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Label Letter

Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

POSTAL BANKING:

AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME (AGAIN)

By Debby Szeredy, Executive Vice President/
American Postal Workers Union

Did you know that the United States had a successful Postal Savings System for more than fifty years? From 1911-1967, working Americans could open a savings account at their local post office, guaranteed through the full faith and credit of the United States and earning interest at 2 percent. At its height in 1947, the Savings System had \$3.4 billion in assets (more than \$35 billion in today's dollars) or about 10 percent of the entire commercial banking system.

Today, our country is again in great need of affordable financial services. Nearly 28 percent of U.S. households (or 100 million people) do not have access to affordable financial services. A shocking 54 percent of African-American and

47 percent of Latino households are underserved by traditional banks.

For many, traditional banks are out of reach either geographically (bank deserted areas exist in both rural and urban communities), or due to high fees and other obstacles to opening, maintaining and accessing accounts. This lack of access drives millions (mainly the working poor) to rely on costly, predatory services such as check cashing and payday loans, trapping many in a cycle of debt.

Each year, the average underserved household spends \$2,412 — nearly 10 percent of gross income — in fees and interest for non-bank financial services. The \$100 billion a year Alternative Financial Services (AFS) industry has flooded the communities where the under-



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BOY SCOUTS MAKING THEIR FIRST DEPOSITS IN A POSTAL SAVINGS BANK—1913
PHOTO ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN BOYS LIFE MAGAZINE

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



2016 UNION MADE TIRES

HOW SAFE ARE YOUR TIRES THIS WINTER?

Consumer Reports says that tires can “lose their footing long before they are worn out.” If your tires need replacing, you can ensure that you are purchasing union-made-in-the-USA tire by following looking for the DOT BE code.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has made it very easy to find union-made tires by requiring that each tire carry a code that shows the company and the location of the plant that manufactured the tire. DOT requires that each tire sold in the United States carry a code that looks something like this: DOT BE XX XXX XXX. The two letters or numbers that follow the DOT identify a particular factory as listed below.

- BE: B.F. Goodrich, Tuscaloosa, Ala.
- BF: B.F. Goodrich, Woodburn, Ind.
- VE, YE, YU, 8B: Bridgestone/Firestone, Des Moines, Iowa
- D2, E3, W1, Y7: Bridgestone/Firestone, La Vergne, Tenn.
- 2C, 4D, 5D: Bridgestone/Firestone, Morrison, Tenn.
- UP: Cooper, Findlay, Ohio
- UT: Cooper, Texarkana, Ark.
- JU, PC, UK: Goodyear, Medicine Hat, Alberta
- JJ, MD, PU: Goodyear, Gadsden, Ala.
- DA: Dunlop, Buffalo, N.Y.
- JN, MJ, PY: Goodyear, Topeka, Kan.
- JE, MC, PT: Goodyear, Danville, Va.
- JF, MM, PJ: Kelly-Springfield, Fayetteville, N.C.
- CF: Titan Tire, Des Moines
- JH, MN, PK: Titan Tire, Freeport, Ill.
- B plus serial #: Titan Tire, Bryan, Ohio
- CC: Yokohama Tire, Salem, Va.

All tires made at the above locations are made by members of the United Steelworkers (USW). Make sure you use this easy-to-follow guide to buy union-made tires.

WALK IN MY SHOES

**Richard Cucarese, Steelworker and USW Local 4889
Rapid Response Coordinator, Fairless Hills, PA**

After a brief stint in college, I worked for a non-union employer which did not offer health insurance, raises, or a pension. There was no security to be had, whatsoever. Looking for more stability, I applied for a job at the United States Steel, Fairless Works, and received my first taste of the union experience.

The most I'd understood about unions was conveyed by certain members of my family, and theirs was not a positive reaction. Instead of the "lazy, overpaid, unskilled workforce" that was articulated by them and others in my surrounding area, I found a very skilled and educated workforce. They were a hard-working group and very dedicated to producing top quality steel. I was also very impressed when they spoke about their Collective Bargaining achievements at the Local and International level in the areas of safety, pensions and benefits for their members and their families.

The members of Local 4889 were very involved in the community, and very informed with the political issues that affected our area.

Unfortunately, during the turbulent times of the 1980's, when many steel plants were crippled by the illicit

dumping of foreign steel on our shores, thousands of our brothers and sisters were forced out of work. The majority of our plant was shuttered and many, including myself had to find work elsewhere.

For over ten years, elsewhere meant very inferior paying jobs with no benefits, no pensions or 401K plans for their workforce. It also meant dealing with taskmaster bosses who had no regard for the health, welfare, or safety of their workers.

In 2005, my wife lost her job and her health insurance, both mainstays for our family. With a young daughter, and a baby daughter just born, I decided to take a ride to Local 4889, to see if they had any leads on prospective job opportunities. Not only did they have a lead, it was back in the only part of U.S Steel which remained open; our Galvanizing Line.

My union went to bat for me in a time of crisis. I was quite possibly months away from losing my house. Now, for the first time in years, I have a strong income, a pension, superior medical benefits and a safe work environment. My wife, five children, and I are a proud, active and grateful union family.



SPOTLIGHT THE LABEL

The Seafarers International Union

The Seafarers International Union, Atlantic, Gulf, Lakes and Inland Waters, AFL-CIO, represents professional United States merchant mariners sailing aboard U.S.-flag vessels in the deep sea, Great Lakes and inland trades.

SIU members sail in the three shipboard departments: deck, engine and steward. They work aboard a wide variety of vessels, including commercial containerships and tankers, military support ships, tugboats and barges, passenger ships, gaming vessels and many more.

Chartered in 1938, the SIU prides itself on representing the best-trained, most efficient crews in the world. A key to meeting that standard is the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education, located in Piney Point, Md. The center is a vocational training facility operated by an SIU-affiliated entity.

Today, the SIU is the largest North American union representing merchant mariners. It is a dynamic, politically active organization dedicated to protecting the membership's job security by constantly staying a step ahead of the ever-changing needs of the industry. ■

Seventeen El Faro Victims Members of Seafarers International Union

El Faro, the U.S. -flag merchant vessel that disappeared off the coast of the Bahamas in early October 2015, carried 33 crew members aboard, 17 were members of the Seafarers International Union (SIU).

"There are no words that can adequately express the grief and sorrow at this time," stated Maritime Trades Department President Michael Sacco, who also serves as President of the Seafarers. "Our hearts go out to the families and friends of those who sailed aboard the El Faro."

The ship, which departed from Jacksonville, Fla. was headed to San Juan Puerto Rico on October 1, when it was caught in Hurricane Joaquin — a category 4 storm. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) located the ship on October 30, in about 15,000 feet of water near the Crooked Islands in the Bahamas, the last known position of the vessel.

The SIU has created the Seafarers El Faro Assistance Fund to help the families of those who perished in the sinking with unanticipated financial hardships. SIU says that 100 percent of the donations will go towards grants for the families. Any individual or organization can donate to the tax exempt fund by visiting the website at <http://www.seafarers.org> and clicking on the "Donate" button. ■

served live with products, services and practices that are expensive and often predatory, with typical interest rates of 391 percent!

As United for a Fair Economy puts it, “For the underserved, there is little opportunity to create a credit history, have access to affordable, safe and sustainable financial services, or build assets over time.”

The Postal Service is not in business to make a profit for shareholders. Its purpose is to serve the American people. This is in stark contrast to the predatory practices associated with alternative financial services such as payday lending or the high fees of many traditional banks.

The 2008 financial crisis led to widespread anger at, and plummeting public confidence in, big banks. As a result, the interest in alternatives to traditional banks has increased. Postal banking is a public, non-profit option.

“Banks are rapidly abandoning low-income and rural neighborhoods... Luckily, there is an organization with the public mission, the infrastructure, the experience and the well-trained employees needed to help address this problem: the U.S. Postal Service... The Postal Service already has a presence in low-income and rural communities, and it could leverage that infrastructure to provide access to lower-cost basic banking services,” writes Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

With more than 30,000 local post offices across the country, the US Postal Service is in a unique position to offer basic financial services. Many of those post offices are located in bank deserted areas. Fifty-nine percent of post offices are in zip codes with either zero banks or only one bank branch. The Postal Service is

geographically well-positioned to reach people, whether rural, suburban, or urban, with little-to-no access to retail banking services.

After the financial crisis of 2008, public confidence in banks fell to 26 percent. But Americans consistently rank the U.S. Postal Service highest among all federal agencies with more than 70% of those polled saying it does an excellent or good job. According to a November 2014 Gallup poll, the age group that ranks the USPS highest is 18-29 year-olds, at 81%.

The U.S. Postal Service is already providing some financial services. Its workforce is trained and certified to handle many financial transactions including the sale of money orders, international money transfers, and cashing of treasury checks. USPS window clerks processed 500 million money order transactions over the past five years at a face value of \$110 billion. That adds up to 378,000 money orders per day in 2014.

Postal Banking will help struggling families nationwide achieve financial stability and will benefit consumers who would prefer a more public option. And the expansion of services will strengthen our public Postal Service.

The Campaign for Postal Banking is a coalition of labor, consumer, financial reform, faith-based and citizen groups that is calling for low-cost, consumer-driven products and services that could range from check cashing to bill payment to savings accounts to small-dollar loans.

Visit www.campaignforpostalbanking.org to learn more and to add your voice to the call for affordable financial services at the post office!



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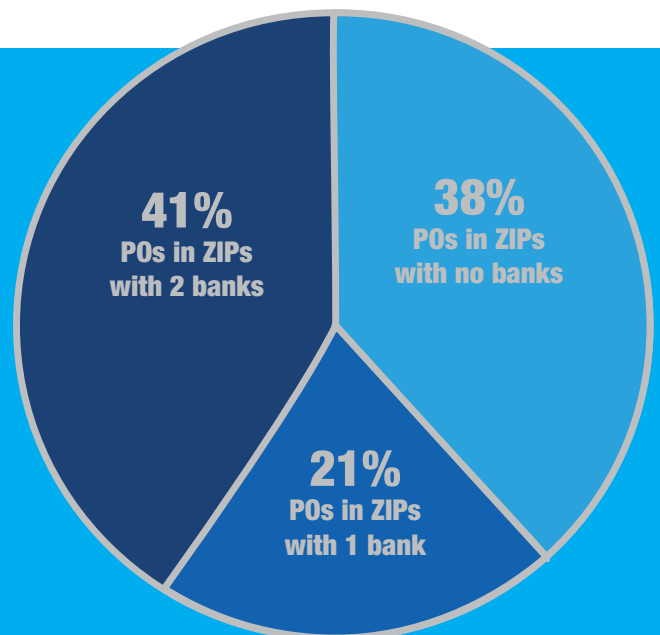
—Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

MOST POST OFFICES ARE IN BANK DESERTS

Fifty-nine percent of internally-managed Post Offices are in ZIP codes with zero or one bank branch, illustrating that the Postal Service is geographically well-positioned to reach people with little-to-no access to retail banking services.

Note: Excludes Post Offices with unique ZIP codes.

Sources: FDIC 2013 Summary of Deposits, Postal Service facilities database.



2016: New Year, Same Attacks on Workers

RIGHT-TO-WORK EXPECTED TO BE INTRODUCED IN WEST VIRGINIA, KENTUCKY

West Virginia Senate President Bill Cole is pushing to make West Virginia the 26th state to enact right-to-work. He says he'd like to "beat Kentucky to the punch" by introducing the proposed legislation, "very early in the session."

West Virginia's 60-day legislative session began January 13.

One reason Cole wants to introduce the legislation early is the fear the current Democratic Governor Earl Ray Tomblin will veto the legislation should it pass in the legislature. "The governor has five days when we put it on his desk," Cole said. "If he vetoes it, we can take it right back up."

"If we do it late in the session he [Tomblin] can just wait until we're gone and veto it and it's done for a year, so we'll take it up early," said Cole.

Cole, who is running to replace term-limited Gov. Tomblin, sees right-to-work as part of the foundation for his political future. Incidentally, he has the backing of the Koch brothers, receiving funds from their Arlington, VA based Aegis PAC.

KENTUCKY

Newly elected conservative Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin has indicated his interest in seeing the state enact right-to-work laws. But, unlike West Virginia the Kentucky House is largely opposed to the legislation having voted it down last year.

However, in Kentucky, groups interested in seeing the legislation pass have been trying to do so at the local level.

In December 2014, Warren County, Ky., became the first county in the nation to pass a local right-to-work ordinance. After

Warren passed its local version of the law, several other counties including Fulton, Hardin, Simpson and Todd, did as well. The conservative pro-right-to-work group "ProtectMyPayCheck" has been leading the effort.

The United Auto Workers and eight other labor unions have filed suit arguing the local laws violate the National Labor Relations Act—stating only states can decide whether they want such a policy.

A 2014 opinion issued by the Kentucky attorney general's office should help labor in their case, the opinion, which was written by Assistant Attorney General Matt James, argued, "Local governments have no power to enact right-to-work ordinances" because they are preempted by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). ■

AFL-CIO HOUSING INVESTMENT TRUST INVESTS IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust is tackling the issue of affordable housing head-on in New York and Detroit.

Less than a month after announcing it would invest up to \$30 million to rehab as many as 300 vacant homes in Detroit, HIT announced another partnership, this time in New York.

HIT has partnered with the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, the New York City Central Labor Council, and area churches and developers — known as the United Clergy Task Force — to invest up to \$300 million in creating affordable housing in the greater New York area.

There are seven proposed projects slated for development in the first phase of the partnership. All are located in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Jersey City. The projects will utilize union labor and could create an estimated 1,500 union construction jobs. The Consortium for Worker Education

"This partnership with the United Clergy Task Force has the potential to be a good model for how affordable housing can be union built across the country."

—Rich Trumka

(CWE) will operate an apprenticeship program, with a particular emphasis on training and hiring residents of the local communities for the work.

"This partnership with the United Clergy Task Force has the potential to be a good model for how affordable housing can be union built across the country," said AFL-CIO president Rich Trumka.

In Detroit, the HIT expects to create about 300 full-time jobs, including apprenticeships for Detroiters hoping for careers in the construction trades.

Working with the Detroit Land Bank

Authority, the HIT will rehab the homes and put them up for sale once they are finished. The city and the union will share in either profits or losses on each house, Mayor Mike Duggan said at a November news conference announcing the deal.

"Union workers using union pension money to rebuild homes for working families is the right formula for rebuilding Detroit," said Trumka.

The HIT is a fixed-income investment company registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission. It manages over \$5 billion in assets for over 370 investors, which include union and public employee pension plans. The HIT invests primarily in government and agency insured and guaranteed multifamily mortgage-backed securities. The HIT is one of the earliest and most successful practitioners of socially responsible, economically targeted investing, with a track record of over 30 years that demonstrates the added value derived from union-friendly investments. ■

MASSEY ENERGY CEO **FOUND GUILTY** OF WILLINGLY VIOLATING MSHA STANDARDS

The April 5, 2010, West Virginia mine explosion that killed 29 workers was one of the worst U.S. mine disasters in decades.

The explosion occurred at the Upper Big Branch South Mine — operated by the Performance Coal Company, a subsidiary of Massey Energy. It was ignited by an unknown source with high methane levels being a contributing factor. Investigators faulted Massey Energy for failure to properly maintain its ventilation systems, which allowed methane levels to increase to dangerous amounts.

In 2013, David Hugart, who was president of a Massey Energy subsidiary, pleaded guilty to two conspiracy counts before a federal judge in Beckley, West Virginia, and identified his former boss, Massey CEO Don Blankenship, as part of an effort to cover up safety violations at the mine.

Massey was the fourth-largest coal producer in the U.S. and the largest mine operator in Appalachia at the time of the

explosion. But, it had racked up an extensive list of violations before the disaster happened, and a 2011 report by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) found that Massey had a history of “systematic, intentional and aggressive efforts” to evade safety regulations.

The company kept two sets of books to mislead miners and inspectors, tipped off crews before surprise inspections and intimidated workers to prevent them from reporting violations, the report found.

Blankenship was indicted in November 2014, after Hugart pointed the finger at him. He was indicted on four charges: conspiracy to violate mandatory federal mine safety and health standards, conspiracy to impede federal mine safety officials, making false statements to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, and securities fraud.

In December 2015, Blankenship was convicted of conspiracy to willfully violate mine health and safety standards. He was

acquitted on two other felony charges.

U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, Booth Goodwin told reporters, “This is a landmark day for the safety of coal miners. Really it’s a landmark day for all working men and women. The CEO and chairman of one of America’s largest coal companies now stands convicted of willful violations of the laws that are designed to keep coal miners safe. I hope the verdict will make a difference throughout the country.”

STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT CECIL E. ROBERTS:

“A measure of justice has been served through the conviction of Don Blankenship on federal charges of conspiring to violate mine safety standards. The truth that was common knowledge in the coalfields – that Don Blankenship cared little for the safety and health of miners working for his company and even less for the laws enforcing their rights – has finally been proven in court.

This decision will not bring back the 52 people killed on Massey Energy property during Blankenship’s reign as the head of that company, including the 29 killed at the Upper Big Branch disaster in 2010. Their families still must live without their loved ones, holding their grief in their hearts the rest of their lives. But a message has gone out today to every coal operator in America who is willing to skirt mine safety and health laws: you do so at your own personal risk. I thank the jury for having the courage to send this message and establish a clear deterrent to this kind of activity. Hopefully that deterrent will keep more miners alive and intact in the years to come.”

Blankenship is expected to be sentenced in March and could face up to a year in federal prison. ■

Kohler Workers Ratify New Contract, End Strike



United Auto Workers Local 833 in Wisconsin ratified a new contract with the Kohler Company in December, ending a month long strike.

The strike—the first in more than 20-years—began on November 15.

Under the agreement, the 2,000 unionized employees will receive wage increases in each of the four-years of the contract.

“We worked very hard to reach an agreement that addressed all of the key areas crucial to the future of our members,” said UAW Local 833 President Tim Tayloe in a statement to a reporter at WISN local news.

In addition to increased wages, employees secured enhanced benefits and modifications to the health care plans that will potentially reduce out-of-pocket costs. ■

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID
WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME VALUE

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EndNotes

By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*



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POLITICS AND POLICY



We have been treated, or mistreated, to a presidential campaign marked by demagoguery and charlatanry. Unfortunately, too much media attention has focused on the entertainment value of a bunch of people name-calling, espousing radical and irrational views and obscuring their positions of topics of importance.

And topics of importance abound.

Income inequality and outright poverty are major concerns. A political campaign marked by obscene amounts of money suggest that ours is a country not unlike others where oligarchs determine elections. The economic recovery has distributed its benefits unevenly and the drop in unemployment conceals the desperation of those with multiple jobs and those who have simply given up.

The Affordable Care Act may have flaws, but it is the best thing on the scene for millions of people, our fellow Americans, who had no health insurance before the ACA. Yet some campaigners vow to destroy the ACA without offering a substitute.

The Trans Pacific Partnership still looms as a threat to American jobs, and if that is not enough, the passage of Fast

Track Authority gives the next president a springboard for pushing for its and other trade deals' passage. Yet, we don't hear a word or a question about the issue.

Public employee unions face a challenge in the Supreme Court to their very existence. The Fair Share decision has enabled political objectors within a union to opt out of the portion of their dues that goes to political activity. Now, Fair Share is under attack again. In the past even Justice Scalia has said that workers who benefit collectively from a union contract should pay their legitimate share of costs for collective bargaining. But the matter is once again before the court and in an election year.

One could go on. Social Security, Medicare, college costs, infrastructure, immigration reform, climate change and national security merit reasonable debate. Yet the national discourse resembles a dogfight more than a political race for the highest office in the land and the most important leader in the world.

Working people generally and union members specifically had better keep a clear view of our potential leaders. Some of these people will bring harm to all but the wealthiest Americans, and even they, in an unsettled world, cannot feel secure. ■