

USW BASIC STEEL CONFERENCE UPDATE

What Our Union Is Seeing Going into Negotiations

As we head into this round of negotiations, it is important to remember that we have a lot of newer members who have never been through this process before. With bargaining coming up, there will always be rumors and people claiming they know what is happening. Do not get caught up in that. Stay focused on your job, pay attention to information from your union, and be smart with your money just in case. Nobody is saying panic but be prepared. Stay informed, and do not let rumors divide us.

A lot of people ask what the Basic Steel Conference is. It is where all steel and related industries come together to look at the outlook of the market, company financials, trade, tariffs, and get a feel for what we are going to see when we get to negotiations.

As we're headed into another important round of bargaining, the message coming out of the Basic Steel Conference was clear. This will not be an easy round, but our union is preparing for that fight. The biggest themes were solidarity, job security, trade, and making sure members understand what is at stake.

The steel industry is facing serious challenges. Global steel overcapacity is projected to exceed 700 million metric tons, meaning far more steel is being produced than the world needs. China alone accounts for nearly half of the world's steel capacity, driving unfair competition that impacts pricing, production, and ultimately our jobs. Even with tariffs in place, countries that dump steel into our markets are still able to make a profit because of heavy government subsidies, which continues to put pressure on our industry.

Cleveland-Cliffs brought in about 18.6 billion in revenue in 2025 but reported a 1.4 billion loss tied to market conditions and pricing pressure. Simultaneously, non-union competitors like Nucor and Steel Dynamics continue to generate profits and hold strong markets showing the pressure being put on union steel. This is the environment companies will point to in bargaining.

USW leadership made it clear that unfair trade is a major issue. The union continues to push for targeted tariffs and quotas that go after "bad actors," not our allies. The United States and Canada have an interconnected steel economy, and the real problem is dumped steel and foreign subsidies, not workers on either side of the border.

We are already seeing how companies respond in uncertain times. Employers are signaling they want to weaken contracting-out language, chip away at pensions, and hold the line on wages and benefits. When pressure builds, companies look to workers to make concessions.

Our union is not walking in unprepared. There is a strong focus on communication, coordinated bargaining, and making sure the membership is engaged. When bargaining committees sit at the table, they represent tens of thousands of USW members, and that unity is what makes the difference.

The industry is also changing. The shift from blast furnaces to electric arc furnaces is impacting jobs, especially in mining and iron ore. This is going to be an issue for years to come, as they are more efficient and have a lower cost structure. That makes this round of bargaining even more important to protect jobs and prevent companies from using change as an excuse to roll things back.

Healthcare, pensions, and benefits remain top priorities. Healthcare costs have increased dramatically over the last four years, and companies will try to use that as a reason to shift more costs onto workers. These are not extras; they are part of our compensation and something generations fought for. The same goes for safety, job security, and the capital projects being put into our plants to make sure we remain viable and competitive long term.

Leadership was clear. This has the potential to be a tough round of bargaining. Never forget, the USW has the resources, including a strong strike defense fund, and the experience to take on that challenge. We are not going into this alone.

Most importantly, the message is simple. Solidarity matters. Division weakens us. When members stay informed, support each other, and stand behind the bargaining committee, we are in the strongest position possible.

As we move closer to negotiations, the goal is clear. Fair wages, job security, protection against contracting out, strong pensions, protected healthcare, safer workplaces, and continued investment in our plants. We are not going backwards.

On the local front, we have met with your union reps to go over what is needed and will be scheduling meetings with the company in the near future to see what they are looking for this round of bargaining. While we are bargaining for the master agreement in Pittsburgh, the local will also be bargaining for SunCoke members at the same time. All contracts end September 1st.

When bargaining dates are set, we will post sound-off meeting notices with the Bargaining Committee at the Union Hall. Be safe!

Solidarity. Clarity. Strength.

That is what will carry us through this round of bargaining.

In Solidarity,

James Thomas

President Local 1010