



Label Letter

Vol. XXXIX, No. 2
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Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO



SAVE THE DATE

STOP STAPLES
NATIONAL DAY
OF ACTION
APRIL 24, 2014

Union membership grows in the South

The labor movement is alive and growing in the 11 states that make up the Old South, putting a sharp focus on the tension between those who see a progressive future for that region and those who want to keep southern working families politically docile. According to the U.S. Labor Department—five southern states provided the most dramatic growth in union membership in the nation:

Tennessee was tops, with a 25% growth in union membership, followed by Georgia, at 22.2%; Alabama, 22.2%; South Carolina, 19%; and Virginia, 13.2%. Lower base numbers make those percentages look more dramatic than they might otherwise, but the growth of manufacturing and investment in the South is undeniably fostering an improved climate for union organizing.

Last September, the AFL-CIO Convention adopted a “southern strategy” calling on all AFL-CIO affiliated unions to “commit the necessary resources to sustain a strong and viable workers’ movement,” explained Brett Hulme, president of the Savannah (GA) Regional Central Labor Council that sponsored the Convention resolution. Hulme says US manufacturing, finance capital and foreign investment locating in the South have enabled the region to become a major player in the global economy, but without union representation, he says, workers are not sharing in the growing prosperity of the region.

Union organizers will continue to encounter an entrenched opposition

APWU: U.S. Mail is not for sale STOP STAPLES

“I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign or domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me god.”

The oath of civil service is given to every federal government employee, including postal workers, when they begin their career. That oath isn’t something that postal workers take lightly. That oath ensures that postal workers put the business of the American people first.

Beginning with a pilot program between the office-supply chain Staples and the United States Postal Service in four geographic areas, good middle-class postal service jobs will now be performed by low-wage retail employees rather than

by civil servants who took that oath of service. The future of the Staples retail stores is in question after the company announced in March that it would close 15 percent of its stores in North America.

Eighty-two Staples stores have opened postal counters as part of the new agreement between the USPS and Staples. “If postal management and Staples consider the pilot successful, the program may be expanded to the chain’s 1,600 other locations, and agreements between the USPS and other big retailers may follow,” The

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Memorial Day

Celebrate the union way!



Use these products from members of the BCTGM, IBB, IUANPW, IUE-CWA, UAW and the UFCW.

FIRE UP A UNION-MADE GRILL:

- Weber (made by Int'l Union of Allied Novelty and Production Workers)
- Thermador (IBB-made)



ON A BUN:

- Butterball burgers and franks
- Wenzel's sausage
- Smithfield sausage
- Oscar Meyer hot dogs
- Boars Head hot dogs
- Ball Park Franks
- Hebrew National franks
- Foster Farms fresh chicken
- Hormel Red Franks
- Nathan's Ball Park hot dogs

THE BUN TO PUT 'EM ON:

- Wonder brand
- Alfred Nickles Bakery
- Stroehmann
- Arnold
- Francisco

TOP 'EM OFF:

- Heinz Ketchup
- Open Pit
- French's
- Gulden's Mustard
- Frank's Red Hot
- Vlasic brand pickles

ON THE SIDE:

- Munchos
- Funyuns
- Rold Gold
- Frito-Lay
- Doritos
- Chex Mixes
- Lays
- Sun Chips

ADULT BEVERAGES:

- American Lager
- Camo Black Ice
- Hamm's
- Miller beer
- Shock Top
- Budweiser
- Iron City
- Mad River
- Michelob
- Pennsylvania Style Lager, Light and Ice

WINE

- Chateau Ste. Michelle
- Columbia Crest
- Saddle Mountain
- Farron Ridge
- Scheid Vineyards Inc.
- Balletto
- Charles Krug
- C.K. Mondavi
- C.R. Cellars
- Gallo of Sonoma
- Gallo Estate
- Turning Leaf

ALCOHOL

- Jim Beam
- Bacardi Rum
- Seagram's
- Captain Morgan
- Fleishman's
- Margaritaville
- Skol
- Wild Turkey
- Knob Creek

NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES:

- Welch's Juices
- Minute Maid
- Hawaiian Punch
- Mott's
- V8
- Sprite
- Mountain Dew
- Pepsi, Diet Pepsi
- Coke, Diet Coke

RECIPE

From the kitchen of:

Union-made Buffalo chicken dip



- 1 (8 oz.) pkg. Horizon Dairy or Kraft Philadelphia Cream Cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup FRANK'S® RedHot® Original Cayenne Pepper Sauce or FRANK'S® RedHot® Buffalo Wings Sauce
- 1/2 cup Kraft Bleu cheese or Hidden Valley Ranch dressing
- 2 cups Shredded cooked Foster Farms fresh chicken.
- 1/2 cup Kraft Crumbled bleu cheese or your favorite Hiland Dairy shredded cheese

DIRECTIONS: PREHEAT oven to 350°F.

COMBINE all ingredients in a Pyrex 1-quart baking dish.

BAKE 20 min. or until mixture is heated through; stir. Serve with Nabisco crackers, Bimbo Bakeries breads and/or Mann's Carrots and other crunchy companions by Eurofresh Vegetables.

This bill 'paid for by union wages'

The St. Louis Union Label and Service Trades Council is printing stickers that union members can attach to cash, checks or credit card receipts, letting business owners know that the purchase was paid for by union wages.

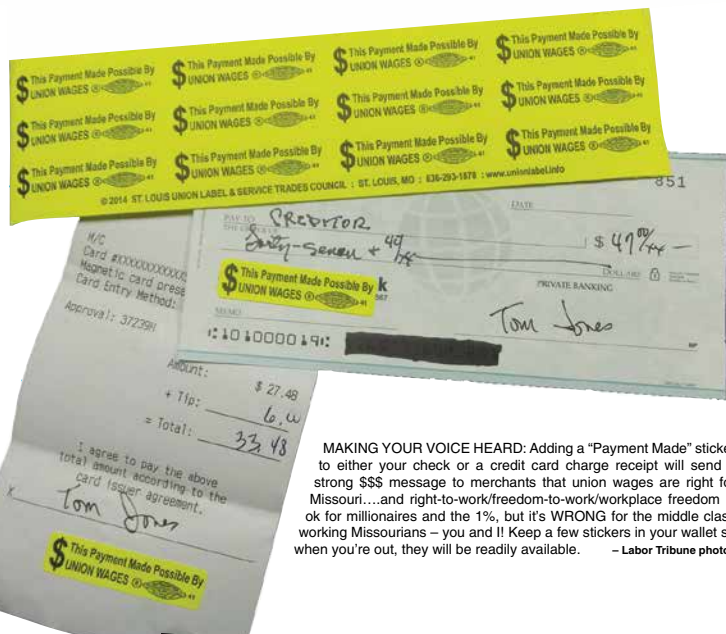
The stickers are one response to the efforts of state Republicans to pass so-called right-to-work legislation, introducing a bill to that effect earlier this year.

Right-to-work laws have been shown to drive down wages by an average of \$1,500 a year for all workers – union and nonunion alike. These wage cuts hurt not only workers, but also communities and local businesses dependent on consumer spending.

As St. Louis IBEW Local 1's blog recently pointed out, not only does Missouri boast higher wages and a better quality of life than neighboring right-to-work Tennessee, it's also a better place to do business:

Missouri is ranked 34th versus Tennessee at 42nd in economic growth. Missouri also ranked 17 in cost of energy in all sectors versus Tennessee at 30. Additionally Missouri made the list at 3 of the top ten states for tech job growth. Tennessee didn't appear on the list at all.

To order stickers, contact the St. Louis Union Label and Service Trades Council at thedarrahs@hotmail.com or call 636-379-1134/636-293-1878. ■



MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD: Adding a "Payment Made" sticker to either your check or a credit card charge receipt will send a strong \$\$\$ message to merchants that union wages are right for Missouri...and right-to-work/freedom-to-work/workplace freedom is ok for millionaires and the 1%, but it's WRONG for the middle class working Missourians – you and I! Keep a few stickers in your wallet so when you're out, they will be readily available. – Labor Tribune photos



WALK IN MY SHOES

Walter Johnson III

BCTGM LOCAL 252G
MECHANIC, 33 YEARS —
LOCKED OUT KELLOGG
WORKER, MEMPHIS TENN.



I've been a mechanic at Kellogg Company in Memphis, Tennessee for 33 years. I was recently diagnosed with Atrial Fibrillation. They took me out in an ambulance.

In October 2013, my coworkers and I were locked out after we refused to accept the company's outrageous take-backs.

The day we got locked out I lost my company insurance, and all medical benefits, that day! I couldn't get the heart operation I needed, which meant I could have had a stroke. It was scary sitting there wondering, "am I gonna make it, til I can finally have this surgery." For years I did right by my company, but they did not do right by me.

I never thought I would be in this position. ■

Spotlight the label: AFSCME



Started in 1932, when a group of white collar professional state employees met in Madison, Wisconsin, and created the Wisconsin State Employees Union, AFSCME has grown into the nation's largest and fastest growing public services employees union with more than 1.6 million working and retired members.

AFSCME's members provide the vital services that make America happen. They are nurses, corrections officers, child care providers, EMTs, sanitation workers and more. With members in hundreds of different occupations, AFSCME advocates for fairness in the workplace, excellence in public services and prosperity and opportunity for all working families. ■

Safety gets a higher priority on union jobs

On March 19, a 21-year-old worker fell to his death off a water tower in Maryland. The worker was a private contractor working on communications equipment atop the tower but his story is not unique. Fifteen percent of workplace fatalities are attributed to falls and OSHA's top cited worker safety violation is failure to protect workers from falls, but that standard applies to the construction industry. Does repair of communications equipment constitute construction? With the way OSHA regulations are applied in this day and age, the answer is likely "No."

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that there were 4,383 fatal work injuries in 2012 but there were nearly 3 million nonfatal injuries, a number of which resulted in eight or more days away from work.

ARE UNION WORKPLACES SAFER?

Data about the rates of workplace deaths and injuries point to a trend: unionized workplaces report higher numbers of nonfatal injuries than their nonunion counterparts, but fewer fatalities. That might seem counterintuitive, until researchers factor in the elevated safety awareness that exists with union representation.

A detailed comparison of individual injury and illness reports from various reporting systems found that only one in three workplace injuries and illnesses was reported on the OSHA log and captured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics survey. A union workplace is more likely to have a safety representative in place and workers don't feel intimidated about reporting injuries. In addition, union workers are more aware of the importance of reporting their injury, whether to protect themselves under workers' compensation procedures or to force their company into more vigilance in their safety programs.

"We know, through worker reports at some of our organizing targets, that injuries at non-unionized job sites are going unreported," said Ron Ault, president of the AFL-CIO's Metal Trades Department, which represents workers at shipyards and other industrial facilities in the U.S. "The workers are urged by their supervi-

sors to not report and to see a company doctor so OSHA inspectors aren't alerted to the jobsite's hazards."

Union workplaces report higher numbers of injuries because of a greater awareness of the importance of reporting. The fact remains that all workplaces are safer because of unions. Unions were the driving force in establishing valuable reforms in workplace safety since they advocated the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970.

WHAT HAS OSHA DONE?

Since OSHA's inception, workplace fatalities have been reduced by more than 65 percent and occupational injury and illness rates have declined by 67 percent. At the same time, U.S. employment has almost doubled.

Worker deaths in America are down—on average, from about 38 worker deaths a day in 1970 to 12 a day in 2012.

Worker injuries and illnesses are down—from 10.9 incidents per 100 workers in 1972 to 3.5 per 100 in 2011.

But workplace safety laws have stalled — it takes an average of seven years to get new standards in place. The Bush Administration successfully rolled back a standard on repetitive motion injuries developed at the end of the Clinton Administration.

"It has taken OSHA more than 15 years to develop a standard for silica dust exposure and the standard is still incomplete," said

Randall Krocka, administrator for the Sheet Metal Occupational Health Institute Trust.

"The Occupational Safety and Health Act is now more than 40 years old. While it fulfilled its early vision, it's been eviscerated by meager budgets, stalled reforms and anti-worker, pro-business measures," Krocka added.

WHAT SHOULD OSHA DO?

A workgroup at the Center for Progressive Reform in June 2011 concluded that OSHA maintains too few inspectors, the fines it imposes are too small to deter businesses and its rulemaking process is outdated. The AFL-CIO last year urged Congress "to extend the OSHAct's coverage to workers currently excluded, strengthen civil and criminal penalties for violations, enhance anti-discrimination protections and strengthen the rights of workers, unions and victims."

Krocka believes that local unions and their safety and health representatives need to combat workplace safety complacency, reminding workers that fall protection equipment is in place for a reason, that respirators and eye protection use are imperative, that deli employees should wear their gloves when operating their slicers. Workers should be vigilant about coworker behavior, letting managers and supervisors know if a worker is demonstrating unsettling behavior. Saying something could prevent one of the leading causes of workplace fatalities — homicide. ■



**SAFE
JOBS
SAVE
LIVES**

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

AFL-CIO.WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY.APRIL 28



The U.S. Mail Is Not for Sale

STOP STAPLES, Continued from page 1

American Postal Workers Union (APWU) President Mark Dimondstein said. “We’ve got to make sure every postal employee understands how serious the threat is.”

“The Staples pilot is a major step toward privatizing retail services,” he added. “If we don’t stop it here, mail processing, transportation, maintenance and other operations will soon follow. We can only stop these privatization plans if we work and fight together.”

APWU believes that this partnership between the USPS and Staples is a “direct assault on postal jobs and public postal services,” according to a statement issued by the Union.

APWU Local 1462 president Steve Morris, was recently quoted as saying that the plan will “jeopardize the safety and security of the U.S. mail system, and consumers are getting a bad deal, too.” Morris points out that “Staples employees staffing the mail counters won’t have the training and expertise required of career postal workers who must qualify for their assignments, pass a civil

service exam to be hired, and take an oath to protect the U.S. mail.”

Unionized postal workers earned an average of \$25.00 an hour in 2013 and had benefits such as health care. While the average non-managerial Staples employee is reported to earn \$8 or \$9 an hour and often lacks benefits.

NLRB: USPS MUST GIVE APWU STAPLES INFO

In a complaint issued in late February, Region 5 of the National Labor Relations Board upheld charges filed by the APWU. APWU had charged that the U.S. Postal Service had improperly refused to provide the union with information about its agreement with Staples. A hearing before an Administrative Law judge was scheduled for March 31, 2014.

The Region 5 NLRB also recommended that the board seek an injunction in federal court to compel the USPS to provide the requested information to the APWU. The decision to recommend an injunction is very rare, according to the union’s attorneys. Violations carry heavy penalties for

management officials who fail to comply, up to and including incarceration.

APWU President Dimondstein applauded the ruling. “This is an important victory for the APWU and for postal customers. The Staples deal is a brazen attempt to privatize postal retail services and it has been shrouded in secrecy,” he said.

“Postal officials seem to forget that the Postal Service belongs to the people,” Dimondstein said. “We intend to keep reminding them.”

STAPLES ANNOUNCES CLOSURE OF 225 STORES

On the heels of the USPS partnership with Staples, the retail office supply chain announced it would close 225 stores in North America by the end of 2015.

“What would happen if service is moved to a Staples store, the nearby Post Office is closed and sold—and then Staples closes its store?” Asks a press release issued by the APWU.

“This proves, more than ever,” said Dimondstein, “that it’s a bad idea to turn public services over to a private company that can close stores at will, with no public input and no public comment.”

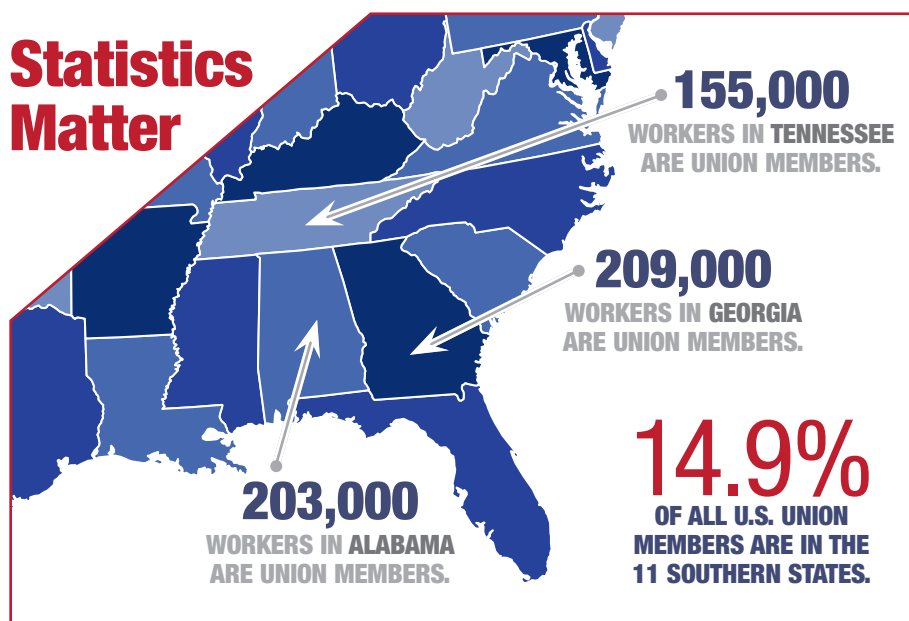
The U.S. Postmaster General has said he plans to expand this “pilot plan” to 1,500 U.S. Staples’ stores. And bills pending in Congress would make it easier to close and sell off U.S. Post Offices.

For more information on the Stop Staples Campaign visit the APWU’s website at www.APWU.org or send a message to Staples at www.stopstaples.com. ■

THE SOUTH..., Continued from page 1

led by conservative politicians and well funded anti-union groups that are vested in the notion that empowered workers present a threat to the status quo.

Traditional anti-tax, anti-union opponents of southern organizing are unabashedly clear about the threat they see: “A higher unionization rate in the South could lead to a different political culture,” said Matt Patterson in an article published by the Chattanooga Times Free Press in February. Patterson, who heads the deceptively named “Center for Worker Freedom,” worries that union representation will provide support to political candidates that “lean left and are contrary to political views of most people in the South.” ■



PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID
WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME VALUE

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EndNotes

By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*

The war on workers goes on



Some say the economy is on upswing and then they quickly amend their comment to reflect the inequities in enjoying that improvement. The same

folks who take credit for righting the economy tell us that one percent of the population takes the bulk of the increased wealth.

What they don't say is that the background noise in the 2014 economy is a continuing war on workers. From Staten Island, NY to Santa Monica, people are aware of the unfairness.

In Memphis, Kellogg workers have been locked out for months. The giant cereal maker wants to cut the wages and benefits of its workers, members of the Bakery Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain

Millers union. The BCTGM members are not giving in.

The Postal Service wants to outsource work done by postal employees, members of American Postal Workers Union, to Staples, a big box office supply store staffed by low wage workers. The Postal Service cites consumer convenience as its objective, while its real goal is cutting jobs in Post Offices.

Walmart continues to pay low wages with benefits so low or nonexistent that its

The same folks who take credit for righting the economy tell us that one percent of the population takes the bulk of the increased wealth.

employees are frequently on food stamps and other public assistance. In other words, taxpayers supplement the Walmart wages. Walmart maintains its rigid opposition to its employees' forming a union.

Rightwing reactionaries in Tennessee used their offices and claims of special insider knowledge and fear mongering about economic collapse to undermine an

United Auto Workers campaign to unionize a Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga. VW management favored the union's efforts, but the conservative politicians opposed bringing union rights to their region.

Can anyone doubt that workers rights are threatened by these and similar situations. Solidarity and support for those under attack is required as we work for improved conditions. ■



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