



2022 UNITED STEELWORKERS CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION COVERAGE

DAY FOUR



JAGMEET SINGH: 'WE'RE GOING TO KEEP ON FIGHTING'



The leader of Canada's New Democratic Party, Jagmeet Singh, applauded USW members for their efforts to make needed improvements inside and outside the workplace and vowed to continue his party's efforts to lift up workers' voices and advance priorities that benefit working families.

"Every one of you contributes to making your communities a better place," Singh said while addressing delegates on Thursday. "Every one of you works hard for your members, for your fellow workers – where you work, and to make your communities better."

Singh reminded delegates that their advocacy benefits everyone.

"Every single time you fight for better wages or good jobs, every single time you fight for better working conditions, you are improving the working conditions of your members, but really of all workers,"

he said.

In both Canada and the United States, the pandemic took a heavy toll on workers, Singh said. Now, as they face widespread inflation, it is more important than ever for elected leaders to step up and deliver results.

"We need politicians to show up for workers, to respect workers and to deliver the help that workers need," he said. "And, I can tell you that the New Democratic Party will always be there for workers."

While noting his party's successes in combatting economic inequality, Singh also vowed to continue the fight for worker-centered policies.

"We are going to keep on fighting every step of the way," said Singh. "We're going to fight to make sure the ultra-rich pay their fair share and reinvest that back into the people. We're going to fight

for more action on the climate crisis by creating new jobs. We're going to fight for fair trade laws that protect workers and lift workers up."

John Horgan, NDP Premier of British Columbia, could not join in person but thanked the USW members by video for their support.

Over the past five years, the provincial government has made significant changes for workers, he said, like making it easier for workers to join a union, introducing paid sick days, and implementing the highest minimum wage in Canada.

"These are basic changes in how we operate in British Columbia, directly resulting from the NDP and the Steelworkers working together to lift working people up," Horgan said.



DELEGATES VOTE TO ADVANCE HEALTH, SAFETY WORK

USW convention delegates unanimously approved resolutions on Thursday to advance the union's fight for safer and healthier workplaces, while also paying tribute to their fellow Steelworkers who lost their lives in workplace incidents.

The first resolution, "Health, Safety and Environment," contained a long list of commitments USW members made to step up their efforts to protect each other. That vote was followed by a scroll memorializing all of the workers at USW-represented facilities killed on the job in the five years since the union's last convention.

The memorial scroll of 144 fallen workers' names, International President Tom Conway said, was a powerful reminder of why the union's priority must always be making sure that workers come home safely at the end of their shifts.

Later in the morning, another resolution passed unanimously recommitting

the USW to supporting its Emergency Response Team (ERT) program, which provides victims, family members and co-workers with immediate assistance in the aftermath of a serious workplace injury or death. The team, which includes member coordinators across the union, responded to 220 incidents since the 2017 convention.

Thursday's focus on safety and health kicked off with the delegation marking the 30th anniversary of the Westray mine disaster and celebrating the work USW members did in the aftermath to enact change.

On May 9, 1992, an explosion killed 26 underground coal miners in Plymouth, Nova Scotia. Following that tragedy, USW members launched an effort to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to hold company leaders responsible for violations that result in serious injuries or death. The legislation, known as the Westray Bill, became law in 2004.

Even after that victory, USW members continue their activism with the "Stop the Killing, Enforce the Law" campaign to make sure prosecutors actually put the law to use and hold companies accountable.

"It's never over," Canadian National Director Marty Warren said of the USW's efforts to protect workers. "It's a continuous fight, every day."

To help members with that fight, Thursday's resolution committed USW locals to expanding and improving enforcement of the health and safety clauses in their collective agreements, including the right to refuse unsafe work, and to better educate members about their rights in the workplace. The resolution also urged members to elect

political leaders who support advancements in workplace safety and pledged "unrelenting opposition" to any efforts to weaken any laws protecting workers in the United States or Canada.

More than a dozen members spoke from the floor in strong support of the health and safety resolution, many of them recalling personal experiences with workplace incidents and stories of friends who were injured or killed on the job.

"When you see how these accidents affect families," said Bill Slater of Local 2724 in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, "safety has to be number one."

Bill Fredette of Local 2705 in the Minnesota Iron Range said it's essential that longtime members make sure that newer workers learn about their rights on the job so that all members can fight to protect each other.

"It's important that we share information and educate members," said Fredette. "Safety is everybody's job."



DELEGATES BACK POLITICAL, RAPID RESPONSE ACTIVISM



USW convention delegates voted on Thursday to redouble the union's efforts to support pro-worker political candidates and to expand the USW's work to educate and mobilize members on issues important to working families.

The union also announced awards for members and locals that have been particularly effective and successful activists in the union's Political Action Committee (PAC) and Rapid Response programs.

The "Political Action Committee" resolution reaffirmed the members' support for the union's PAC work, in which the international union, districts and locals raise funds and use those funds to mobilize voters on behalf of worker-friendly candidates. The program is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from members.

Several members spoke about the importance of workers becoming politically active so they can prevent corporate

interests from dominating the political arena.

Justus Smith of Local 307 in Topeka, Kan., said that the work of the USW PAC is particularly important in right-to-work (for less) states like his.

"This committee is essential to ensure that our voices are being heard at the electoral and legislative levels," Smith said.

The "Rapid Response" resolution is intended to advance the union's non-partisan grassroots education and action program that aims to employ the union's communications network to inform every USW member about important labor and work-related legislation and issues.

Several speakers, including International President Tom Conway, said that PAC, Rapid Response and similar education and mobilization programs are essential to the union's success because they give USW members the ability to put "boots on the ground," make their voices heard and compete with the heavy lobbying and spending done by huge corporations and billionaires in Washington, D.C., Ottawa, and on the local, state and provincial levels.

"When scores of Steelworkers show up on Capitol Hill wearing blue and gold, people pay attention," Conway said.



USW CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION ADOPTS RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING NEED FOR RETIREE ACTIVISM

The USW 2022 Constitutional Convention on Thursday adopted a resolution in strong support of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) in its mission to keep generations of workers connected.

“Everybody’s Union definitely includes our retirees,” said USW SOAR Coordinator Julie Stein. “In fact, it is absolutely essential to include SOAR members for us to be Everybody’s Union.”

The resolution encourages the union to find new and inventive ways to incorporate SOAR chapters into all aspects of the USW’s work on political issues, strategic campaigns and other mobilizations.

“We can’t afford to leave people on the sideline when we need to fight, and there’s a lot of experience there,” Conway said. “This is an essential part of the work the union does.”

The resolution also seeks to help grow the SOAR membership by encouraging local unions to cover the cost of first-year dues and bargaining checkoff for future retiree membership.

Bonnie Carey, a SOAR board member from District 11, thanked members of USW Local 105 for supporting their SOAR chapter while speaking in favor of the resolution.

Their investment in SOAR “keeps our chapter thriving. It keeps us active. It keeps money coming in to us to help us to be involved in the community, to help politically, and to try to help the local,” Carey said.

Earlier this year, SOAR members from Carey’s chapter provided a strong showing of inter-generational solidarity in support of negotiations with Arconic, including a plant-gate rally, she said.

The value of mentorship SOAR members provide to local union leaders cannot be overstated, said Local 3267 President Charles Perko from Pueblo, Colo., speaking in favor of the resolution.

He credited his local SOAR chapter for providing more than 150 years of local union leadership expertise at his fingertips as a new local union officer.

Prior to the convention, about 100 delegates and guests gathered on Aug. 5 and 6, for the 13th annual SOAR conference.

Retired members heard from speakers, including members of the USW International Executive Board, elected new SOAR leaders, and passed a series of resolutions supporting the USW’s work in bargaining, political activism and organizing.



VETERANS OF STEEL



Delegates to the 2022 Convention on Thursday approved an amendment to establish a Veterans’ Committee at each USW local under Article 7, Section 15 of the International Constitution.



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USW RESOLVES TO BUILD POWER AMONG FRONTLINE, PROFESSIONAL WORKERS

Delegates to the 2022 Constitutional Convention Thursday passed a resolution committing the USW to ramping up efforts to organize and build power in education, health care, security, telecommunications and other rapidly growing professional sectors.

The resolution saluted the sacrifices that workers in these and similar fields made during the COVID-19 pandemic and rededicated the union to helping these members bargain better contracts, safer working conditions and a greater voice on the job.

“On a daily basis, our members were

spit on, hit and cursed at,” said Sherry Charette, president of Local 9597, which represents 6,000 security officers and airport screeners across Ontario. “You name it, they had to deal with it. I think a lot more needs to be done for our security industry.”

Delegates gave the union’s 50,000 health care workers a standing ovation Monday, the opening day of the convention, when International President Tom Conway saluted the contributions they’ve made during the pandemic. The resolution adopted Thursday aims at further empowering these workers and providing the resources they need to

protect themselves and their patients.

It commits the union to fighting for safe staffing levels, for example, and helping members better leverage their collective power through the USW’s Health Care Workers Council and a Health Care Workers Council Conference to be held at least once every two years.

“You would not believe the stuff employers try to get away with,” said Duane McEwan of Local 1-207 in Alberta, noting members at understaffed long-term care facilities compiled “work short lists” that ended up the size of “two or three telephone books.”

