



# 2022 UNITED STEELWORKERS CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION COVERAGE

DAY TWO



## DELEGATES DIRECT MAJOR FOCUS ON ORGANIZING



Delegates to the 2022 Constitutional Convention redoubled the USW's commitment to organizing Tuesday, passing resolutions to fuel union drives across broad swaths of the economy and raise the USW's profile as a "growing, progressive union" that "helps people change their lives by unionizing."

"People want more power. They want more of a voice. They want more opportunity," International President Tom Conway said, referring to the surging demand for union representation amid a pandemic that's shown workers how much they need the protections and benefits of organized labor.

Union election petitions filed with the U.S. National Labor Relations Board skyrocketed 58 percent in recent months. At the same time, unfair labor practice charges shot up 16 percent, reflecting employers' efforts to thwart organizing drives at any cost.

In one resolution, "Organizing for Strength," delegates called on the USW

to fight relentlessly against so-called right-to-work laws, union-busting campaigns and other attacks on workers' rights while also marshaling the union's resources to build density in core and emerging industries.

The resolution put a stamp of approval on Conway's plan, announced in April, to recruit and train dozens of members for grassroots, worker-to-worker organizing in both countries. It also directed the USW to support local union organizing committees, build new alliances with community allies and widely promote the advantages of union membership.

"If everybody knew what this union is, it would be 'Everybody's Union,'" said Martin L'Abbée, USW staff representative and member of Local 9584 in Quebec, one of 20 delegates who rose to speak in support of the resolution.

In a second resolution, "Honoring Our Past and Present While Building the Next Generation," delegates laid the groundwork for growing the union

through the USW NextGen program, the AFL-CIO's Next Up initiative and the young workers committee at the Canadian Labour Congress.

And in a third resolution, "Environmental Responsibility: Acting Today to Protect USW Jobs Now and in the Future," delegates directed the union to support "all current generating options for electric utilities" while also reaching out to workers in wind, solar and other emerging industries.

These efforts will build on the USW's recent organizing successes, which include welcoming prison chaplains, baristas, university professors, professional football players and tire industry workers, among thousands of others, into the union. Delegates watched a video recounting how workers at Kumho Tire in Macon, Ga., overcame the company's brutal anti-union campaign to join the USW.

"The good guys always win in the end," declared Alex Perkins, a leader of the Kumho drive.

# KEMAL ÖZKAN: EFFECTIVE ACTION REQUIRES INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Only international solidarity can help workers “rebalance the scales” and build better lives as greedy multinational corporations seek to exploit them around the world, Kemal Özkan, Assistant General Secretary of IndustriALL Global Union, told the 2022 Constitutional Convention.

Özkan assailed corporations for using the pandemic as cover to take advantage of workers, often doing so with the assistance of governments that

suspended labor laws, increased working hours and rolled back health and safety provisions, reversing decades worth of workers’ gains. Right now, he said, workers around the globe face stagnant wages, rising inflation and other common struggles.

“Under the circumstances, dear brothers and sisters, we must work internationally to confront bad bosses, bad governments and union busters,” he said.

While battling these powerful inter-

ests won’t be easy, “it is our fight. Let us move as one,” he added, praising the USW’s contributions to cross-border trade unionism. “Only our movement can build justice in our workplaces and in our communities. We need global solidarity and cooperation for peace, for democracy, for fundamental rights.”

IndustriALL, founded in 2012, represents more than 50 million workers in 140 countries across a wide range of industries, including mining, energy and manufacturing.

## USW PARTNERSHIP WITH UNITE THE UNION EMPOWERS WORKERS TO FIGHT COMMON CHALLENGES

In keeping with Tuesday’s focus on international solidarity at the USW Convention, Unite the Union Director of International and Research Simon Dubbins gave delegates a valuable perspective from USW allies across the Atlantic.

Since corporate-level decisions made by executives of multinational companies can have serious impacts on workers anywhere and everywhere, the USW and Unite have aligned with trade unions around the world to work across international borders and better represent members.

The USW and Unite the Union formalized their partnership in 2008 when together they formed Workers Uniting, bringing together more than three million active and retired workers from the United States, Canada, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland who work in nearly every sector of the global economy. The Mexican union, Los Mineros,

joined Workers Uniting in 2018.

Dubbins pointed out that working families have had enough of anti-union government policies and double-digit inflation while corporate profits and executive compensation continue to soar.

“The challenges that you are facing here are absolutely the same as the challenges facing our members in the U.K. and Ireland – and indeed facing workers everywhere,” Dubbins said. “Enough is enough, and we’re not having it anymore.”

Dubbins said that workers made massive sacrifices and took risks throughout the pandemic to keep the economy going, but the cost of energy and the inflation crisis have impacted standards of living to the point where workers have been pushed to fight back in a wave of strikes.

“Workers are mobilizing and organizing again on a scale we haven’t seen for 50 years,” he said. “I sincerely believe that if we overcome our fears and move forward together, then we can build a better future for all of us.”



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## MEXICAN LABOR LEADER CELEBRATES USW CONNECTION

**M**exican Senator and labor leader Napoleón Gómez Urrutia kicked off a celebration of global solidarity on day two of the USW convention Tuesday morning.

Gómez, one of dozens of international guests and observers from 20 nations to join the delegation, credited the support of the USW with allowing him to return triumphantly to Mexico in 2018 after 12 years in exile while fighting bogus corruption charges.

“They brought us friendship, support and solidarity,” Gomez said of current and former USW leaders. “I honor and thank them.”

Throughout his address, Gomez rattled off a list of pro-worker victories that he and other Mexican leaders have achieved since he joined the senate.

Gomez reminded the USW delegates that the last time he addressed them in 2017, he was living in exile in Canada, Mexico was overrun with company-run “protection” unions, and Los Mineros, one of the country’s few democratic unions, was

under relentless attack.

“Today I am a senator,” he said. “And we have passed labor laws that mandate democratic control of unions by their members.”

None of it would have been possible without international solidarity from the USW, he said, specifically thanking International President Tom Conway, past President Leo W. Gerard, former Canadian Director Ken Neumann, late District 12 Director Bob LaVenture and others for their support.

Gomez said that, with continued support, he will keep pushing for pro-worker reforms. The USW delegation vowed to support those efforts on Tuesday when it passed the resolution “Global Unity and Activism,” recommitting the union to building global solidarity.

“Today we still face many challenges,” Gomez said, citing unfair trade, low pay, supply chain problems and other issues brought about due to globalization and corporate greed. “We must keep organizing, fighting to increase wages and end the race to the bottom.”



# MEMBER TURNED LAWMAKER URGES WORKERS TO RUN FOR OFFICE



**U**SW member and Louisiana State Sen. Ed Price urged his fellow workers to take politics into their own hands by running for office and using their power to enact laws to support labor.

“It’s you who must step up and make a difference,” Price, a Democrat, told USW convention delegates on Tuesday. “It’s not easy, but nothing worth doing ever is.”

Price said it doesn’t matter where members start their political work, as long as they make working families their priority. Price first ran for office in 1985 when he won a school board seat with the support of his local union, then part of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Work-

ers (OCAW).

When his local at BASF endured a five-and-a-half year lockout in the 1980s, Price said, the experience demonstrated the importance of solidarity with workers inside and outside of the union.

“We make things happen by working together,” he said.

Despite living in a state where the right-wing majority often attacks workers’ rights, Price said he hasn’t given up hope that the labor movement can achieve positive change.

“You’re not in this fight alone. I am one of many, but we need more of you on the front lines,” he said. “Whether it’s at the local, state, or national level, we must have leaders in office who are willing to fight for workers.”

Another USW member turned lawmaker, Jamie West, of Local 6500, in Sudbury, Ontario, delivered a similar message to retirees gathered for the SOAR conference, traditionally held in the days before the constitutional convention.

West is a Member of Provincial Parliament in Ontario, representing constituents in Sudbury for the New Democratic Party (NDP), founded in 1961 with the support of the USW. He said that before his election, he already knew the NDP was the party of workers, because NDP leaders were the only ones who showed up during a 2009 strike at his workplace.

“There is nothing I love more in life,” West said, “than speaking on behalf of workers.”

A logo for "Next Gen" featuring the word "NEXT" in a large, stylized font above the word "GEN" in a smaller, bold font. The entire logo is enclosed in a white rectangular border.

# NE XT GEN

A photograph of Justin Willis, a Local 7-507 member, speaking at a podium. He has a beard and is wearing a grey shirt with a USW lanyard around his neck. The background is dark with some blue lighting.

Local 7-507 member  
Justin Willis introduces  
the resolution “Honoring  
Our Past and Present  
While Building the Next  
Generation.”