



Label Letter

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Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Holding the Line on the Label: How BCTGM Workers Protected “Union Made” at Kellogg

When workers at Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union walked off the job in the fall of 2021, they were not just fighting for wages, benefits, or job security. They were also defending something that often gets overlooked but carries real power in the marketplace: the union label.

The strike against Kellogg Company, which later spun off its North American cereal business into WK Kellogg Co, became one of the most closely watched labor disputes in the country. At stake were issues familiar across the labor movement, including a controversial two-tier wage system and the company's long-term commitment to its workforce. But embedded in those negotiations was another fight, one tied directly to consumer awareness and union pride: the future of the “Union Made” label on cereal boxes.

Initially, the company proposed removing the union label from its packaging. That move would have stripped away a visible, everyday connection between the workers who make the product and the consumers who buy it. For BCTGM members, that was unacceptable. The union label is more than a mark. It represents fair wages, safe working conditions, and the dignity of skilled labor. Removing it would have erased that connection at the point of purchase.

After weeks on the picket line and sustained pressure from workers and allies, BCTGM members secured a landmark agreement in December 2021. The five-year contract included no concessions, a plant-closing moratorium, and meaningful protections for workers across the company's facilities. Just as important, the agreement preserved the “Union Made” label on cereal boxes produced in the United States.



Photo Courtesy of BCTGM

The resolution of the label issue did not stop at preservation. It went a step further.

At the time of the agreement, the company had already produced a significant number of cereal boxes without the union label printed on them. Rather than allowing those products to reach store shelves without recognition of the workers who made them, the agreement required the company to take corrective action. WK Kellogg Co committed to adding “Union Made by BCTGM members” to the top of those boxes, ensuring that even previously printed packaging would carry the mark of union labor.

UNION LABEL MORE THAN SYMBOLIC

That detail matters. It demonstrates that the union label is not symbolic window dressing. It is something worth negotiating over, enforcing, and protecting in concrete terms.

The importance of that fight was underscored again this April, when BCTGM International Secretary-Treasurer David Woods shared the story in remarks to the Union Label and Service Trades Department Convention. His account made clear that the label was never a side issue. It was a line in the sand. Workers understood that maintaining the union mark on products—and correcting boxes that ini-

tially lacked it—was essential to preserving the visibility and value of union labor.

For the labor movement, this outcome reinforces a broader point. The union label connects collective bargaining to consumer behavior. It gives working people a way to support one another beyond the workplace, turning everyday purchases into acts of solidarity. When that label is visible, it educates consumers and reinforces the value of union labor in a way that no press release or advertising campaign can replicate.

The 2021 BCTGM strike and the resulting agreement with WK Kellogg Co show what is possible when workers hold the line not just on traditional contract issues, but on the visibility and recognition of their work. They understood that if the label disappears, so does a powerful tool for building long-term support for union jobs.

They were right to fight for it, and they were right to win.

The union label is not an afterthought. It is a strategic asset. Protecting it at the bargaining table strengthens the connection between workers and consumers, reinforces standards across industries, and keeps the value of union labor front and center where it belongs.

In Courtrooms, Agencies, and Congress: AFGE Keeps Fighting for Federal Workers



Photo Courtesy of AFGE Website

employee terminations, finding that the Office of Personnel Management exceeded its authority in directing agencies to fire workers. AFGE described the ruling as proof that the administration could not simply discard civil service protections by executive fiat.

BATTLES AHEAD REMAIN ENORMOUS

AFGE and allied unions continue to fight executive orders that seek to remove collective bargaining rights from broad categories of federal employees under claims of national security exemptions. Some lower court victories have already been narrowed or temporarily reversed on appeal, and several major cases are still moving through federal courts.

At the same time, agencies continue appealing arbitration losses tied to telework and workplace flexibility. The SSA, for example, has already appealed the arbitrator's telework ruling to the Federal Labor Relations Authority, signaling that even clear wins may face prolonged legal fights before workers see lasting relief.

The broader stakes are larger than telework alone.

What AFGE is defending is the idea that federal workers deserve enforceable contracts, due process protections, safe workplaces, and a voice on the job. The union's ongoing litigation campaign has effectively become a frontline defense of the modern federal civil service system itself.

For many federal employees, the constant legal uncertainty has created anxiety about layoffs, reclassifications, union representation, and working conditions. Yet AFGE has continued to organize, litigate, arbitrate, and publicly challenge nearly every major anti-worker action affecting its members.

That persistence matters.

Because while some cases remain unresolved and appeals continue to pile up, AFGE has shown that organized workers can still force agencies and administrations to answer to contracts, labor law, and the courts. And in an environment where many federal workers feel under sustained attack, that tenacity has become one of the union's greatest strengths.

The American Federation of Government Employees has spent the last two years locked in one of the most aggressive fights for federal worker rights in modern labor history.

From battling mass layoffs and reductions in force to defending collective bargaining agreements, telework protections, due process rights, and union representation itself, AFGE has become the central legal and organizing force standing between federal workers and sweeping efforts to dismantle workplace protections across the federal government.

And despite enormous pressure, the union keeps winning critical battles.

AFGE's strategy has been relentless: challenge unlawful actions in court, enforce collective bargaining agreements through arbitration, mobilize members publicly, and refuse to surrender bargaining rights agency by agency. That persistence has produced a series of major victories for federal employees, even as larger legal and political fights continue to unfold.

One of the most significant recent victories came at the Department of Veterans Affairs, where a federal judge ordered the VA to restore its collective bargaining agreement with AFGE's National VA Council, covering more than 300,000 employees. The ruling found the administration's attempt to terminate the agreement likely violated federal law and constitutional protections.

The VA fight did not end there. AFGE later returned to court accusing the agency of attempting to circumvent the judge's order, prompting further judicial scrutiny and warnings regarding compliance.

At the Social Security Administration, AFGE secured another major win when an independent arbitrator ordered the agency to restore telework rights for thousands of employees represented by the union. The arbitrator found SSA had unlawfully repudiated provisions of its negotiated contract after the agency broadly suspended remote work arrangements.

AFGE achieved similar victories at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, where arbitrators ruled that management violated collective bargaining agreements by unilaterally rolling back telework protections. Those rulings ordered HUD to reinstate prior agreements and potentially compensate workers for commuting and dependent-care costs resulting from the changes.

The union has also remained deeply involved in broader national litigation challenging reductions in force, politically motivated terminations, and executive actions aimed at stripping bargaining rights from federal workers. AFGE has joined or led multiple lawsuits contesting layoffs, agency reorganizations, and mass contract cancellations across the federal government.

In one particularly important ruling earlier this year, a federal judge sided with AFGE in a case involving probationary

Mail-In Voting Works—Because the System Behind It Works

Mail-in voting remains one of the most secure, reliable, and accessible ways Americans participate in democracy—and it works because of the people and systems behind it.

At its core, voting by mail improves the voting experience. It allows voters to cast a ballot when and how it is most convenient, without the pressure of long lines or limited polling hours. Voters can take the time to review candidates, research ballot measures, and make informed decisions at their own pace. That flexibility leads to stronger participation. Turnout increases. Low-propensity voters are more likely to engage. And more voters complete the full ballot, which is especially important in local elections and ballot initiatives that directly affect communities.

That system depends on the coordinated, nonpartisan work of the United States Postal Service and its unionized workforce, including the National Association of Letter Carriers, the American Postal Workers Union, and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union.

Each plays a distinct and essential role. Mail handlers move and process ballots through sorting facilities. Postal clerks and plant workers ensure ballots are properly processed and routed. Letter carriers complete the final step, delivering ballots to voters and returning them to election officials. Together, they form a seamless chain that keeps election mail moving securely and efficiently across the country.

Just as important is what the Postal Service does not do. USPS does not set election rules, determine deadlines, design ballots, or count votes. Those responsibilities remain with state and local election officials. The role of the Postal Service is clear: transport, process, and deliver ballots and political mail in a strictly nonpartisan manner.

During election season, that mission is backed by extraordinary effort. In the final weeks before Election Day, USPS implements nationwide “extraordinary measures” to ensure ballots move quickly, even



when they are mailed close to deadlines. In 2024, those measures included extra deliveries and collections, special pick-ups, expedited sorting plans, and local transportation adjustments to speed ballots to election offices. These efforts began weeks before Election Day and continued through each state’s ballot acceptance deadlines.

Year-round practices reinforce that commitment. Election Mail is prioritized ahead of standard marketing mail. Daily system checks ensure all election mail is accounted for and moving on schedule.

CONSISTENT, MEASURABLE RESULTS

In the 2024 general election, USPS processed at least 99.22 million ballots and more than 3.3 billion pieces of political and election mail. Ballots moved quickly, with an average delivery time of 1.95 days from election officials to voters, and less than one day on average from voters back to election officials. Nearly 98 percent of ballots were delivered within three days, and more than 99.6 percent arrived within five days.

These numbers build on a strong track record. In 2020, USPS processed at least 135 million ballots, with nearly 98 percent delivered within three days and 99.7 percent within five days.

Security is equally strong. Documented cases of fraud in mail-in voting are

extremely rare. A 2025 analysis by the Brookings Institution found fraud accounted for just 0.0000043% of mailed ballots—about four cases per 10 million votes. Earlier research from the American Statistical Association found no evidence that voting by mail increases the risk of fraud.

Mail-in voting is also widely used beyond the United States. More than 30 countries allow postal voting, including Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Domestically, 28 states allow no-excuse vote-by-mail, and several states and the District of Columbia conduct elections primarily by mail.

For the workers who power this system, the mission is simple: deliver the mail, serve the public, and do it without bias.

As NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine put it, “Every ballot is treated like any other piece of important mail—handled securely, delivered on time, and without regard to politics. That’s what the public expects, and it’s what our members deliver every day.”

The evidence is clear. Mail-in voting increases access. It strengthens participation. It operates securely. And it is upheld by a professional, union workforce committed to getting every ballot where it needs to go—safely, securely, and on time.

Convention Convenes with Focus on Mission, Accountability, and Momentum

The 72nd Convention of the Union Label and Service Trades Department (UL&STD) opened on April 23 at 10:20 a.m., bringing together delegates from across the labor movement to advance a clear and coordinated agenda, centered on strengthening the visibility and value of union labor.

The convention began with Nicole Rhine, secretary-treasurer of the National Association of Letter Carriers and a vice president of the Department, leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

Next, UL&STD President Rich Kline welcomed delegates and delivered remarks focused squarely on the Department's mission: promoting union-made goods and services while reinforcing the connection between workers and consumers. He emphasized that the union label is not symbolic—it is a practical tool that drives accountability, supports good jobs, and gives the public a clear way to back union labor in the marketplace.

That message carried through the convention's featured remarks.

David Woods, international secretary-treasurer of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM), addressed delegates with a detailed look at his union's 140-year his-

tory and its ongoing work to protect and grow union jobs. He pointed to recent efforts to preserve jobs at major manufacturers, including Kellogg, and highlighted the successful repatriation of approximately 200 jobs back to BCTGM members.

Woods also reinforced a central theme of the convention: the importance of the union label. As detailed in his earlier remarks on the 2021 strike against Kellogg, the fight to preserve the "Union Made" label was not a side issue—it was a defining one. Ensuring that products made by union workers are clearly identified remains a core strategy for building long-term support for union labor.

Nicole Rhine returned to the podium to speak on the role of the United States Postal Service and its workforce, particularly in the context of mail-in voting. Her remarks underscored the essential, nonpartisan role postal workers play in ensuring ballots are delivered securely and on time. As outlined in the Department's broader discussion on vote-by-mail, that system works because of the coordinated effort of union postal workers across multiple crafts who keep election mail moving efficiently nationwide.

Following these presentations, delegates reviewed the Department's financial report, providing a transparent assessment of its operations and fiscal health.

The convention then moved into official business. Delegates voted on a series of resolutions addressing collective bargaining, labor policy, and emerging workplace issues—including the expanded use of the union label in contracts, protections for workers in the face of artificial intelligence, and support for federal workers and public institutions.

In a strong show of unity, delegates also voted to reelect the Department's full slate of officers, signaling confidence in the leadership and a shared commitment to continuing the work ahead.

Taken together, the proceedings reinforced a consistent message echoed throughout the convention and reflected across its resolutions and featured discussions: the union label remains one of the labor movement's most effective tools. It connects organizing to consumer action, strengthens bargaining power, and ensures that the value of union labor is visible where it matters most—in the marketplace and in the daily lives of working people.

Delegates Take Action at the 72nd UL&STD Convention, Advancing a Clear Agenda for Workers

At the 72nd Convention of the Union Label and Service Trades Department (UL&STD), delegates focused on action. They passed a series of resolutions aimed at strengthening the labor movement in bargaining, policy, and public engagement.

A central theme ran through the remarks: making union labor more visible and more valued. The Union Label was front and center in that effort, not just as a symbol, but as a practical tool that can be used at the bargaining table and in the marketplace.

PUTTING THE UNION LABEL TO WORK IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Convention's signature action was the adoption of a resolution encouraging

unions to include Union Label requirements in collective bargaining agreements.

The resolution calls for contract language that requires employers to display the Union Label on products, in storefronts, and across digital platforms. The goal is simple: make it clear to the public when union labor is behind the goods they buy and the services they use.

When that connection is visible, it gives working people a way to support each other through everyday choices. It also reinforces the value of union labor in a way that benefits both workers and responsible employers.

The resolution reflects a straightforward point. If union labor is not visible, it is harder to support. Putting the Union

Label into contracts ensures that visibility becomes part of standard practice.

HOLDING THE NLRB TO ITS MISSION

Delegates also passed a resolution calling on the National Labor Relations Board to return to its core mission of protecting workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively.

The resolution highlights concerns about weak enforcement and employer interference. It calls for stronger penalties, timely action, and a clear focus on protecting workers.

See 'Agenda,' next page

REAFFIRMING THE ROLE OF THE EPA

Delegates adopted a resolution urging the Environmental Protection Agency to recommit to protecting public health and the environment.

The message is clear. Strong environmental protections support safe workplaces and healthy communities. Workers should not have to choose between a job and their health.

DRAWING A LINE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

As artificial intelligence continues to expand in the workplace, delegates addressed the need for safeguards.

The resolution calls for transparency, accountability, and protections that ensure new technology does not undermine jobs, safety, or workers' rights. It also reinforces that changes affecting workers must be subject to bargaining.

STANDING UP FOR FEDERAL WORKERS

Delegates passed a resolution calling for an end to the attacks on federal workers.

Federal employees provide essential services across the country. The resolution affirms their role and rejects efforts to use them as political targets.

DEFENDING A NONPARTISAN CIVIL SERVICE

A related resolution opposes efforts to weaken civil service protections and politicize the federal workforce.

Delegates emphasized that public service must remain grounded in merit, professionalism, and the rule of law.

BACKING THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE AND ITS WORKFORCE

The Convention also reaffirmed strong support for the United States Postal Service and its union workforce.

Delegates expressed clear opposition to privatization efforts and underscored the importance of maintaining reliable service and good union jobs.

Resolution Introduces Model Contract Language to Put the Union Label Front and Center



Alongside the Union Label resolution, the Department introduced model collective bargaining language to help affiliates put this approach into practice.

Model Collective Bargaining Agreement Language

Section 1. Union Label on Products

The Employer recognizes the value and significance of the Union Label as a symbol that identifies goods produced by workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

The Employer agrees that all products manufactured, assembled, or produced by employees covered under this Agreement shall display the appropriate Union Label, Bug, or Identification Mark on product packaging, labeling, or accompanying materials where reasonably practicable.

Such labeling shall clearly indicate that the product was produced by union labor under a collective bargaining agreement.

The Union Label used shall be mutually agreed upon by the Employer and the Union and shall conform to the standards or marks issued by the appropriate labor organization.

Section 2. Union Identification in Service Establishments

In workplaces where employees provide services to the public, the Employer agrees to visibly display the Union Label or an equivalent sign indicating that services are provided by union labor.

Such identification shall be placed in a prominent and visible location, including but not limited to:

- Storefront windows
- Entrances
- Service counters
- Reception areas
- Customer service areas

The design and placement of the Union Label signage shall be mutually agreed upon by the Employer and the Union.

Section 3. Digital and Online Identification of Union Labor

The Employer agrees to acknowledge that its products or services are produced or provided by union labor on the Employer's website and other digital plat-

forms used to promote or sell its goods or services.

This identification shall include:

- A statement indicating that the Employer's products or services are produced or provided by union workers under a collective bargaining agreement; and
- The display of the appropriate Union Label, bug, or identification mark, where permitted.

Such identification shall be included on the Employer's:

- Official website
- Online product descriptions or service pages
- E-commerce listings where applicable
- Digital marketing & promotional materials where appropriate

The placement and format of the digital Union Label or identification statement shall be reasonably visible and mutually agreed upon by the Employer and the Union.

Section 4. Promotion of Union Labor

The Employer agrees that where products or services are advertised or marketed to the public, the Union Label may be included in promotional materials, websites, social media, or advertising to indicate that the goods or services are produced or provided by union workers.

Nothing in this section shall prevent the Employer from highlighting the presence of union labor as a positive feature of its business.

Section 5. Maintenance of the Union Label

The Employer agrees that the Union Label shall not be removed, altered, or misused in a way that would misrepresent whether goods or services are produced by employees covered under this Agreement.

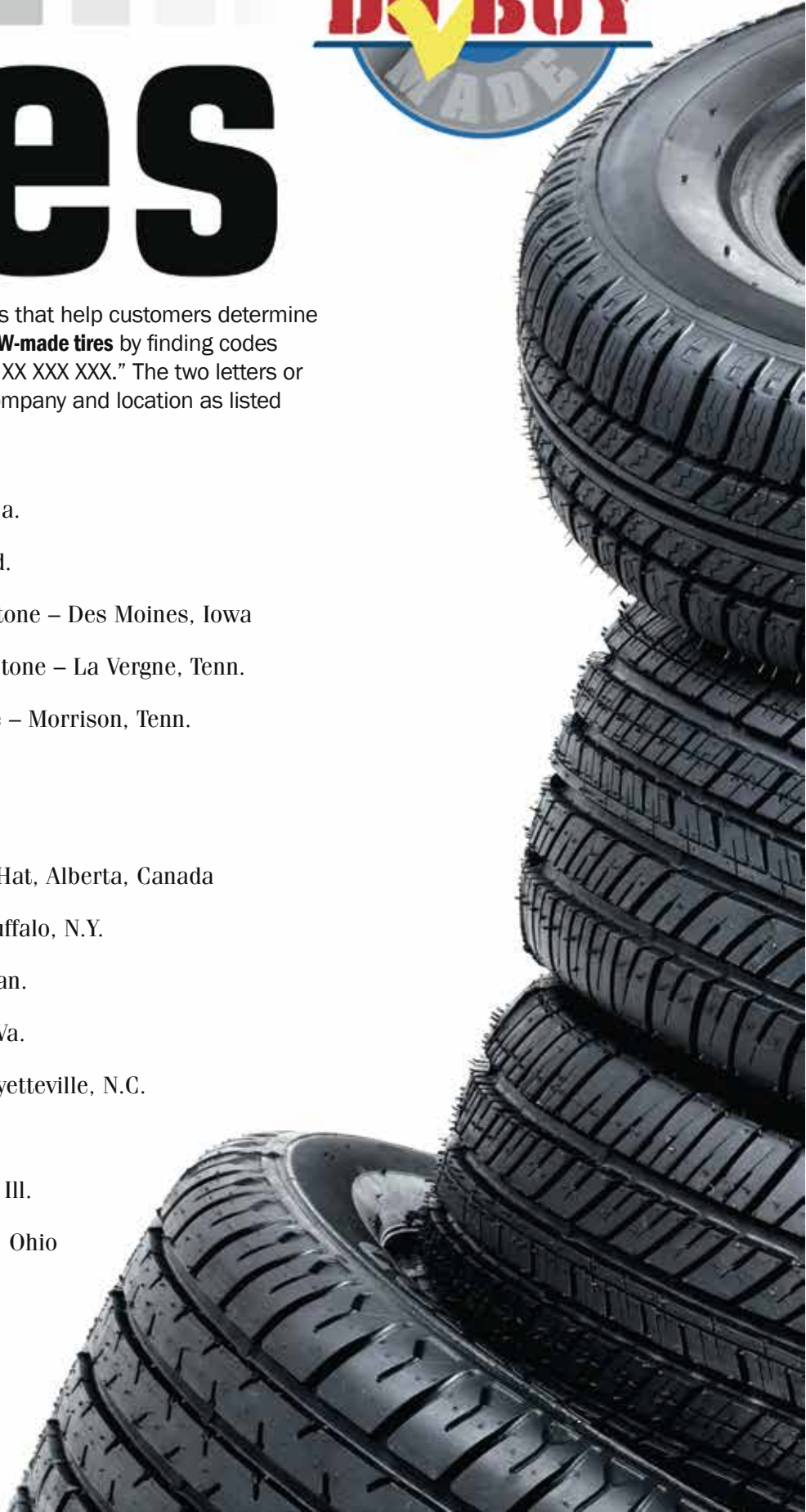
Any disputes regarding the use or display of the Union Label, including digital display, shall be subject to the grievance and arbitration procedures of this Agreement.

UNION MADE tires



Tires sold in the United States carry codes that help customers determine where they were made. **Buyers can find USW-made tires** by finding codes that appear something like this: “DOT BE XX XXX XXX.” The two letters or numbers that follow the DOT identify a company and location 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, Canada
- » DA: Dunlop/Sumitomo/Falken – 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, Iowa
- » JH, MN, PK: Titan Tire – Freeport, Ill.
- » B plus serial #: Titan Tire – Bryan, Ohio
- » CC: Yokohama Tire – Salem, Va.



AFL-CIO NATIONAL BOYCOTTS

MAY-JUN 2026



COMMUNICATIONS SUBMITTED BY COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA (CWA)

- » T-Mobile

FOOD SUBMITTED BY Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM)

- » Mondelez International Snack Foods
(those made in Mexico)

HOTELS SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

Please support the workers in these hotels by continuing to boycott the following properties:

ALASKA:

- » Hilton Anchorage
- » Marriott Anchorage Downtown
- » Homewood Suites by Hilton Anchorage
- » Hampton Inn Anchorage
- » Hilton Garden Inn

CALIFORNIA:

- » Hilton Long Beach
- » Hyatt Centric Fisherman's Wharf
- » The Jay, Autograph Collection

- » Hilton Los Angeles Airport
- » Terranea Resort
- » Hyatt Regency Santa Clara
- » Four Seasons Beverly Hills
- » Langham Huntington

LEGAL SUBMITTED BY American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

- » Gleason, Dunn, Walsh & O'Shea
- » McDonald, Lamond, Canzoneri and Hickernell

OTHER SUBMITTED BY Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC)

- » Reynolds American, Inc., Vuse e-cigarettes

RESTAURANTS SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

WASHINGTON, DC:

- » **STARR restaurants:** The Occidental, Osteria Mozza and Le Diplomate
- » **Knightsbridge Restaurant Group:** Modena, Bombay Club and Rasika

When some labor disputes with businesses cannot be resolved, the AFL-CIO supports its affiliates by endorsing their boycotts. A boycott is an act of solidarity by voluntarily abstaining from the purchase or use of a product or service.

POLICY GUIDELINE FOR ENDORSEMENT OF AFFILIATES' BOYCOTTS

The AFL-CIO Executive Council has developed policy guidelines that regulate how the federation endorses boycotts undertaken by its affiliates. To get AFL-CIO sanction, boycotts should be directed at primary employers.

THE GUIDELINES INCLUDE THESE PROVISIONS:

All requests to the national AFL-CIO for endorsement must be made by a national or international union.

Any affiliated union with a contract in force with the same primary employer will be contacted by the AFL-CIO to determine whether there is an objection to the federation's endorsement.

Affiliates will be asked to provide the AFL-CIO with background information on the dispute in a confidential information survey. Prior to endorsement of the boycott, the executive officers, or their designees, will meet with the national union's officers, or their designees, to discuss the union's strategic plan and timetable for the boycott, or other appropriate tactics, and to discuss the federation's role.

The national or international union initiating the boycott is primarily responsible for all boycott activities; the AFL-CIO will provide supplemental support.

Boycotts will be carried on the AFL-CIO national boycott list for a period of one year, and the endorsement will expire automatically at the end of that time. National and international unions may request one-year extensions of the listings for actions where an organizing or bargaining campaign is actively in place.

(These guidelines were adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council in April 2011.)

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PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID
WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME VALUE

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UL&STD thanks Ullico for supporting our mission.

EndNotes

By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*



As public polling continues to show growing support for the labor movement, union members and working families have an opportunity to turn that support into meaningful action. One of the most direct and effective ways to stand with workers is to buy union-made products and utilize services provided by union members.

Every purchase sends a message. When consumers choose union-made goods and services, they support family-sustaining wages, safe working conditions, quality training, and the right of workers to have a voice on the job. Likewise, boycotting employers engaged in unfair labor practices demonstrates that working people and their allies are prepared to stand up for fairness and accountability in the marketplace.

The Union Label and Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO maintains its “Do Buy” and boycott lists to give union members and the public the tools they need to make informed purchasing decisions. These resources, available through unionlabel.org, help consumers identify products made by union labor and businesses that respect workers’ rights. Union-made labels represent more than quality craftsmanship. They signify dignity on the job, fair wages, and workplaces where employees have fought collectively for a voice and a better future.

As highlighted in this issue of the *Label Letter*, the Department is asking affiliated unions and all labor organizations to assist in expanding and updating its Airtable database of union-made products and services. Accurate, up-to-date information is essential in helping consumers connect their spending habits with their values and ensuring union-made products remain visible and accessible in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

This issue also includes model contract language that would require employers to display the union label, bug, or logo on products made by union workers or prominently in workplaces where union services are provided. Greater visibility of union labor helps educate consumers, promotes pride among workers, and strengthens public awareness of the critical role unions play throughout the economy.

Union members hold enormous economic power. When working people intentionally support union-made products and union employers, they reinforce the strength of the labor movement beyond the bargaining table. Shopping cart solidarity strengthens unions, protects jobs, and reminds employers that union workers and their allies stand together both in the workplace and in the marketplace.



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