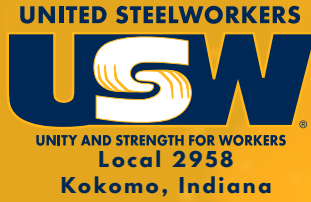


September - October 2025

Volume 14 ~ Our Anniversary & Labor Day Special



# Forged Together

## USW 2958 Newsletter



Communications Team:  
Zach Keller, Andrew Betzner, & Paul Reehling  
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### LOCAL HISTORY: USW LOCAL 2958 - SIX DECADES OF SOLIDARITY AND SERVICE *By Zach Keller*

For 60 years now, United Steelworkers Local 2958 in Kokomo has been a force for fairness, solidarity, and progress. Born from hard-fought organizing drives and a landmark first contract in 1965, the Local has stood strong through strikes, presidential intervention, and groundbreaking achievements on the global stage.

After several failed attempts, workers at Haynes finally organized and on September 29, 1965, Local 2958 ratified its very first agreement, winning a contract that delivered grievance rights, seniority protections, and better wages. A year later, the union faced its first major test, a strike that drew national attention and led to President Johnson invoking the Taft-Hartley Act to order workers back to the job. That moment marked Local 2958 as a serious force in labor. The 1966 strike remains a proud part of Local 2958 lore and a testament to our unity and resolve. Proof that even the President of the United States had to take notice when Kokomo's steelworkers stand up for what is right.

# SIX DECADES OF SOLIDARITY AND SERVICE

Continued

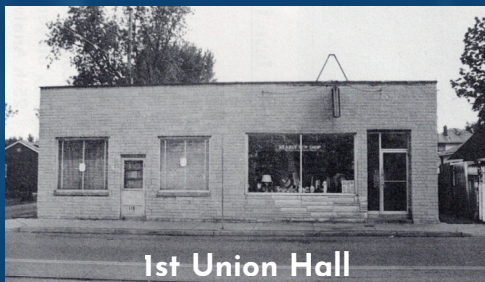
From Apollo to the Mars rovers, Local 2958 members have played a key role in America's space program. Our high-performance alloys have flown on Apollo rockets, Space Shuttles, and deep-space missions. Even today, our metals are used by NASA, SpaceX, and Blue Origin. When astronauts walk the stars, they do it with our work. Lady Liberty is standing in New York City with our help.

We also remember the members we've lost over the years. Tragedies like the 1966 explosion, Seth Badger's more recent accident, and other on-site incidents remind us that safety isn't just policy, it's personal. Those names on our wall are a permanent reminder of why we push for safer conditions and why we look out for each other.

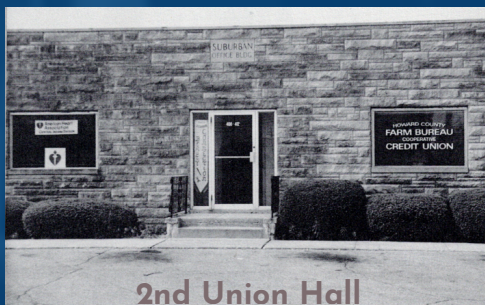
Local 2958 isn't just a union, it's a family. With multi-generational legacies, many of our members have watched their children, and even grandchildren, follow in their footsteps in our local. It's not uncommon to hear someone on the shop floor say their father or grandfather "taught them the trade" or recall stories of a relative on the picket line in the 60's or during the lockout back in the day. These blood bonds strengthen our union bonds and remind us that our fight for fair wages, safe conditions, and respect on the job is about protecting our families and building a better future for the next generation. We carry forward the values and lessons of those who came before, and we honor them by passing on a thriving union to those who come after.

As we celebrate this history, we do so not in nostalgia alone, but with renewed resolve for the future. New markets, new technologies, new challenges, and even new owners, await us. The world will continue to change, but one thing will not, the unwavering solidarity of Local 2958. The same spirit that secured that first contract and that guided us through every challenge since still burns brightly. It lives in the journeyman who proudly shares his knowledge with an apprentice; in the safety committee member who refuses to cut corners; in the retiree who stops by the hall to make sure today's members know their legacy; and in the newest hire who signs up as a union member on day one, eager to carry the torch forward.

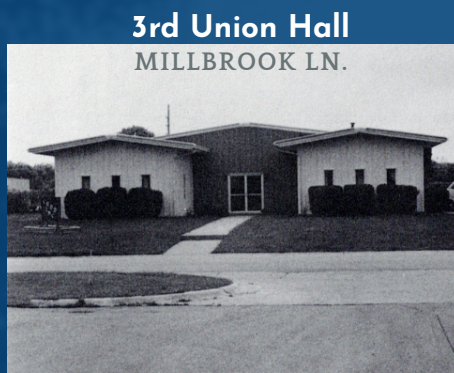
Brothers and sisters, we have so much to be proud of. Our union has truly made a difference for our families, for our community, and even for our country's history. So here's to Local 2958 on this celebratory occasion of 60 years of solidarity. To the many achievements that these years contain, and the countless acts of courage and kindness that never made the newspapers but have made all the difference. May we continue to stand united, honor our legacy, and shape our own destiny for many years to come.



**1st Union Hall**  
DEFENBAUGH ST.



**2nd Union Hall**  
SOUTHWAY BLVD.

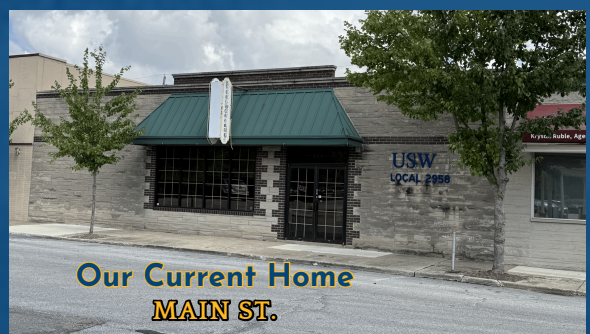


**3rd Union Hall**  
MILLBROOK LN.

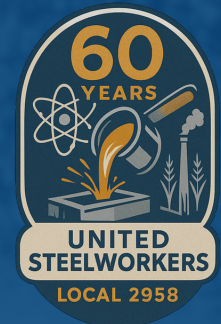


**4th Union Hall**  
MILLBROOK LN.

*Union Halls*  
OF THE PAST



**Our Current Home**  
MAIN ST.



# Our Labor Day Special Edition

By Staff

Labor Day is more than a long weekend or the unofficial end of summer. It is a day to recognize the people who built this country and keep it running. The strength of labor is in every bridge, every piece of steel, every product made by skilled hands. It is also in the unity we show for one another. The eight hour day, weekends, and safe workplaces did not appear by chance. They were fought for and won through years of sacrifice. On Labor Day, we honor that history, remember those who came before us, and recommit ourselves to carrying their work forward for the generations that will follow.

In this edition, every article is centered on labor and Labor Day. We felt it was important to dedicate this issue entirely to the meaning of work, our history and the history of the movement, and the challenges and struggles we still face and that still lie ahead. You will find stories that remind us where we came from, tributes to those who gave so much, and reflections on what solidarity really means in today's world. Our hope is that this issue will not only honor the holiday but also spark conversation and pride in the power of working people.



## LOCAL SOLIDARITY: All The Small Things

By Andrew Betzner

From July's issue you may remember the article, "Man in the Mirror" that showcased the small steps you can take to strengthen our union. By no means was it a complete and definitive list. Consider this the remix.

### **Never Let a Supervisor Speak Ill of a Sibling**

You would think management would be above gossip and speaking bad about someone behind their back. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As an "authority role" their opinion carries added weight. I've witnessed a supervisor convince an entire crew that someone coming to their shift was no good, and untrainable. He turned out to be one of the fastest learners I've ever met. It's not enough to just ignore them. If their behavior is left unchecked it will continue.

### **Quit Speaking Ill of Your Own Siblings**

ALL of us can do better with this, myself included. Rumors are just that, and talking crap about someone behind someone's back has never solved any problems. I know a few of the older guys here have mentioned some questionable methods they used to use back in the day to solve grudges, but today we're going to just go with "have tough conversations with your co-workers." If you have a problem with someone then have the intestinal fortitude and talk to them about it. No need to get aggressive, yell, scream, or curse. Meet face to face and squash that beef. Leave that grade school gossip to the kids.

### **Thank Your Committeeperson**

Now, I ain't saying you got to throw them a damn pizza party, but an occasional nice word goes a long way. When I was a rep at my previous job, some days it seemed like my main task was being a human punching bag. People would come at me all day about how we're failing, and that we weren't doing enough. In their frustration with what the company was doing people would often misdirect their anger at me.

They don't always see what's going on in the background. They don't see that committee person's personal time spent digging through the contract to find the language to help their case. They don't see the legwork that goes into

investigating a grievance. They don't see the 10 other grievances and endless missed calls they need to return. I made it about a year until I got burnt out. Sometimes committeepeople do drop the ball. Sometimes we don't win even though we're in the right, but a lot of times they do. Be sure to show some love when they do.

### **Wear That Swag**

Most of you have been around long enough to have acquired at least a couple union shirts. Show your pride and wear them! Wearing USW apparel and hardhat stickers sends a message to your co-workers and management that you recognize and support the lifestyle and benefits being part of a collective grants you. You are an integral part of the labor movement. Just like with your favorite sports team or alma mater, wear that union swag with pride!

### **Speak Up When Something Is Wrong**

Too often someone will complain about a workplace condition or an issue they wish the union would focus on, but never relay it to the right people. How is your boss supposed to know about a safety issue and how is your committee person to fix a recurring contract violation if they are never made aware of it? One of the most powerful benefits we have as a union member is the ability to speak truth to power without the fear of retaliation.

Tell your boss about that safety issue or call them out for that contract violation. If they won't listen, go to your committee person. If your issue still isn't being addressed appropriately then head to the union hall. Conversations with Joe the welder and Brittanie in the breakroom are important; but if you want anything to change, you need to speak truth to power.

## ***This Union Is You - Solidarity Isn't Just a Slogan***

*By Eric Gibson - New Contributor*

Solidarity...we use this word, we hear it from our co-workers, and we see it on shirts. We talk about it so often that we become numb to what it means. I see daily, the opposite of solidarity. I'm sure you have seen the person who runs to the boss to complain. The person who complains about union dues or how the union does nothing. We all have seen one and we all let their behavior go unchecked. Shame on us. In this article I hope to define what solidarity is and what we can do to overcome those folks who want to tear it down.

Solidarity is simple. It means standing by your union brothers and sisters on matters that involve work. We don't all agree on politics, religion, guns, or whatever the hot button topic of the day is. All those issues are used to keep us apart and end in fighting. If they can keep us divided they can impose their will. We see it in every aspect of our lives today. We can not control decisions made in the world. We can, however, influence every aspect of our jobs. As much as management likes the appearance of power, they draw their paychecks off the backs of you and me. No workforce, no paychecks for anyone.

So you may be asking yourself, "How do we build the solidarity that shifts the power dynamics at work?" Great question! This is our union. That is you and me. I have listened to my union brothers and sisters talk about our union as if it's a third party. This could not be further from the truth. If you are reading this, the union is you. I have listened to my union siblings complain about dues and how they are spent. I have also noticed those same people are never at a meeting or event to ask questions. I have seen the rat on the floor who thinks running to management might get him something, not knowing that there isn't anything he can get except what the union has bargained. I have watched folks who are out for themselves and turn on the very people who are trying to help them.

I believe that everyone deserves a second chance. If you are one of the folks who run to the boss, trash talk the union, or are just out for yourself please reach out. I know our jobs get frustrating. I know we don't always see things the same. I know the bosses make decisions that seem to have no thought behind them. I get how easy it is to become bitter. I also know there are people in our union who want the best for the person they are working with. When we stand together, we are stronger. When you are feeling overwhelmed: you are not alone. Talk to a committeeman, EAP, or just call the hall.



So as union siblings, reach out to those folks and bring them back in the fold. If they continue down a road that tears us down, then we have to stop it. Ignorance is one thing, but the blatant destructive exploits of our brothers and sisters is another. If the behavior continues, they must be frozen out. There are some jobs that require us to communicate to do the job. That should be the only communication they receive. Don't talk to them about anything else. Don't eat lunch with them. If it's not necessary to complete a job, then they are a ghost. All is not lost. They will get the point that their negativity doesn't belong and will not be tolerated. If they then decide to join us on the winning side, we applaud them and welcome them back. A lot of us have a long time to go until we retire. It seems like being shut out from the people you spend the majority of your time with would be pretty miserable.

So we have shut down or shut out the negative people: what's next? Building solidarity isn't hard. Have your union brothers and sisters back. Plan a pitch-in for your department. Attend union meetings. Join NextGen, Women of Steel, or Vets of Steel. Join in on shirt day. Wear the stickers. Stand up for the person next to you. Talk to your committeeman. The list can go on. We must look out for each other. I challenge each one of us to address our quarrelsome brothers and sisters this week. Then reach out to someone you might not know at work. Small things make a difference. We are called brothers and sisters for a reason...Let's build our power TOGETHER and remember; When We Fight, WE WIN

## Give me a WARNing!

By Andrew Betzner

In pursuit of providing employees advance notice of layoffs, congress passed the Workers Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act of 1989, known as the WARN Act. I'll preface this by saying do not read into this as anything other than for educational purposes. I don't want to hear any crazy talk about the newsletter saying a layoff is coming, or that we're covering it because one is likely. It's purely educational. Now eyes forward and sit up straight. Class is in session.

Under the WARN Act, employers are required to provide a minimum of 60 days notice before a plant closure affecting at least 50 employees, discontinuing an operating unit affecting 50 or more (ex. discontinuing bar product), or massive layoffs affecting at least 1/3rd of the worksite. This law only applies to companies with at least 100 employees. Employees with less than 6 months on the job are not included, neither are part-time employees logging 20 hours or less.

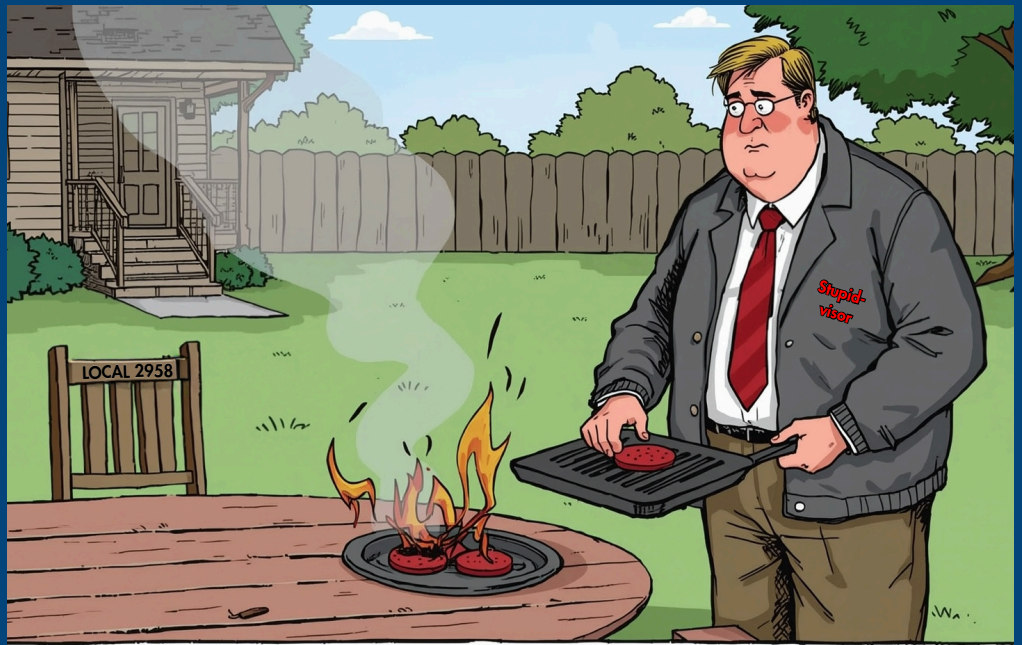
Unlike some labor laws, this one has teeth. Employers found not in compliance are required to provide back pay and benefits for each affected worker. Employers may also face civil charges up to \$500 a day for not notifying local government. Exemptions can be made due to faltering companies, unforeseen business circumstances, and natural disasters.

With the rapidly shifting world economy and technology advances, laws like the WARN Act are paramount. Sixty days' notice could be the difference between missing a loan payment, or securing a new job and keeping your family financially secure. We must be vigilant to ensure laws protecting labor, and your family stay on the books.



# METAL MAYHEM

LOCAL 2958'S EDITORIAL CARTOON FEATURE



“Without labor, nothing works.”

## Funny How Raises Appear When Unions Are Near

By Zach Keller

Ever notice how companies “find” extra money to hand out raises the moment workers start talking about unions? It happened with Tesla when the UAW won its huge raises recently. It’s like they’ve been sitting on a pile of cash, hoping nobody would notice, until collective action gets serious. Suddenly, there’s an announcement: “We’re giving everyone a raise because we value our team.” Sure, that’s the reason. Truth is, unions cause the rising tide that lifts all boats.

Here’s the truth: those raises aren’t a gift; they’re a reaction. Employers don’t hand out pay bumps because they feel generous, they do it because they’re worried about what happens if workers organize. And let’s be honest, they’re not giving you everything they could. These raises are just enough to quiet the noise and keep things business as usual.

Think of it like this: a company is walking around with a sack of cash. They toss a few pennies your way, hoping you’ll take them and stop asking questions. But the real money? That only comes when workers band together and demand their fair share. Collective bargaining doesn’t just unlock the wallet; it shows you how much was there all along. So, if your nonunion friends are weighing their options, let them know: that raise they’re getting? It’s just a taste of what a union can win. If your employer says, “We can’t afford it,” remember that these sudden raises prove otherwise.



The money is always there, it just takes organized workers to make them share it. So the next time someone tries to tell you unions aren’t worth it, just point to the evidence: raises, better benefits, and workplace improvements don’t happen by accident. They happen because workers make them happen. And if their management starts tossing out small raises to keep people happy, tell them to aim higher; because the real gains come when workers band together, make demands, and refuse to settle for less.

Unions: showing companies where they “misplaced” your paycheck since forever.

# Women of Steel - Going Through Changes

By Andrew Betzner

Women of Steel will be starting a new chapter with new Co-Chairs, Brittanie Forsthoffer and Lisa Bryant, both of WG2. When asked why co-chairs they simply responded "We simply work better together!" - a bond formed from years of working together on the 100 MKW mill.

Initially, WOS focused on solidarity with the community. New leadership would like to focus on group cohesion, first. "First and foremost we want to create solidarity in WOS. Only a little over 10% of our local are women and we'd like that 10% to have 100% involvement! Once we have solidarity within the ranks we will reach to the community again."

Their current ideas for building solidarity include a paint and sip event, as well as a self defense class at the hall. Going back to the committee's original priority of helping the community, subsequent projects discussed include a book drive to stock the free libraries in town, and a back to school drive.

Their goal is to go around and introduce themselves to all the women at the plant. If you see Brittanie or Lisa out and about don't hesitate to reach and offer up your thoughts on how you'd like to see the committee grow. The local would like to take one last moment to thank the previous leaders of WOS for their hard work and effort to relaunch this committee. From all of us at Forged Together, I'd like to congratulate Lisa and Brittanie on their new roles and wish them the best of luck!



# Your Free Firewood Comes at a Price

By Zach Keller

Politicians love tax cuts like a dog loves chasing cars; recklessly and with no idea what to do if they actually catch one. They'll promise tax cuts for everyone: Service workers? No tax on tips! Retirees? No tax on Social Security! Police? Firefighters? Active-duty military? All free of taxes! It's like an infomercial where everything's free, just don't ask them how they're going to pay for it. "Tariffs!" they shout, which is economic-speak for things like having a cookout and charging people a fee for beers they brought themselves, next time, they just won't show up.

Here's the trick: tax cuts are sold as extra cash in your pocket but delivered as fewer public services. Schools? Defunded. Affordable housing? See ya. Health care? Maybe try a GoFundMe. It's the classic bait-and-switch. Politicians act like they're giving you a gift when really they're just burning your house down and handing you the scraps and ashes in a branded tote bag labeled "FREE FIREWOOD."

And this isn't some big ideological stance; it's math for rich people. Spending millions to buy politicians who'll save you billions is a better return on investment than Bitcoin or stocks.

But here's where unions come in. While politicians promise the world and deliver crumbs, unions exist to give workers a seat at the B table. Strong unions fight for better wages, benefits, and working conditions; things that actually

improve your life instead of just sounding nice on the campaign trail. Want good schools, affordable housing, and real healthcare? Unions are the folks who'll fight the corporations to make sure they actually pay for those things instead of disappearing into corporate subsidies and tax breaks for billionaires and their cronies.

Unions also make it harder for politicians to pull off the tax-cut scam. When workers are organized, they can demand transparency and accountability, not just from employers but from policymakers too. A unionized workforce, especially in the government and public sector, can push back on policies that gut public services in the name of "government" while funneling cash to the rich. It's a lot harder to sell a bad deal when millions of people are collectively saying, "Hey, we see through your nonsense, and we're not buying it."

So if you're tired of watching politicians chop up your house and call it firewood, think about supporting unions and the people whom unions support. Organized labor has been the backbone of every fight for fair wages, decent public services, and a system that works for everyone, not just the folks who can afford to buy their own politicians. Union participation doesn't just strengthen your paycheck; it strengthens your community, making sure everyone gets a piece of the pie, not just the crumbs. In short: when unions get stronger, the "it's either the cherry or the sundae" question gets a lot easier. You can have both.

# LOCAL 2958 CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**September 1**



**Union Hall Closed for Labor Day**



**September 6**

**Combined Next Gen & Women of Steel Meeting**  
@2958 Union Hall  
1:00 pm



**September 18**

**Regular Membership Meetings**  
7:30 am  
1:00 pm  
3:30 pm

**October 4**

**Combined Next Gen & Women of Steel Meeting**  
@2958 Union Hall  
1:00 pm



**October 19**

**Regular Membership Meetings**  
7:30am  
1:00pm  
3:30pm

## Raffle Results



July -  
*Eric Gabriel*  
(not present, prize rolled over)

August -  
*Taylor Lowe*  
(not present, prize rolled over)

— HAPPY —  
*Retirement*



30 YEARS

**PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE INJURED AND FALLEN EMPLOYEES AT CLAIRTON MILL**



**CLAIRTON STRONG**  
STEELWORKERS LOCAL 1557




**CLAIRTONSTRONG.ITEMORDER.COM**

# In Memory of Our Brother, Bill

By Zach Keller

We mourn the passing of our fellow union brother, Bill London, who recently retired and was the longest-serving member in our local's history. With nearly 60 years of dedication, Bill took pride not just in the work itself, but in mentoring the next generation, passing down skills, knowledge, and values that can't be found in a manual.

More than his record-setting years of service, Bill will be remembered for his wit and his diligence to his job. He could be found plugging away in R-1 or R-18 seven days a week almost up until the day he retired. He was wonderful at giving out nicknames (as some will attest) and could often be found chatting up the ladies all over the plant. The quiet strength he showed on tough days, the steady hand when things got hectic, and he always had your back. He didn't just help build this local, he helped shape it, from even before its formation. From the 1960s to the 2020s, Bill was the constant for generations of union brothers and sisters.

We send our deepest condolences to his family and friends. Rest easy, brother. Your legacy lives on in every one of us who had the privilege to work beside you.



# The Wagner Act of 1935

By Paul Reehling

The Wagner Act of 1935, officially known as the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), is a landmark piece of American labor legislation that was put into place to protect the rights of employees and employers, encourage collective bargaining, and stop certain labor and management practices that could harm the general welfare of workers, businesses, and the U.S. economy. The Wagner Act was put together by Senator Robert F. Wagner. It established the legal right of most workers to organize or join labor unions and to bargain collectively with their employers. It also created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which works to watch over and enforce labor laws and ensure fair labor practices.

The Wagner Act applies to most private sector employers and employees, some exceptions are, government workers, agricultural laborers, and domestic workers. Under the Wagner Act employees have the right to form and/or join labor union and bargain collectively with their employer with representatives that they have chosen. The Act also does not allow employers to practice any "unfair labor practices",

including discriminating against employees that are in or trying to form a union, refusing to bargain in good faith, as well as other unfair acts.

The Wagner Act strengthens the ability of employees to band together collectively with their employees making sure that negotiations are fair and transparent. Finally, the NLRB was formed to investigate any labor disputes, they conduct union elections, and the are able to remedy unfair labor practices.

For 90 years now, the Wagner Act has played a pivotal role in shaping the American labor movement, empowering workers to seek better wages, hours, and working conditions, and helping to balance power between labor and management. This is just another important part of our history that I feel we all, as union members, should know about and understand.

# What I Learned Phone Banking

By Andrew Betzner



## Labor Activism Spotlight



On April 5th, I volunteered to phone bank for Starbucks Workers United (SBWU). Phone banking is a way for organizations to inform, conduct polling, and gather contact information of interested individuals. Using an automatic dialer and a script, phone bankers are connected to a list of people or locations to be canvassed. Our goal for this day was to find out which stores were facing understaffing, inform them of SBWU's plan to correct it, and gather contact information for an organizer to follow up.

First, you should know if you are new like I was, it's incredibly easy to make the calls. We used "Scale to Win" and all I had to do was click "make call" and read the script. The dialer runs off your internet connection so your number is kept private. Just click the response that best fits their answer to your question and the suggested response back is given to you -all from the comfort of your living room.

Performing the task was easy, being good at it was another thing. It's hard cold calling people. Our instructions said feel free to make the script your own. I HIGHLY suggest it. Otherwise you're going to come off phoney and robotic. Give yourself grace. I was horrific the first five calls I made. You will get better and eventually it'll feel natural.

One of my fears was dealing with someone aggressive on the other line. I made around 20 calls, and not one of them was hostile. This tracks with what others I've talked to have experienced. If it does happen, just hang up. Something else to keep in mind is to temper your expectations of success. Out of the 20 conversations I had, 3 thanked me for the work we were doing and only 1 wanted to be contacted for more information. Most just wanted to get back to their shift.

Would I do phone banking again? Yes. It's a great first step into the world of organizing. Anyone can do it and it can be done from the comfort of your own home. If you're interested in phone banking for SBWU, go to <https://sbworkersunited.org/take-action/> and click "sign the pledge" to be notified of upcoming action. For all other opportunities, go to <https://www.mobilize.us/aflicio>

## October Is National Work and Family Month

Every October, National Work and Family Month reminds us that a good job should support, and not compete with, our lives outside of work. It's a time to reflect on the balance between the hours we spend earning a paycheck and the time we need for family, health, and rest.

For union members, this month is also a reminder of what we fight for. Fair scheduling. Paid time off. Parental leave. Job security. These aren't just nice-to-haves, they're what allow us to show up fully at home and on the job.

If your work-life balance feels out of whack, talk to your committeeperson, an EAP rep, or someone you trust. And if you're one of the lucky ones who's found a rhythm that works, share how you got there. We get stronger when we learn from each other.



US Dept. Of Labor

RESOURCES FOR WORKING FAMILIES



### Employee Assistance Program

To access services:  
1-866-611-2826, TTY: 711  
[resourcesforliving.com](https://resourcesforliving.com)  
Username: MyHaynes  
Password: EAP



# Pizza, Pizza ~

By Paul Reehling

## How Pizza Delivery Drivers Organized for Change

The journey of the pizza delivery driver in America is more than just stories of late-night runs and hot pies; it is a testament to the power of organized labor in the service industry. The history of their union traces how a group of workers once seen as temporary or unskilled, harnessed collective action to advocate for fair treatment and recognition.

Pizza delivery began to flourish in the United States after World War II, and chains like Domino's and Pizza Hut competed to deliver food quickly and efficiently. Being a pizza delivery driver was supposed to be a flexible job, but the schedules were unpredictable, the pay was low, and there were lots of risks, like car accidents and even crime. The drivers had no benefits and nothing in place for protection. Soon the delivery driver became a very important part of the pizza industry, accounting for a large percentage of a company's profits, yet the drivers still were underpaid, and underappreciated.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, drivers began to organize, starting in cities that already had a strong union presence. Associations started forming and were demanding fair pay, better safety procedures, benefits, and transparent tip policies. They started using the internet to share experiences and strategies, creating a sense of unity. This was the beginning of the American Union of Pizza Delivery Drivers (AUPDD), which aimed to secure fair wages, comprehensive safety protocols, access to benefits, and protection from unfair dismissal.

Despite initial resistance from major chains, the AUPDD achieved some significant victories. They negotiated better mileage reimbursements, mandatory safety training, and were able to get a guarantee that drivers would receive all their tips.

As new delivery companies like Uber Eats and DoorDash began to appear. The AUPDD worked to bring more drivers into the union, going beyond just pizza drivers. By using the internet and new technology, they continued to fight for drivers' rights in this changing industry.

Today, the AUPDD encompasses pizza drivers, gig workers (uber eats, doordash, etc...), couriers, and more. The union continues to fight for higher pay, hazard pay, better benefits, and they are a part of the debate concerning minimum wage as well. To some these jobs may seem as temporary, part time, or teenagers jobs but there is a large group that count on these jobs as their main source of income. They are trying to live, raise a family, and contribute to our society. The AUPDD is helping them achieve these goals.



**American  
Union**  
of Pizza  
Delivery Drivers

## Upholding Our Strength: Challenges to the Future of Collective Bargaining

By Zach Keller

### Navigating the Changing Legal Landscape

The core of union solidarity has always been exclusive representation, the idea that a union elected by the majority represents all workers in a workplace. This structure fosters unity, prevents employers from exploiting divisions, and strengthens workers' collective voice. But ongoing legal battles, spurred by cases like *Janus v. AFSCME*, threaten to erode this foundation. For unionized steelworkers, staying informed about these legal shifts is crucial to defending hard-won rights and preparing for what lies ahead.

### The *Janus* Decision and Its Ripple Effects

The 2018 *Janus v. AFSCME* ruling struck down "fair share fees" for public-sector unions, declaring that requiring non-members to pay union fees violated their First Amendment rights. The Court argued that public-sector collective bargaining is inherently political and touching on issues like budgets and pensions and making compulsory payments a violation of free speech. While *Janus* specifically targeted public-sector unions, its underlying legal argument is now being tested in cases like *Goldstein v. CUNY*, where plaintiffs claim that exclusive representation itself violates free association by forcing workers to adhere to a union's stance, even if they personally disagree.

Although these cases primarily impact public-sector employees, their implications for private-sector unions, steelworkers included, are profound. If courts extend the Janus precedent to private-sector exclusive representation, unions could lose significant bargaining power as non-members opt out of representation entirely, weakening workplace unity and diminishing leverage at the negotiating table.

## Sectoral Bargaining & Labor Standards Boards: Two Sides of a Coin

Another emerging trend is the rise of government-backed labor standards boards, such as California's Fast Food Council. These boards, composed of union-appointed worker representatives, employers, and government officials, set industry-wide wages and working conditions through regulatory mechanisms. Supporters argue this model helps raise labor standards across entire sectors, but critics warn that it sidelines traditional collective bargaining.

For steelworkers, this raises serious concerns. Sectoral bargaining could override workplace-level negotiations, where unions directly engage with employers. In California's fast-food industry for example, such boards make key decisions without workers having a say through ratification votes, reducing direct employee input. If this model were applied to manufacturing or construction, it could strip steelworkers of the ability to negotiate agreements tailored to their specific needs, like workplace safety measures or shift premiums.

## The Threat to Workplace Democracy

Exclusive representation isn't just a legal principle, it's a tool for ensuring fairness. Without it, employers could manipulate divisions by offering individual contracts or recognizing multiple unions. In industries like steel, fragmentation could create competition among workers, undermining solidarity. Additionally, sectoral boards risk politicizing labor standards. Organizations like the SEIU, which champion these models, often align with specific political agendas. While their policies may benefit some workers, the lack of direct accountability, such

as the absence of member voting on board representatives, could disconnect decision-making from rank-and-file concerns. For steelworkers, whose contracts hinge on specific wage and safety protections, losing local control could have serious consequences.

## Why Steelworkers Should Care

- **Legal Precedent:** A Supreme Court ruling against exclusive representation in the *Goldstein* case could set a precedent for broader legal attacks on private-sector unions. Anti-union groups may argue that steelworkers shouldn't be bound by agreements they didn't personally approve.
- **Bargaining Power:** While sectoral boards might establish regional wage standards, they could also limit workplace-specific gains. A board-mandated industry wage, for example, might fail to account for a plant's profitability or unique safety risks.
- **Political Influence:** Unions' ability to push for pro-worker policies (such as infrastructure investments and workplace safety regulations) relies on a unified membership. Fractured representation weakens this collective advocacy.

## Defending Our Future

Steelworkers must take proactive steps to protect their rights:

- **Mobilize Against Legal Threats:** Support unions fighting anti-worker lawsuits and advocate for policies that uphold exclusive representation.
- **Reject One-Size-Fits-All Solutions:** Oppose models that weaken local bargaining power and demand worker representation in any industry-wide negotiations.

The labor movement is constantly evolving, but solidarity remains its greatest strength. For steelworkers, defending exclusive representation isn't about holding onto the past, it's about preserving the unity needed to secure a stronger future. The path forward is clear; stand together, bargain collectively, and protect the rights that keep us strong.

**ATTENTION PLEASE!**

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