USW at NIPSCO and BP is challenging those lockouts — they argue the companies did not bargain in good faith and improperly declared an impasse. Bottom line for our local: Good-faith bargaining protects our right to have a real voice at the table. With two years left on our contract and clear survey results showing wages, health insurance, and staffing as top priorities, we need every member paying attention. Solidarity and awareness are our best tools heading into the next round.

**DO NOT BUY**  
**BP GAS**

**STAND WITH USW LOCAL 7-1**

These stations do not get fuel from BP -  
BUY FROM THESE:

Meijer ~ Costco ~ Kroger ~ Sam’s Club ~ Casey’s ~ Shell ~ Mobil ~ Marathon ~ Texaco ~ Chevron ~ Exxon ~ Kwik Trip ~ Love’s Travel






**DON'T FORGET!** **SOLIDARITY FRIDAY!!**



Wear your union shirts on Fridays!! Show management that we stand as one on issues that affect all workers. Show them the power of the people!!

**Raffle Results**

**May 2026**  
**Jim Elliott**  
 (Won \$599 prize, jackpot restarter at \$100)



**June 2026**  
**Mindy Fowler**  
 (not present, prize rolled over)

*"MAKE THE SCENE, AND JULYBE LEAVE WITH SOME GREEN"*

**SUMMER SOLIDARITY EVENT!!**

**July 25<sup>th</sup> - Noon to 5PM**  
 The Zone - 111 Southway Blvd.



**New Women of Steel Shirts**

COMING SOON!!

Regular Unisex & Women's V-Neck

FRONT



NO MATTER WHAT THE FIGHT,  
 DON'T BE Ladylike  
 - MOTHER JONES



BACK



*Happy Retirement*

*Ryan McClish*  
 WG 8- Clock # 26810  
 11 years of service

HONORING THE BROTHERS & SISTERS WHO BUILT THIS PLACE AND NOW MOVE INTO WELL-EARNED RETIREMENT.

