

# Day 3

## CONVENTION COVERAGE



2014 USW CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

# TRUMKA: "NO DENYING IT, UNIONISM WORKS"

**P**ummeled by the loss of middle-class jobs, Americans are starting to wake up and recognize they need an economy that works for everyone, not just the rich, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka told convention delegates Wednesday.

"America is tired of losing middle-class jobs. From Montana to the Gulf of Mexico, from Ontario to the California coast, we're done with the downward spiral," Trumka said. "In poll after poll, we hear Americans say, 'We want an economy that works for everyone.'"

People around the world are beginning to see collective action as a solution to their economic troubles, he said, and are debating big issues like a living wage and collective bargaining.

"From fast food to forged steel, and everywhere in between, more and more people talk about economic inequality, people who never spoke the words before," Trumka said.

Workers have gotten an unusually raw deal in this economic recovery. Hourly compensation rose by only 0.1 percent from June 2009 through March 2014, despite productivity having increased by 6.5 percent. In other words, most of the benefits of workers' increased productivity have gone to corporate profits.

Raising the minimum wage is popular. Polls show public support for it is strong, broad and durable even though opponents howl about the potential harm to small businesses.

Delegates jumped to their feet and gave Trumka a standing ovation when he urged them to stand together to help raise wages for all workers – union and nonunion.

"We'll fight for athletes and car wash workers, for Harley workers and security guards, nurses and teachers. We'll march together! We'll stand together for a strong future, for each other, to create the economy that we want, that we need and should have," he said to applause.

Workers are confused and angry, frustrated, sometimes scared and concerned about their children's future, he said.

Trumka cited Rebecca Taksel, who helped to organize adjunct professors at Point Park University in Pittsburgh to join the Adjunct Faculty Association of the USW. An adjunct for about 20 years, she makes about 20 percent of what a tenured faculty member earns, roughly \$6,700 for a semester.

"A union is the best tool to win respect, turn a bad job into a good job, one with good pay and benefits and a chance for a secure retirement, because when we stand together we are powerful," he said.

"There's no denying it. It works. Unionism works."

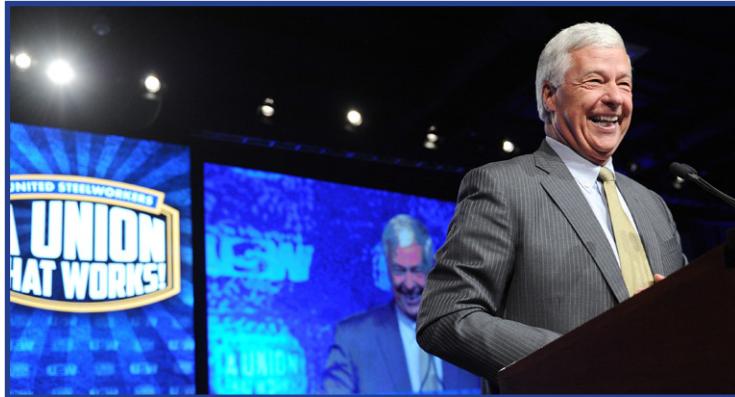


# MICHAUD CALLS FOR USW TO 'ROAR' ON ELECTION DAY

**M**aine Congressman Mike Michaud reminded his fellow USW members Wednesday of their power at the ballot box and asked them to exercise that power once again this November to help him get elected governor of his state.

"When I first ran for Congress, they said labor was a paper tiger," Michaud said, recalling his long-shot election to Congress in 2002. "They couldn't have been more wrong, and they are worried that you will once again roar on Election Day."

Michaud, who has worked for Great Northern Paper Co. in East Millinocket, Maine, for nearly 30 years and remains a



member of Local 4-37, attributed his electoral success to the political strength and solidarity of the labor movement, especially Steelworkers.

In a six-way primary in his first run for Congress, USW activists helped Michaud receive 96 percent of the vote in his hometown of East Millinocket. So many voters turned out there, Michaud said, "they were running out of ballots, I can't express enough the importance of solidarity."

In return, Michaud has spent 12 years in Washington fighting for workers: supporting higher wages, opposing unfair trade, strengthening Buy America provisions, and fighting to reform health care and strengthen Social Security and Medicare.

"I've loved my job in Washington – but I love Maine even more," Michaud said, explaining why he decided to challenge Tea Party Republican Gov. Paul LePage this November.

LePage, who has been called "America's craziest governor," famously ordered murals at the state's labor department depicting Maine's diverse workers to be taken down shortly after taking office.

"It's time we had a governor that will build upon people's strength, not tear them down," Michaud said.

Republicans have spent \$3 million on ads attacking him, Michaud said. To combat that, USW members will have to take to the streets and remind the people of Maine who has always fought for them, he said.

"We can set an example by electing a working man who will stand up for the working class," Michaud said. "Their deep pockets are no match for the collective strength of the USW."

## HARRY REID REMINDS USW MEMBERS WHAT'S POSSIBLE

**S**enate Majority Leader Harry Reid called on USW convention delegates to get their members to the polls this fall to give Democrats control of both houses of Congress.

"Congressional Republicans are doing everything they can to block legislation that would help you," the Democrat said. "All we've tried to do is make sure working men and women in this country have a fair shot."

Reid, who has represented Nevada in the Senate since 1987, reminded the delegates of what Democrats were able to accomplish in 2009 and 2010, before Republicans took control of the House and effectively brought the legislative branch to a standstill.

From passing the Dodd-Frank Wall Street reform law and the Affordable Care Act to preserving the domestic auto industry and increasing aid to the unemployed, Democrats were able in two short years to accomplish great things, and they could do so again, Reid said.

"We can learn a lot about what will go on in the future by looking at what went on in the past," Reid said. "Republicans have opposed everything the president wanted."

That Republican obstruction means he past two Congressional sessions will go down in history as "classically bad," Reid said, both for what they've done and what they've failed to do.

"They shut down the government; they took us to the brink of defaulting on our debt," Reid said. "Sequestration was a disaster."

Because Democrats have maintained control of the Senate, they've been able to fight back with rule changes to thwart Republican blockades of judges and National Labor Relations Board nominees, but it hasn't been enough, Reid said.

"The filibuster has become the norm. We may need to do a little more rule changing, don't you think?" Reid asked the crowd, which responded with a loud ovation.

Given the chance, Democrats will do much more to help workers, he said, noting the proposed Bring Jobs Home Act to limit offshoring of jobs, and renewal of the Infrastructure Investment Bank that would fund public investment in roads, bridges, schools and other projects.

"For every billion dollars we spend, we create 50,000 high-paying jobs," Reid said.



# KEN GEORGETTI: UNION ADVANTAGE IS UNDENIABLE

Steelworkers praised one of their own Wednesday – former Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti, for leading the way in changing the public conversation about the vital role of unions in building a fair, prosperous and democratic society.

Georgetti, the CLC's longest-serving president (1999 to May of this year), began his career as a USW activist in a British Columbia smelter in the 1970s. His many achievements include the CLC's successful national campaign, Together Fairness Works, that is building public awareness of the undeniably positive impact of unions.

Invited to address the USW convention Wednesday, Georgetti praised the USW for launching its own version of the Fairness Works campaign in Steelworkers' communities across the country.

The campaign includes research based on official government data showing union members on average earn \$10,000 annually more than non-union workers.

The research proves "the union advantage" has enormous benefits for communities and the national economy, Georgetti said.

"Polling in Canada shows that 30 percent of non-union, unorganized workers would join a union tomorrow if they had the chance," he said.

"We need that union advantage for everyone."

# USW RESOLVES TO WORK HARDER ON TRADE, EQUITY

**“W**e have become the dumping ground for the world, and we have to fight it," International Vice President Tom Conway told delegates to the 2014 Constitutional Convention Wednesday as a resolution on fair trade was introduced.

"This is not about no trade at all. This is about balanced trade," Conway said.

International President Leo Gerard noted that Germany and Brazil do not tolerate huge trade imbalances. "It is the politics of our two countries that let this happen," he said.

In Canada, he said, workers must insist on the right to challenge unfair trade, as unions can in the United States.

The resolution, passed unanimously, affirms the intention of Steelworkers to fight unfair trade policies and agreements and to work with allies internationally for fair trade that protects human and labor rights and the environment.

A dozen delegates spoke in support, including William Johnson of Local 13-00555 in Louisiana who said fracking companies there were not only importing foreign-made equipment but also thousands of foreign workers. "I want the aid of the International union to put Americans and Canadians to work on those jobs," he said.

Delegates also resolved to ensure that the USW is a union that works even harder for collective bargaining, equality for women and minorities and decent treatment for retirees.

Eight speakers, including District 3 Director Stephen Hunt, appealed for delegates to adopt the resolution on civil rights, which includes support for comprehensive immigration reform and for initiatives barring discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

The resolution, which passed unanimously, also pledges the union to oppose voter suppression and revoke exploitative aspects of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

David Wilson of Local 831 in District 8 asked his brothers and sisters to vote for the resolution because "there is no place in our family for any violation of civil or human rights. Our family is our union."

Nearly 20 delegates spoke in support of the collective bargaining resolution that pledges the union to provide support needed to achieve fair and equitable contracts.

Mike Lewis of Local 9477 in Maryland told his fellow delegates, "The most successful way to get a middle class life for our families is through collective bargaining."

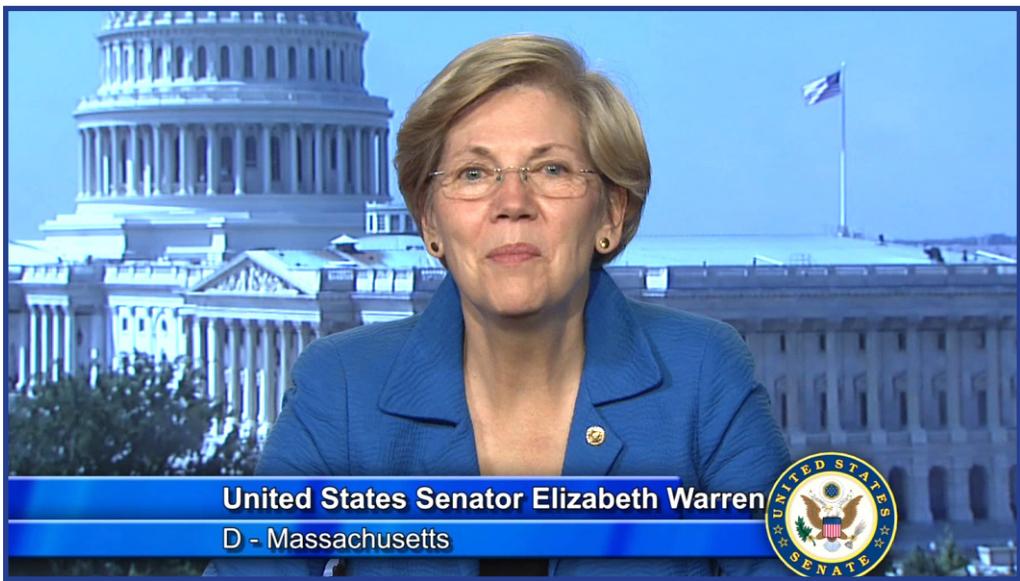
Retirees and active members expressed support for the Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) resolution. Former District 12 Director Terry Bonds explained the point of the resolution, "SOAR is an arm of the Steelworkers, and we are trying to make it better so that it is a stronger arm."

The Women of Steel resolution quickly received the support of 15 men and women delegates, including International Vice President at Large Carol Landry who said Leo Gerard started the program 25 years ago to ensure the union properly represented women and benefitted from their talents and leadership.



**F**red Azcarate, director of USAction, a national coalition of activist groups, delivered a powerful call for unity, appealing to Steelworkers to join forces with progressive allies across the United States. Such alliances are important in the fight for labor rights, higher wages, health care, voting rights, paid sick leave and a host of other issues, said Azcarate. "It's not enough just to have a vision – we need to work to make it a reality."

**U**S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) delivered a videotaped address to convention delegates on Wednesday, pledging to continue to fight on behalf of working families and union members against big-money interests. “I am very glad that you all have my back, and I promise I’ll always have yours,” Warren vowed as she called on USW members to renew the union’s commitment to organizing. “We need to remind people what labor unions do and why they are good for working families all across this country.”



**Niki Ashton**

## **'WE HAVE A REAL UNION – THE STEELWORKERS'**



**O**ne of Canada’s youngest, progressive political leaders has called on Steelworkers to channel the inspiration and energy of their international convention into unprecedented political and labor activism in the communities.

“I urge you – do not leave your solidarity as activists and Steelworkers on the convention floor.”

“Together we’re going to fight for dignity, for fairness, for justice for all of us,” said Ashton, a prominent member of the New Democratic Party, which is the Official Opposition to the Conservative federal government.

Steelworkers and New Democrats have been leaders in the social democratic movement that has mobilized public opinion and forced most of the progressive change in Canadian society over several decades, Ashton noted.

“Every social and economic advance that we’ve seen has been the result of decades of struggle.”

Ashton, whose father and grandmother were Steelworkers, was elected to Canada’s parliament in 2008, at age 26. She said her hometown – the northern mining community of Thompson, Manitoba – has prospered for generations due largely to the USW’s battles against multinational corporations.

“We don’t have millionaires, but what we do have are workers and a union, a real union – the Steelworkers – that fight for a fair share of the wealth from our natural resources.”



In a video address on Wednesday, President Obama urged USW members to return home from Las Vegas “fired up and ready to fight harder for everyone who is in the middle class.”