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# 21 NEWS

Editor: Gerald Kell [WWW.USW2-21.COM](http://WWW.USW2-21.COM) October, 2016  
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21 News is a periodic publication of USW (United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union) Local 2-21, 1201 Sheridan Road, Escanaba, Michigan 49829. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily that of the International Union, the Local 2-21 membership, or the officers of these bodies. The editor reserves the right to refuse any article that is detrimental to the Local Union or the USW. Article accuracy and content is the responsibility of the author.

## Important Information & Events

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

[www.freckmanandassociates.com](http://www.freckmanandassociates.com) (800) 331-3226

**Retiree Get Together** 1st Wednesday of month 10am - Union Hall

**Union Meeting:** 2nd Wednesday - 7 pm – Dinner 6 pm

**Steward's Meeting:** 4th Wednesday - 3 pm at the Hall

**Welfare Club Meeting:** 1st Monday of the month - 7 pm at the Mead Rod & Gun Club

**Total Benefit Solutions:** Union Hall hours on the first two Wednesdays of each month from 9:30 to 3:30. Call 1.877.265.2212 to schedule an appointment.

## Committee Members

President	Steve Benoit .....	233-2529	399-4195
1st Vice	Chuck Way.....	233-2705	280-1698
2nd Vice	Bob Larson.....		420-2256
3rd Vice	Jeff Skorupski.....	233-2556	399-5472
Insurance	Gerald Kell.....	233-3135	869-7943
Comp	Ross Strand.....	233-2549	280-1494
Secretary	Brandon Stromberg.....	233-2714	284-1604
Treasurer	Guy Trudell.....	233-2534	399-9143
Hall Rental	Steve Kennedy.....		789-1933

**Lon Johnson**  
for  
**U.S. Congress**

Scott  
**Ceello**  
for STATE REPRESENTATIVE

 **Clinton Kaine**

## Rock the Vote!

*Brandon Stromberg, Secretary/Rapid Response*

You may have heard it's an election year! Are you excited? There is much at stake! What's at stake, you ask? Well, let's look at what has happened the last few years just in our home state of Michigan and focus on a couple of the local races. Since Governor Rick Snyder and the Republican legislature took power, there has been a burdensome tax shift. When House Bill 4361 (PA 38-2011) was enacted, large businesses saw their taxes decrease by \$1.4 Billion. Meanwhile, Michigan citizens saw their taxes increase \$1.2 Billion—anyone notice an increase when they went to renew their vehicle registration lately? Next came Right to Work, taxing pensions, tax increases for seniors, cutting the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), cuts in unemployment benefits, and cuts in workman's compensation. Furthermore, after handing out a cash windfall to his big money campaign donors, Snyder and his GOP legislature then expected us to pass a massive tax increase to take care of our crumbling infrastructure! We turned out in droves to vote that down in an off cycle election, why can't we get that same action to get them out of office? You might think to yourself, "How the HELL did all this happen and I wasn't aware of it?" My first reply would be, "Did you vote?" If you answer "yes" then you are allowed to complain. The Republicans in Michigan have unfettered POWER. In the state House of Representatives, the Republicans outnumber Democrats 61-45 (with 1 Independent and 3 vacant seats). In the Senate it's 27-11. Most of the legislation I mentioned earlier was passed on party lines and signed by Republican Governor Snyder. We simply can no longer afford to deny which party currently has our best interests in mind. There was a time, decades ago, when labor could rely on bipartisan support for reasonable protection of employee's rights—that time appears to have ended.

There are no checks and balances to ensure that the middle class working men and women have a voice. What can we expect from those in power moving forward? More attacks on working men and women. Senate Bill (SB) 279, and 280 would ban union leave time for public employees to negotiate contracts and settle grievances (know any teachers, police officers, firefighters, or municipal employees?); SB 250 would cut minimum wage workers from age 18-20 by \$.90 per hour—that could cost him or her \$1,872/year (know any young men and women trying to work through college?). SB1-3 and House Bill (HB) 4001-3 would eliminate prevailing wage (know any construction workers who rely on “Davis/Bacon”? for a competitive wage and pension?). As you can see we need a change in Michigan. We need to bring balance to our legislature. We need Sheriff **SCOTT CELELLO and LON**

**“There's a direct relationship between the ballot box and the bread box, and what the union fights for and wins at the bargaining table can be taken away in the legislative halls.”**

**JOHNSON**—both of which the USW has endorsed.

Sheriff Scott Celello is running for the 108<sup>th</sup> district for the Michigan House of Representatives. The 108<sup>th</sup> covers Delta, Menominee, and Dickinson counties. Scott has 30 years of law enforcement experience working with the public, working with local legislative and judicial branches, dealing with budgets; while his opponent, Beau LaFave, is 24 years old and has really only worked at a Jimmy John's. I'm sure Beau is a very nice, young man; however, we need experience in the House and he simply has none. Scott wants to repeal the unfair retirement tax on our seniors, end tax breaks for companies that outsource Michigan jobs, and make in-state tuition affordable for us all. Scott understands the challenges we face as a union and as a paper mill and will help us succeed. His opponent, Beau LaFave, has never even held a regular, full-time job, he doesn't understand the plight of paying income tax, or sending kids to college, or how important it is to protect workers' rights. His major campaign donors include the likes of the DeVos family who, if you follow Michigan politics at all, you know wants to privatize education for their own profiteering, privatize social security, and strip away union rights—among other regressive initiatives.

We also have Lon Johnson running for the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District for the U.S. House of

Representatives. The 1<sup>st</sup> District covers all the Upper Peninsula and the northern part of the Lower Peninsula. Lon is running against Jack Bergman who probably couldn't have pointed to the UP on a map until last year. You may have heard in attack ads lately the false claim that Lon does not actually reside in Kalkaska. The truth is he owns a home in Kalkaska *and* in Detroit and the Bergman campaign is trying to exploit this so you don't question his own residency. Meanwhile Jack Bergman recently purchased a small piece of land in the UP with a pole barn on it just to claim it as his residence—similar to what he did to take an appointed position in Louisiana just a couple years ago. For my 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment advocacy friends, Lon Johnson has been given an 'A' rating by the National Rifle Association. When his opponent requested the same

rating, the NRA refused.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, vote for your family, vote for your job, vote for the UP, vote for **SCOTT CELELLO and LON JOHNSON**. As UAW President Walter Reuther said, “There's a direct relationship between the ballot box and the bread box, and what the union fights for and wins at the bargaining table can be taken away in the legislative halls.” Don't let them take away anything else. Vote November 8<sup>th</sup>!



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## Maintenance, Yard, Grievances

*Chuck Way, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*

Yard and Maintenance grievances are scheduled to be discussed on Thursday, September 27th. Human Resources called this meeting as they felt we could make some progress on them. A few Yard jobs have been posted and the vacancies are being filled. Several people from this department have moved to other jobs or retired. The Company transferred a labor pool there and they continue to train that person in various jobs. Also, a bidder from another department has moved there and he continues to train. We met with the Company to discuss the future presence of the Yard department within the mill. As of now, the department will remain intact with some potential role changes, but we will see where this goes. Mechanical Maintenance testing will have concluded by the time you read this. Overall the testing went well with the vast majority receiving a passing grade. Only the future will tell when the actual departmental moves will be made. With so many vacancies waiting to be filled compounded with no training in all parts of the mill it does not look to be soon. The E/I Department continues to develop their classes. They should move forward soon as well.



2500 7th Ave South, Suite 217  
Escanaba, MI 49829 906.789.1400

*Don't throw your hard-earned  
money out the window!  
If you pay for vision insurance, come see us!*

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## Safety Meeting/Master Contract

*Steve Benoit, President*

The Company made us all aware of the changes they have made to the Safety Meeting Attendance Policy, the only problem is that they cannot make these changes unilaterally without sitting down with the Union and bargaining. The Company has now said that if you are scheduled to attend an off-shift meeting and you do not show up for this meeting you would receive a half checkmark. The problem here is that in the past policy it stated, "The check mark system, utilized as part of the mill's attendance policy, **will not** be used." This is very clear and cannot be changed by the Company. We are employing measures to hold them accountable and will utilize the grievance/arbitration process to reaffirm our message that this cannot happen. In several meetings we have clearly stated to the Company they cannot do this and they have chosen to continue regardless. Please be aware of this and if you find yourself in a situation please contact a steward in your area.

### Negotiations

October looks to be the month we will be beginning Master Contract negotiations. The dates are being set and the venue is being chosen. We will be putting out CAT letters as more information becomes available. Please watch our media sites for more information as we will share information there as it becomes available. We need your support during negotiations and that include keeping informed. An educated union is a strong union and with solidarity comes success.

**Jerry's Body Shop**  
#1 Collision Experts

1000 1st Ave S  
Escanaba, MI 49829

Phone: 906-786-6425  
Fax: 906-789-6026  
jerrysbodyshop01@sbcglobal.net

**Jamie Sebeck**  
Owner/Operator

## Exercise your rights

Jeff Skorupski, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

If you happen to have a safety incident at work please be aware that when your supervisor talks to you about it is your right to have a steward present. There have been quite a few instances lately where a supervisor approached the individual to ask about what happened. This is fine, but some supervisors are using this two minute conversation as their incident investigation. If it ends in discipline, that two minute conversation is what their investigation is based on. A true investigation would include sitting down and talking about all the factors that led to the incident but unfortunately some of our supervision seems to think that a quick talk and a reprimand will address the problem. As we all know, there are usually multiple factors that lead to an incident but unfortunately some supervision at the mill likes to put all the blame on the employee and not even attempt to address the hazards that ultimately lead to the accident.

We are going to hold a vote at the Hall on October 24th from 5 to 7pm to clarify a couple items. First, there was some confusion as to when and how often a person can work an 18 hour shift. Below is the current wording along with the proposed new wording. Second, we came up with some language to clarify how and when bankers can be cancelled by either the employee or the company. If you have any questions, please let us know.

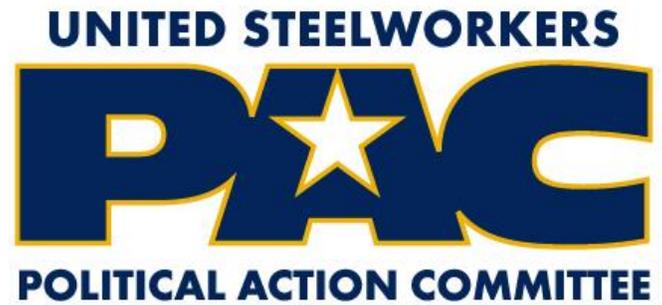
### 18 Hour Rule

**Current Wording:** An employee can work only one 18 hour shift during consecutive 12 hour day rotations (i.e., an employee could work 12 hours Sunday, 12 hours Monday, 18 hours Tuesday and 12 hours Wednesday).

**New Wording:** Any hours over a 16 hour shift, either voluntary or forced, would constitute an 18 hour day and would require a day off before working another 18 hour shift. An exception would be in the case of an annual time change or to attend a safety meeting before or after the shift.

### Cancellation of Bankers Language

The company and the employee have two business days prior to the date of a banker to cancel the scheduled banker. A business day in this situation is defined as any day ending at 3:30 pm est excluding weekends and holidays observed by the Collective Bargaining Agreement or salaried employees.



Did you know that USW District 2 has a 94% active membership density? We are stronger in numbers. Let us proudly keep that number high, encourage membership retention and pursue expansion. You can help this effort by contributing to the USW PAC fund. USW PAC makes it possible for our union to run the most effective, member-driven program in the labor movement; and, it is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from members like you. Federal law prohibits your dues dollars from being used for most political purposes, which is why our union has established the United Steelworkers Political Action Committee (USW PAC).

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## Update

Ross Strand, Workman's Comp Advocate

I want to thank everyone who signed up for the incident investigation team, I'm still looking for more volunteers to help us out, you can contact me at 280-1494. I met recently with a member who has concerns with an area steward, I want to remind all of you that when you were sworn into the Union, you swore not to wrong a member and we hold our shop stewards to an even higher standard, so if there are concerns of any sort we want you to come to the Union with them and they will be handled accordingly.

An advertisement for Upper Michigan Law. At the top left is the logo "um" in a yellow square. To its right, the text "UPPER MICHIGAN LAW" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with "CLARK, BRAY, CAMERON &amp; LARRABEE, P.C." in a smaller font below it. Below the logo and text is a photograph of five people: Richard Clark, Jessica Bray, Gabe Cameron, Sam Larrabee, and Katie Clark. Each person's name is printed in white text below their respective portrait. Below the photograph is a blue banner with the text "NO FEE UNLESS BENEFITS OBTAINED" in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below the banner is a red banner with white text listing services: "Workers' Compensation • Social Security Disability Injury, Illness &amp; Death Claims • Vehicle Injuries - Fault &amp; No Fault Wills • Trusts • Estate Planning • Criminal Defense". Below the red banner is the website "www.uppermichiganlaw.com" in yellow text. At the bottom of the advertisement are two phone numbers: "906-786-3902" and "1-800-562-0954" in white text. At the very bottom, the locations "Iron Mountain Escanaba Marquette Menominee Houghton" are listed in white text.

## **Industry Standards**

**Bob Larson, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President**

The last several months have been marred by a rash of dump truck accidents. The Company places the blame squarely on the drivers. I cannot agree with that. The condition of the roads, the trucks and the lack of training apparently has no impact on these incidents according to our leadership. Most of the people involved have been disciplined, some severely. The union will fight this through the grievance process. Verso is used to non-union mills, I feel that some, if not all of these accidents would have resulted in termination at those mills. Fear and intimidation are key to their style of management. The beatings will continue until safety improves. Brothers and sisters, be safe! Follow the rules, coach your co-workers, be your brother's keeper, not out of fear of reprimand, but because everyone deserves to go home safe. The Company will use these same tactics when we go into bargaining. They are fond of reminding us of the relatively good lifestyles we enjoy working here, but this lifestyle was not just *given* to us by corporate benevolence, but through our strength as a union. The Company will take whatever they possibly can. They say our contract has to be brought in line with industry standards, but I say let our contract be the industry standard!

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## **Backpacks and CAT Team**

**Gary Dubord, Jr., Next Generation**

We would like to thank everyone that contributed to the recent Backpack Drive sponsored by USW Local 21. We had a good amount of supplies and were able to donate 52 backpacks to local schools. The supplies were very much appreciated by the school faculty and students. I feel a little guilty because I didn't realize there was such a need for school supplies in our area and after speaking with the local schools, they all pretty much said they will take any donations they can get. This was a great program that our Union put together to

invest in our local children. I would also like to give special thanks to Donna Dams and the Local 21 Women of Steel for helping out with



the Backpack Drive. Programs like this are excellent and I encourage everyone within our union to contribute, it demonstrates our community pride and support.

The CAT Team was utilized to distribute some important information and I would like to thank the members for their support. Any time we have information that needs to be distributed within our union on short notice, this team will be used. Any questions or suggestions please contact me at 906.241.2959.

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## **Pittsburgh Safety Conference**

**Chuck Way, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President**

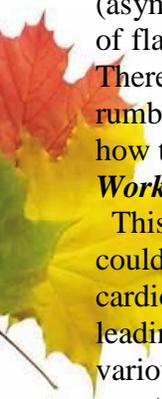
Myself, along with a couple other USW 21 members recently attended a safety conference in Pittsburgh. This conference is paid for by the Company and usually includes someone from management, this year's scheduling conflicts prevented anyone from the local facility's management team attending. The following is an overview of some of the topics they covered.

### **Occupational Health and Safety**

The course covered investigations and accident prevention. Three objectives were covered: cause, prevention, and improvement. Topics of discussion included controlling the scene of the accident, arranging help, physical evidence, interviews, what happened, making a report, recommendations, and follow up. The basic who, what, when, why, and how were covered. Each one of these areas was talked about and how to go about them. They talked about the pitfalls that invalidate the investigation—(assumption and lack of completion). Also talked about how accidents were a combination of several items including working conditions.

### **Fuels and Combustion Training**

We discussed combustion basics and the need to sustain a controlled boiler; the fire triangle, fuel properties, combustion system designs, and combustion hazards. The course described what exactly combustion is—the rapid oxidation of fuel. How explosions occur was mentioned in addition to how one is created. They touched on the chemistry of combustion and terms used to describe it. They pointed out safeguards, burner designs, drafts in boilers and even went into some detail on gas nozzle designs. The instructor gave us some do's and don'ts on firing up a boiler. Went in-depth on how a flame should look and even described impingement



(asymmetrical flame). We looked at the importance of flame stability and how to tell if it's rich or lean. There was an overview of hazard recognition such as rumble, vibration, burnt spots, and glowing parts and how to repair them, the do's and don'ts.

### ***Workplace Related Death and Diseases***

This class talked about how workplace exposures could lead to various diseases and even death; cardiovascular disease, the numbers and how it is the leading cause of death in the U.S. Discussed the various kinds of cardiovascular disease, plaques, constricting arteries and thrombosis. Talked extensively on risk factors such as unhealthy habits, genetics, age and workplace exposure. For each one of the factors your risk gets higher. Mentioned how irregular heavy physical exertion is associated along with exposure to solvents and chemicals. Shift work is also a factor. They emphasized the changing of habits, work rituals, among other things as possible fixes. Positive testing is a way of knowing if you are having any of these problems i.e. ekg test, glucose checks, among others go a long way in prevention. We did an exercise with SDS on glue used in a factory. This happened in real life with this product and we were lucky to have the occupational nurse who investigated this case in our class. It was very informative.

### ***A Day's Work***

The value of this class covered on how new and temporary employees are more likely to be hurt in their first assignments. It went into an interview with a family whose son/brother was killed within 90 minutes of starting as a temp employee with Bacardi rum bottling. It talked about how his gung ho attitude to get the job done interfered with his perspective on safety. It also covered the lack of safety rules within the facility such as lockouts, evident hazards and SOPs.

There were many speakers from various industries across the globe and Governmental officers from Canada and the U.S. The topics of the speeches varied from labor topics to chemical health and safety awareness. The U.S. Secretary of Labor, Thomas Perez, spoke with us, so did the chairperson of U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation. Various union officials along with USW President, Leo Gerard, gave speeches on how much safety is a concern of the union. Various safety awards were presented to deserving individuals and organizations. An award was given for industrial valor for showing

how coke ovens induced cancer to workers in steel plants.

Overall, it was a nice conference with good company, good food, and some nice sightseeing. There were many management personnel there and I believe the interaction is beneficial to the well being of our working relationship. Just hearing and talking about what is happening in the industry was an earful and enlightening. There was great benefit in that.

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### **USW PAC Fund Drive!**

This Wednesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, we will be hosting a PAC fund drive at the union hall. Every person who signs up will receive a free T-Shirt and be entered in a drawing to win \$100 CASH! The drawing for the \$100 will take place immediately after the union meeting meeting. Also, if you sign-up to have \$5 deducted per paycheck the USW district will give you a free t-shirt or \$10 per paycheck will get you a free USW jacket!

Since none of our union dues goes toward political activities, this is one small way we can help good candidates get into government. Big money in politics has become an existential threat to our democracy. So how did we get here? Short answer: The Supreme Court.

Citizens United v. FEC was a 2010 Supreme Court decision that changed our campaign spending laws, making it easier for wealthy special interests to spend unlimited amounts of money on getting political candidates elected. It is one of several Supreme Court decisions that have opened the floodgates for unlimited big money in our elections and are now preventing even the most common-sense campaign finance regulations.

## **OCTOBER'S LOCAL BUSINESS FEATURE**

Our membership has a significant impact on the local economy. Let's keep that impact a positive one by shopping locally and being sure to frequent establishments that give back to our community. Shop at a local small business and much more of the money stays local. Remember to let them know you saw them in our newsletter!

Hearts & Hands Family Chiropractic has been serving the Spalding area for 10 years and the Escanaba area for 2 years. The Escanaba office established a permanent location last August at TenFour Plaza, which houses a group of professionals working together to benefit our community.



Born and raised in Escanaba, Dr. Sara Deno, D.C. continues to live in Escanaba with her husband and two boys. She loves helping people through chiropractic care, and has a passion for working with pregnant women and children. She has obtained the ICPA's 120-hour certificate in the Principals and Practices of Chiropractic Pediatrics and Webster Technique Certification.

Celebrate October, Spinal Healthcare Month, by making yourself an appointment with your chiropractor. If you don't have one, get one. Hearts & Hands recommends that everyone have a chiropractor to promote health and prevent future problems. Chiropractic is good for more than neck and back pain. It helps reduce sick days and gets you back to work faster after a WC injury.

## **Union RIF Helps Mill Retirees Buy Health Insurance**

In 1988 employees of the Escanaba Paper Company began paying \$15 per month into a trust fund called the retirement insurance fund (RIF) to help mill retirees buy health insurance. A lot of things have changed since 1988 but new hires still pay \$15 per month into the fund for a period of seven years and are eligible to draw a benefit from the fund for a period of seven consecutive years starting any time after they retire. The fund will reimburse a portion of any out of pocket health insurance premiums a retiree has to pay as well as premiums for Medicare, COBRA, Medicare supplements, a drug coverage policy, and optical or dental insurance. The maximum RIF benefit is currently limited at \$110 per month.

The reimbursement from the union RIF is not to be confused with the premium reimbursement option (PRO) offered by the company. In fact, the union RIF cannot reimburse premiums for a policy if the company, the military or the government is already reimbursing the retiree for the same premiums. If a retiree is fortunate enough to have their premium reimbursed at the present time then they simply need to get an application for their RIF benefits and file it away until their current reimbursement comes to an end. At that time, they may apply for the union RIF benefit which would start the following month and run for a period of seven years, assuming they have eligible insurance premiums and continue to provide proof of insurance at the required intervals.

You may pick up an application for the union RIF benefit in time clock alley near the large bulletin board. There is information on the back of the application which may answer some common questions. For additional information you may contact Accuserve at 906-428-2861 or contact one of the RIF trustees, Sean Reese, Mel Anderson, Brian Lesnieski, Bill Anderson, or Joyce Rabitoy.

*Information provided by Isaac Micheau of Accuserve Benefit Administration Services*

