



Missing from the Headlines:

Elected officials and those they appoint continually make decisions that impact our bargaining ability, job security and more. Read on for ten recent actions that haven't always made the headlines.

- 1 Pensions of 120,000 active and retired members protected.**

The American Rescue Plan provided many needed resources to help struggling workers and communities across the nation. One of its most significant provisions is a resolution to a decade-long battle to shore up multiemployer pensions that were in distress from unfair trade, financial crisis and other factors.¹
- 2 Once-in-a-generation win on infrastructure investment.**

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act became law on November 15, 2021, during a signing ceremony at the White House that was kicked off by a USW member. This law is an investment in our roads, bridges, ports, water systems, broadband, and more. It has the power to create and sustain USW jobs found throughout the infrastructure supply chain, while improving the safety and health of our communities and economic competitiveness.²
- 3 Pro-worker direction at the National Labor Relations Board and more funds to do the work.**

Throughout the previous administration, we saw a continual weakening of workers' rights at the hands of the National Labor Relations Board and its general counsel, Peter Robb. In moves large and small, they chipped away at our bargaining ability, gave more power to companies, and generally weakened unions. As one of the current President's first moves on Inauguration Day, he forced Robb to vacate the post.³ Since then, the President appointed a new general counsel and additional board members with union backgrounds. Their work is rebalancing the Board away from pro-corporate interests and toward workers' rights.^{4,5} The NLRB has been underfunded for years while their caseload grows. Our union helped secure more federal funding in 2022 so more work can be done to protect workers.⁶
- 4 Lower prescription drug costs ahead.**

For the first time, the federal government will be allowed to negotiate for lower drug prices for seniors on Medicare thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act. Other benefits of the law include inflation caps for Medicare prescription drugs and improvements to prescription benefits. The law also prevents a premium spike for Affordable Care Act enrollees.⁷
- 5 Inflation and supply chain solutions.**

One of the largest supply chain vulnerabilities facing the U.S. is the shortage of semiconductor chips, those little powerhouses that are needed for every growing "smart" application from vehicles to tvs to cell phones. While this tech was invented in the U.S., we ceded this industry to Asia, where roughly 80 percent of the chips are now made. The shortages are a driver of inflation. For instance, a lack of chips has meant delays of new vehicles and rising auto prices. A bipartisan bill became law in August. It will invest \$54 billion into building the industry here.⁸ Companies are already making investments that are expected to result in tens of thousands of new jobs.⁹

¹ Forbes, [How the American Rescue Plan Will Help Nearly a Million Retirees and Workers](#), March 12, 2021.

² The White House, [Fact Sheet](#), November 15, 2022.

³ Bloomberg Law, [Biden Moves to Oust Top Labor Board Attorney Peter Robb](#), January 20, 2021.

⁴ In These Times, [Jennifer Abruzzo, the NLRB's General Counsel, Is Labor's Best Legal Friend](#), September 27, 2021.

⁵ The National Law Review, [Prepare for Takeoff: NLRB's New Pro-Union Majority Will Soon Take Over](#), July 30, 2021.

⁶ NLRB, [Statement on NLRB Funding in the 2023 Omnibus Spending Bill](#), December 29, 2022.

⁷ CNET, [Inflation Reduction Act: 3 Ways It Can Save You Money on Medical Bills](#), August 15, 2022.

⁸ Forbes, [What Is The Semiconductor CHIPS Act, And Why Does The U.S. Need It?](#), August 15, 2022.

⁹ Data Center Knowledge, [5 Months After CHIPS Act, Investment Activity Abounds in the Chip Industry](#), January 19, 2023.

- 6 American manufacturing commitment.**
An executive order set out standards for strengthening domestic manufacturing requirements for federally-funded projects, which benefits many USW workplaces in the supply chain. It also created a Made in America office to support the work and scrutinize requests to bypass the rules.¹⁰ A subsequent law made the office permanent so that it can't be eliminated in the future.¹¹
- 7 Union members in key government roles.**
Jim Frederick, the long-time assistant director and principal investigator for the USW's Health, Safety and Environment Department, is helping to lead the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Having one of our own, who understands our industries and our challenges, in a critical position safeguarding worker health and safety is excellent news for our union and working people everywhere.¹² The President's appointments include many additional people who have been part of unions. His first Secretary of Labor, Marty Walsh, was a member of the Laborers' Union and led the Boston Building and Construction Trades Council. As Secretary of Labor, Walsh personally joined with USW members in our fights for infrastructure investment, organizing and more.¹³
- 8 USW health and safety priorities advance.**
Over 5,000 workers in the U.S. are killed on the job each year, and an additional 100,000 die of occupational disease. When laws to protect workers become outdated, government agencies can – but don't always – add new scientific, economic or industry expertise to update them through the rulemaking process, resulting in new standards (a.k.a. regulations or rules). A number of our priorities are currently moving forward, including rules that would control healthcare workers' exposure to Covid-19; protect workers covered by the Mine Safety and Health Administration from silica exposure; and achieve new protections for workplace heat exposure. The process can be long. When final, these rules will save lives.^{14,15}
- 9 Trade safety net restored.**
Trade Adjustment Assistance has long been available to workers who lose their jobs to foreign trade. While we always want to protect these jobs from being lost, this help for job transitions is a safety net in difficult times. The program expired in July 2022, leaving workers without aid.¹⁶ Our union fought for the program, ultimately securing a partial extension in December 2022.
- 10 Trade changes.**
After significant USW involvement, a renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement became law in early 2020. Labor reforms in Mexico were written into the revised agreement – now called the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). In February 2022, thousands of workers at the country's largest General Motors plant utilized this change in policy as they won a historic vote to elect an independent union. This marks a break from a tradition of corrupt unions tied to elites who cut deals with corporations to keep wages and benefits low. It was the first such election under the USMCA, and an example of how trade can lift up workers, rather than fuel a race to the bottom. Our union lent support to the fight.¹⁷

Updated March 2023.

¹⁰ The White House, [Executive Order on Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers](#), January 25, 2021.

¹¹ The White House, [President Biden Announces Key Hire at the Office of Management and Budget](#), April 27, 2021.

¹² USW Press Release, [USW Applauds Worker-Friendly Choices for OSHA Leadership Roles](#), January 21, 2021.

¹³ USW Press Release, [USW Applauds Picks for Labor, Commerce Secretaries](#), January 7, 2021.

¹⁴ AFL-CIO, [Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect, 2022](#), April 26, 2022.

¹⁵ Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, [Agency Rule List](#), Fall 2021.

¹⁶ NBC News, [Thousands of workers have lost access to trade assistance weeks after Congress allowed it to expire](#), July 23, 2022.

¹⁷ Democracy Now!, [Workers at Largest GM Plant in Mexico Win Historic Independent Union Vote](#), February 9, 2022.