

FIRST LOCAL NEWS

Published by United Auto Workers Local 249—Kansas City, Missouri

April 2020



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International Union United Auto,
Aerospace and Agricultural Workers Local 249
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Local 249 Member Josh Woodley, left, was presented with the James (Frog) Moran Solidarity Award for outstanding dedication to unionism, education and community activism by Jacob Diggs at the March membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.

Local 249 Election Postponed to June

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Local 249 Election has been postponed to June after consulting with the federal Centers for Disease Control and the Office of Labor-Management Standards.

Details of the June Election will be published in the next edition of First Local News.

Tell Congress: make workers well-being and economic security your top priority

UAW

As COVID-19 wreaks havoc across the world, people coming down with the virus is skyrocketing, and it is uncertain when this pandemic will end. What is clear is we are not taking all the necessary steps to fight this virus.

Millions of the brave nurses, doctors, firefighters, policemen, and other first responders do not even have basic protective gear they need to not get infected themselves. Millions of Americans have been laid off, or seen their hours cut as business are ordered to shut down and people ordered to stay at home.

We all have a role to play in reducing the spread of this virus, but we cannot do it alone. We need our elected leaders to rise to the occasion. Right now, Congress is working on legislation to address this public health and economic crisis, and we need to make sure they hear our voice.

We are asking all UAW leaders, members, retirees, and their family members to call Congress and demand workers' well-being and economic security is their top priority rather than Wall St and the well connected. Conversation with them should focus on two critical issues:

Frontline workers addressing this crisis must be protected as much as possible. Right now they are not. Without workplace protections, we run the risk of more frontline workers getting sick and hollowing out everyone's ability to fight this virus. Legislation must require Occupation Safety Health Administration to issue an emergency temporary standard to ensure that health care workers and other high-risk workers receive protection from the spread of the coronavirus.

People are losing their jobs through no fault of their own. Right now, unemployment benefits are not nearly enough to keep families afloat and are difficult to access. Unemployment benefits and other financial assistance must provide full wage replacement to laid off and quarantined workers. Workers should not be punished for the outbreak of the virus.

Call your Representative's office right now at 1-866-287-6350, and call your Senator's office at 1-888-329-5096. Make sure you let them know who you are, where you live, and that any federal legislation dealing with this pandemic protects frontline workers and working families across America.

First Local News

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The Regular Membership Meeting of United Automobile Workers Amalgamated Local Union 249 is held on the third Sunday of each month at 2:00 p.m. in the local union hall, 8040 NE 69 Highway, Pleasant Valley, Mo. The Executive Board Meeting is held at 1:00 p.m. prior to the Regular Membership Meeting.

UAW-Ford Joint Programs

Apprentice Training

Cortez Bradley 816-459-2060

Benefits

Steve Hibbs, Derron Joyner and Jason Hartman 816-454-6333

Employee Involvement

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Darroyce Thornton 816-459-1490

Employee Support Services

Kenny Alexander 816-459-1226

Health and Safety

Ed Samborski 816-459-1210 • Terry Tharp 816-459-1407
Ulysses Bales 816-459-1605 • Joe Camper 816-459-5559
Dave Sambol 816-459-1223

Quality

John Lowe and Jeff Wright 816-459-1232

Dealer Rep. Danny Mata

Job Sourcing and Production Standards

Jim Ryan and Todd Wyse 816-459-1466

Helpful Numbers

Quality Hotline 1-866-723-3937

Employee Health Services 816-459-1226

National Employee Service Center 1-800-248-4444

Blue Care 816-395-2700

Blue Cross PPO 1-800-482-5146

Preferred Care Blue PPO 816-395-3193

Child Care Referrals 866-327-7952

UNICARE Life Insurance 1-800-843-8184

UNICARE Medical/Disability Leave Claims 1-877-475-9652

Delta Dental (Active) 844-223-8520

Delta Dental (Retired) 800-524-0149

United Concordia Dental Plan 1-800-937-6432

Ford A,X,& Z Plan 1-800-348-7709

www.fordvehicleprograms.com

UAW-Ford Legal Services 800-482-7700

UAW-Ford TESPHE 1-800-248-4444

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The Picket Line

UAW: 'Extreme measures' needed at auto factories amid coronavirus scare

The automakers have started to deny visitors entry into their facilities. But it's the hourly union workers who are showing increasing anxiety over coronavirus spreading. The factory workers are in a unique bind. They can't self-quarantine and work from home. Their job requires them to go to a job site and have contact with thousands of others, making the risk of contagion high, just as hand sanitizer is running low.

Meanwhile, industry forecasters are predicting global light-vehicle sales will be down by 3.7 million units this year and U.S. sales down by 300,000 to 16.5 million units because of the virus, said LMC Automotive on Wednesday.

The UAW reached out early to companies about working together to address the virus, UAW President Rory Gamble told the Free Press on Wednesday.

"All the response we've gotten back is very positive," Gamble said. "Everybody has to band together and put any differences aside and focus on the goal of keeping everyone — our members, members of management, the guy who comes into the plant — making sure everybody is safe." — *Detroit News*

UAW on reopening worksites

"The UAW continues to review with great caution and concern decisions being made about restarting workplaces, especially at advanced dates."

These decisions should be informed by data and where each state is on the contagion curve. The UAW maintains that strict CDC guidelines need to be adhered to at all worksites and that prior to reopening sufficient data and protections are in place to ensure the safety of our members, their families and the public. The only guideline in a boardroom should be management asking themselves, "Would I send my family — my own son or daughter — into that plant and be 100 percent certain they are safe?" — *UAW*

UAW investigating sexual harassment claims

The United Auto Workers union is investigating claims of sexual harassment and discrimination in one of its regions.

The union... has hired an investigator to look into allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination in UAW Region 2B, which oversees workers from dozens of companies in Indiana and Ohio.

The statement followed the Wall Street Journal reporting two current female UAW staffers have alleged that Richard Rankin, the director of the region who holds a seat on the union's governing board, "repeatedly made sexually charged remarks that in one instance escalated to a physical threat." — *CNBC*

GM: FCA-UAW bribery scheme 'targeted and directly harmed' automaker

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV executives accused of bribing United Auto Workers officials "targeted" General Motors Co. in an attempt to do it harm, the Detroit automaker claimed... in its rebuttal to FCA's request for the civil racketeering case against it be dismissed.

In November, GM filed an unprecedented civil racketeering lawsuit against the Italian American automaker. GM argued bribes offered by FCA executives to union officials corrupted three rounds of bargaining and cost the Detroit automaker "billions." Fiat Chrysler has called the allegations "meritless," and in January requested the suit be dismissed for not meeting RICO's requirement that the plaintiff be directly harmed by wrongdoing. — *Detroit News*



Coronavirus reduces Ford production

UAW

Following the March 19 evening shifts, Ford temporarily suspended production at its manufacturing sites in North America through March 30 to thoroughly clean its facilities to protect its workforce and boost containment efforts for the COVID-19 coronavirus.

"We're continuing to work closely with union leaders, especially the United Auto Workers, to find ways to help keep our workforce healthy and safe — even as we look at solutions for continuing to provide the vehicles customers really want and need," said Kumar Galhotra, Ford's president of North America.

"In these unprecedented times, we're exploring unique and creative solutions to support our workforce, customers, dealers, suppliers and communities."

UAW and Ford leaders will work together in the coming weeks on plant restart plans as well as exploring additional protocols and procedures for helping prevent the spread of the virus. Chief among them: finding ways to maximize social distancing among plant workers — both during work hours and at shift change, when large numbers of people typically gather at entry and exit points and maximizing cleaning times between shift changes.

"Today's action is the prudent thing to do. By taking a shutdown and working through next steps, we protect UAW members, their families and the community," said Rory Gamble, president of the UAW.

"We have time to review best practices when the plants reopen, and we prevent the possible spread of this pandemic. We commend Ford for working with us and taking this bold step."

Ford temporarily closed Michigan Assembly Plant (MAP) final assembly building after an employee tested positive for the COVID-19 coronavirus and is thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting the building, as promised as part of the company's coronavirus emergency response protocol. MAP will halt production through March 30.

In addition, the company will instruct people who have had direct contact with that infected employee to self-quarantine and get medical attention. Those who have had close contact to those who have had direct contact are asked watch for symptoms and seek medical attention if they feel unwell.

The move to temporarily close plants follows Sunday's news that Ford leaders are forming a Coronavirus Task Force along with UAW, General Motors Co. and Fiat Chrysler leaders to implement enhanced protections for manufacturing and warehouse employees at all three companies.

Ford Executive Chairman Bill Ford and President and CEO Jim Hackett, UAW President Rory Gamble, GM Chairman and CEO Mary Barra, and FCA CEO Michael Manley are leading the task force. The three companies formed a similar task force in Canada.

"Together, we'll continue finding solutions and best practices that help keep workers at our plants and parts distribution centers healthy and safe throughout our operations," said Gary Johnson, chief manufacturing and labor affairs officer.

UAW PRESIDENT RORY GAMBLE LETTER TO MEMBERSHIP ON CORONAVIRUS

Brothers and Sisters: As the United States is faced with the concern of the new Coronavirus known as COVID-19, I feel it is important to speak to this topic with all our UAW membership.

I want to be very clear that we do not take this matter lightly. In detailing some important actions that our UAW is taking relative to the virus; I want to assure our brothers and sisters that we continue discussions daily to ensure the necessary steps are being taken to maintain a state of preparedness.

In addition to focusing on preparedness, our leadership is asked to be diligent in maintaining a constant watch on the potential spread of COVID-19 to ensure any new challenges are recognized and reacted to accordingly.

The direction given to businesses and the American public are predominantly derived from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations and the World Health Organization (WHO).

As our UAW staff and leadership monitor and assess the situation there have already been several steps taken to limit exposure potentials.

This includes travel bans and restrictions according to potential threat levels geographically.

This also includes restrictions on modes of transportation, such as airlines both domestically and internationally.

We are working with companies to ensure that vendors traveling internationally into the U.S. have restrictions depending on geographic point of origin and potential for exposures, including quarantine protocols.

The internal UAW Health and Safe-

ty Department protocols have been updated and shared with Health and

Safety Committees and companies.

In addition to these steps, there have been leadership communications sent to all leaders, including this correspondence, to share the most current

information with our members.

Our UAW Health and Safety Department back in February began to track best practices and impacts on our worksites and that work continues. Our UAW Nationally appointed Health and Safety representatives locally to actively engage our membership and help answer questions to address concerns appropriately.

I also want to spend a moment to talk about basic and simple hygiene practices that, according to the CDC, we can all practice to help each other maintain a level of potential protection against the spread of any and all viruses, including COVID-19:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap is not available with at least 60 percent alcohol.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or cloth when you sneeze or cough.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

Finally, a note of caution as Spring and Easter Break approaches to keep in mind these protocols when looking at family travel and these best practices.

We will continue to press for the utmost preparedness and response capabilities from senior leadership at all levels. I want to thank all of you for the caution and preparedness you display at home and in the workplace regarding this matter.

Through Solidarity we will protect our families and keep our economy flowing.

COVID 19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19

Women's History Month

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

We've come a long way baby
(or have we?)

By Gwen Starkey

As we celebrate Women's History in March, it's a great time to look at just how far we've come in terms of gender discrimination. You'd be surprised to know that discrimination on the basis of gender is still not accounted for in the supreme law of the United States, but that's all about to change with the recent vote in Virginia to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and certify the measure as part of the Constitution.

Many Americans falsely believed that equality for women has already been covered under the Fourteenth Amendment that says all persons shall have equal protection of the laws, but only males are specified in the language referring to suffrage. The only right that the Constitution specifically affirms to be equal for women and men is the right to vote, as a result of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Although the ERA to the US Constitution was passed in Congress in 1972, it remains basically unfinished business because it was only approved by 35 of the 38 state legislatures required to ratify it. Therefore, the ERA cannot be considered fully adopted, and women in the US are not guaranteed equal rights under the Constitution.

On January 27, Virginia became the 38th, and potentially final state

needed to ratify the amendment guaranteeing equal protection for women, but the fight is not over. The fate of the ERA has been in question because of a 1979 deadline that Congress enacted and later extended to 1982.

Thirty-five states ratified the ERA by 1977, but no others joined by the 1982 cutoff. Nevada eventually ratified the amendment in 2017 and Illinois in 2018, but one more state was needed to reach the required legislators of three quarters of the states.

Virginia's recent ratification set the stage for a legal fight over whether too much time has passed to add it to the U.S. Constitution. In a landmark civil rights lawsuit filed Jan.30 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia by Virginia Attorney General Democrat Mark Herring alongside Democratic Attorneys General Kwame

Raoul of Illinois, and Aaron Ford of Nevada, against David Ferriero, the archivist of the United States National Archives and Records Administration, in an effort to "compel the archivist to carry out his statutory duty of recognizing the complete and final adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment," who they contend, would take no action to certify the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment.

The attorneys general argue that U.S. laws do not give the archivist the power to decide whether to certify an amendment. They argue that the archivist's duty to certify the amendment is mandatory and purely ministerial. "After generations of effort, the women of this country are entitled to their rightful place in the Constitution. This Court should compel the Archivist to carry out his statutory duty of recognizing the complete and final adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment," the lawsuit says.

In declining to certify the ERA, the archives said it was following advice from the U.S. Department of Justice, which issued an opinion saying it was

too late for states to certify the ERA. The department said the amendment process must begin anew.

The ERA Amendment is important because it provides the constitutional assurance that all men and women are truly equal under the law and that these rights cannot easily be abridged. Only the ERA can remove all doubt, and with the majority of Americans supporting it, what's the holdup? With ratification, once and for all, it would be clear.

Even with Congress's latest move to rejuvenate the ERA, three more states; Alabama, South Dakota, and Louisiana, filed a federal lawsuit in December to block the passage of the ERA. But even with the public's overwhelming support for the amendment, it is at odds with recent party line votes.

When the amendment was first introduced, there was bipartisan support for its passage, and its originator, Alice Paul, was a Republican. But that hasn't made it law yet, and while it's closer now than it's been in a while, it's unclear still whether the ERA will ever get over the finish line.



CORONAVIRUS

THE PROOF THAT RUNNING GOVERNMENT LIKE A BUSINESS DOESN'T WORK

By Pat Hayes

In 2018, despite repeated warnings from health experts that a global pandemic was inevitable, President Trump disbanded the National Security Council directorate for global health and security and biodefense, the agency tasked with preventing disease outbreaks from growing into epidemics and pandemics after the Ebola crisis. His administration also pushed through enormous budget cuts to the Centers for Disease Control, the National Institute for Health, and the World Health Organization, the very government agencies we now rely on to stop the global pandemic.

Asked about the cuts at a February 26 news conference, the president said, "I'm a businessperson. I don't like having thousands of people around when you don't need them — when we need them, we can get them back very quickly."

Not quickly enough.

China notified the WHO of flu-like cases in Wuhan, the capital of Central China's Hubei province on Dec. 31. Having squandered many weeks of lead time to prepare, the United States is now struggling to provide wide-scale testing of patients with Coronavirus symptoms. Hospital ICU beds — already occupied by patients being treated for seasonal flu — are in short supply, as are ventilators for the most seriously afflicted.

Scandalously, nurses, doctors, police and paramedics — the frontline workers in the pandemic — can't get the N95 masks, gowns, faceshields and other personal protective equipment they need to stay safe.

The advice of medical and epide-

miological professionals to implement quarantines and social distancing was ignored leading to community spread of the virus. That in turn led to a shutdown of large parts of the economy, mass layoffs and financial panic. The resultant loss of confidence in the government has led to panic buying that has needlessly cleared grocery store shelves.

The disastrous social and economic consequences of the Trump administration's determination to "run government like a business" in the leadup to a global pandemic are likely to be with us for years to come.

The idea that government should be run like a business is an old, if flawed, idea. Proponents argue that business methods can bring efficiency to government functions by cutting through slow-moving bureaucratic processes to achieve results quickly. Advocates of bringing business principles to government also point to cost savings that they say could lower taxes.

The Coronavirus pandemic has exposed in the starkest possible terms the disastrous consequences of short-term, profit-focussed business thinking.

Those business leaders, who just weeks ago were delivering stern lecturing to the rest of us on the evils of socialism, are now elbowing their way to the front of the line to get yet another bailout from the taxpayers.

Having squandered the \$1.9 trillion Trump tax cut on stock buy backs CEOs now clamor for rescue from the very government they endlessly warn us is such a danger to our freedom.

The irony of businesspeople cautioning us on the danger government poses to our freedoms should be lost on no one now. That's because businesses are, by their nature, dictatorships.

The man at the top — and it almost always is a man — makes the rules and the rest of us fall in line if we want to put bread on the table. For working people who aren't protected by a union contract, everything is dictated from the top. The Bill of Rights is something that exists off the job.

Ford workers who know their history should be acutely aware of this danger because, in his time, Henry Ford was called the Mussolini of Highland Park. Like the fascist Italian dictator, who was said to have made the trains run on time, Ford ruled his factories

with an iron hand. Ford's despotic regime subordinated each individual worker to his whims — he once fired a man for smiling — and strictly controlled every aspect of their lives by coercive measures.

Adolph Hitler — a great admirer of Ford's methods — reportedly kept a life-size photo of the auto magnate next to his desk.

But governments like ours are not businesses. They are first and foremost democracies. The principle that government depends on the "consent of the governed and that any government not based on that consent could be justifiably overthrown and replaced," is written into the Declaration of Independence.

In a 2017 interview, the president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner told *The Washington Post* that he thought "the government should be run like a great American company," and should "achieve successes and efficiencies for our customers, who are the citizens."

Here's a news flash, Jared, citizens are not customers. In a representative democracy like ours, it is citizens who are the ultimate rulers of the country. Men like Trump and Kushner work for us, not the other way around.

In this crisis, we must reassert our power over the men who think they rule us — in business and government. The future depends on it.



Local 249 members took over the Ford Motor Kansas City Assembly Plant, then located at 1025 Winchester Ave., on April 2, 1937 in the first sit-down strike at a Ford plant. Local 249 was the first Ford local to win a charter from the UAW and the first to win a contract.

83rd anniversary of first Ford sit-down strike

By Pat Hayes

In early June of 1936, Wyndam Mortimer, an organizer for the United Auto Workers, drove north out of Detroit to organize workers at the Fisher Body plant No. 1 in Flint, Mich. The union decided to target the plant because it stamped the body parts for Buicks, Pontiacs and Oldsmobiles. If the Fisher Body plant in Flint, and another in Cleveland that stamped parts for Chevrolets, could be shut down, union organizers believed, General Motors would be forced to recognize the UAW.

"I registered at a cheap hotel," Mortimer recalled in his memoir, *Organize*. "I had barely time to remove my coat when the phone rang."

A voice said, "You better get the hell back to where you came from if you don't want to be carried out in a wooden box!"

"How would you like to go to hell?" Mortimer shot back.

Mortimer knew he had his work cut out for him. Flint was a company town. Every worker was forced to a company union as a condition of employment. Workers were paralyzed with fear of the Black Legion, a white supremacist splittoff from the KKK, that

carried out some 50 murders during the 1930s. Mortimer knew that many Black Legion members were given jobs in the auto industry to sabotage the efforts of union organizers like him.

Despite the obstacles, Mortimer succeeded in convincing workers to launch a sit-down strike at Fisher Body No. 1 on Dec. 30, 1936. The strike lasted 44 days before GM, under pressure from Michigan Gov. Frank Murphy and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, agreed to a contract with the UAW on Feb. 11.

Less than a month later, inspired by success of the Flint sit-down strike, Chrysler workers in Detroit struck Dodge Main, Jefferson, Plymouth,

Dodge Truck, Kercheval and DeSoto, on March 8, stopping production at all six Chrysler plants.

The successful strikes at GM and Chrysler galvanized workers at the Ford Motor Winchester Ave. plant in Kansas City.

UAW organizers at the plant led by Baron DeLouis, Walter Williams, Pat Monroe and others had been meeting in secret since Local 249 was chartered by the UAW earlier in the year.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had signed the National Labor Relations Act into law in 1935 giving workers the right to organize and bargain collectively.

It was the law of the land, but Henry Ford wasn't having it.

"We'll never recognize the United Automobile Workers union or any other union," Ford said.

Acutely aware of what had happened at GM and Chrysler, Henry Ford ordered the firing of every worker at the Winchester Ave. plant who had

signed a union card.

On April 2, 1937 at 3:15 p.m. as men lined up at the time clock to punch out, foremen started pulling workers aside and telling them to turn in their company badges.

Local 249 organizers quickly sensed that this was no normal layoff. Everyone told to turn in their badge was a UAW member. Long-time workers were fired while newcomers kept their jobs.

That's when union leaders in each department began pulling the fuses out of each of the production lines and announced a sit-down strike.

"The company officials were so flustered over our quick moves they didn't really know what happened," said Gene Minshall, a leader of the strike. "They'd never seen all their production lines shut down all at one time. So, the sit-down strike was on."

That strike, the first at Ford, was the start of a four-year battle to win recognition at Ford.



The Local 249 Community Service Committee Fish Fry held Feb. 28 to raise donations for Kansas City area social service agencies is an example of UAW members fighting for those who don't have the resources to fight for themselves. Photo by Don Lehman.

Coronavirus: UAW must fight for better future

By Gary Thomas

There's an old Greek myth about a prophet named Cassandra. This young woman was granted future sight by Zeus but with the added twist that if she spoke her prophecies that she wouldn't be heard.



Local 249's Motorcycle Committee members Gary Thomas, left to right, Joe Lumpkin Jr., Wyman Simpson, Jerry Covington Jr., and Josh Curtis sold raffle tickets to win a Harley-Davidson 2001 Dyna Lowrider at the March membership meeting. The winning ticket will be drawn at the April 16 membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.

Trade unionists are sympathetic towards the plight of poor Cassandra. For years we have made the mistake of not speaking of the future we see because we are or were afraid of it falling on deaf ears. Hopefully, that has all changed after this pandemic. Hopefully, we have all been granted future sight.

Members of your local here in Kansas City have partnered with KC Tenants for nearly a year to end the exploitation of the working class at the hands of landlords. Membership of your local have partnered with organizations like Free Hot Soup KC and Veterans Community Project, Habitat for Humanity, Court Appointed Special Advocates, more commonly known as CASA, for even longer. Because we see a bleak future without them.

While many of us working for the Big Three get to come home during this time of national crisis and get our nationally negotiated SUB pay and nationally negotiated healthcare, many in this country do not. Most workers are forced to go to work or even worse, forced to stay home as bills mount.

Trade unionism compels us in the standing committees of Local 249 to understand that our fight will never

be won until we fight for those who don't have the resources to fight for themselves. Our contracts will never be better, our safety will always decline and our healthcare costs will climb as long as we allow it to happen to others.

The global pandemic has shone a glaring light on our country. It has shown us that our economy is only as strong as our most fragile industry. It has proven that we are only as healthy as our least insured. That we can only bargain from our weakest position.

We must do better as autoworkers. We must learn our place as the stewards of the American Dream. We must not acquiesce to the villains of industry and ravenous greed.

Use this time to steel your will. To radicalize your spirit. Autoworkers built this country and with some elbow grease, some knowledge and compassionate heart we can find our adversarial ways again.

Don't let this bleak glimpse into the future go unnoticed. We are on the brink, we are at the end, up against the wall. There's no denying it now.

Let's get active in our communities, our politics, our livelihoods, because 249 leads the way.

KCAP Coronavirus plans changing rapidly

By Jim Fisher

As I write this article, I ask everyone to understand that during these unprecedented times things are changing day by day and sometimes hour by hour. The Bargaining Committee and I have been in meetings daily with the International Union and top management at KCAP. There have been talks ranging between when production will return, safety of our members, what will change going forward and much more.

This week Team Solutions and some of our production work force has been inside the plant cleaning. While this is a very large facility and making the plant in mint condition in just one week is an impossible task, there has been a very clear effort in cleaning the plant.

The management from Team Solutions, KCAP HR Department, Local 249 Health & Safety Reps, and the top leadership from 249 have been walking the floor every day to check on the progress. One thing you will notice is all the guns have been wiped down with a cleaning solution.

For verification this has been done, once a gun was cleaned it was also wrapped in plastic. The plants PMHV's were treated in the same manner once cleaned the steering wheel was wrapped. In both cases this helped ensure that everything has been disinfected and then left alone.

Lunch and dinner breaks will also see adjustments. Ford is currently in the process of removing microwaves and refrigerators off the production floor. In addition, when the cafe opens, they will be honoring the six-foot social distancing recommendations. We expect this to slow down food services. Members need to plan on bringing in

their meals until we can get back to regular operations.

There are several other safety measures that are being discussed and waiting on approval. One thing will be for sure, The plant you left and the plant you return back to will be greatly changed for a while.

As for the production schedules I expect the next 60 – 90 days to be difficult to project on a long-range basis. There are several factors in play. Our parts suppliers need to be able to support full production, the spread of this virus, and the economy coming back up. Make sure you are getting updates of the Local 249 website, our Facebook page, and our app. We are making sure they are updated as things change. I'm sure there will be more changes ahead.

I would like to take a second and commend our UAW Members (Including three from Local 249) and Ford's response teams that have partnered with 3M to help make masks, and our other members who are working with G.E. to help produce respirators. To be able to use our production skills to help doctors and nurses on the front lines of this virus, and the people suffering from it is truly a remarkable effort to help save lives.



Local 249 Bargaining Chair Jim Fisher answers questions at the March membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.

I would like to thank all the Leadership from Local 249. We have never in our history had a fight like this. From helping with unemployment, getting 253 members retired from the packages, helping in the Health & Safety Department, and adjusting to production schedules that are constantly changing. I brag a lot about all of us being One Team. They have shown over the past couple of weeks why that's so important and they have made every move possible to help our members.

Finally, I want to thank our membership. While I recognize that having the plant idle has caused hardship for

some members, the down time has been the best possible move to protect the membership while adjustments are being made.

We will continue to monitor this virus daily and when additional information is made available it will be passed on as soon as possible. There is hope that this virus will decrease as we get into the warmer months, but expect to be battling this into mid to late summer. In the meantime please continue staying at home, take care of your family, and of course yourself.

I want to assure everyone that we will get through this. We are Local 249.

Attention Retirees

The April and May Retiree meetings have been cancelled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. We will notify you when meetings resume.

Donations Needed

Help us Keep Local 249's Food Pantry Fully Stocked

Drop off donations at Local 249 Union Hall

UAW, Local 249 take action to protect members

By Jason Starr

We are living through truly difficult times right now. The coronavirus pandemic has caused fear and uncertainty across our country. The dangers are two-fold: first, is the fear of infection and the ability of our healthcare system to respond to the crisis. Second, is the uncertainty about the economic effects of shutting down the country to stop the spread of the virus.

At the International level, UAW President Rory Gamble requested a two-week shut down of all Big Three plants based on the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations to safeguard our members, our families and our communities on March 13.

Ford, GM and Fiat-Chrysler refused to implement this reasonable request. They asked for 48 hours to put together plans to safeguard workers in their facilities.

As the 48-hour window drew to a close, Gamble put the companies on notice that “the UAW will use any and all measures to protect our brothers and sisters who are working in their facilities. And make no mistake, we have powerful allies who have stepped up to help us.”

In the end, the companies, under pressure from the union and Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer yielded to our demands to shut down until March 30.

As we go to press with this issue of *First Local News*, Ford has announced plans to reopen the Dearborn Truck Plant, the Kentucky Truck Plant, the Kansas City Assembly Plant Transit System and the Ohio Assembly Plant. It also plans to reopen eight stamping, engine, transmission and component

lines needed to supply those plants.

In response, the UAW issued a statement saying, “We are reviewing with great concern and caution today’s announcement. Our priority is the health and safety of our members, their families and the American public.”

What we need now is sound leadership that puts the health of all our people as the top priority.

Many who we would normally look to for direction — the president and Missouri Gov. Parson — have failed the test of leadership in this crisis by making short sighted decisions that are doomed to make the pandemic worse.

The failure to produce test kits, masks, gloves, gowns and other protective gear will cost many lives. As will the failure to develop a federal program to manufacture ventilators to distribute to the states will mean many needless deaths.

The failure to respond on a national level is mirrored here in Missouri by Gov. Mike Parson who has taken what the *Kansas City Star* characterizes as a “frighteningly leisurely approach” by failing to close schools or enforce a lockdown of nonessential local businesses.

Rather than mobilize the resources of the state to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, Gov. Parson has preached personal responsibility.

“At the end of the day, it is going to



Local 249 President Jason Starr updates members on the Coronavirus actions taken by the union at the March membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.

be personal responsibility that’s going to be a part of the future of what we’re doing to fight the coronavirus,” Parson said.

As I write this, more than 500 positive coronavirus cases have now been reported in Missouri. The state has seen eight deaths.

The hands-off approach to the crisis by Gov. Parson puts all of us, especially senior citizens and those with suppressed immune systems at risk.

As more Missourians succumb to Coronavirus infections, first responders, nurses and doctors will be exposed to the virus and become ill. There is a real danger that Parson’s inaction will lead to the state’s health care system being overwhelmed.

These failures contrast with the

seriousness demonstrated by the governors of Kansas and Illinois and Democratic leaders in Washington, D.C. who have forced Republicans to include increased aid to hospitals, enhanced unemployment insurance payment for laid off workers and controls on giveaways to corporations.

In closing, I want to thank our Team Solutions and skilled trades members who are in the plant now doing deep cleaning to keep our members safe when we return to work.

Team Solutions members have been working tirelessly inside the plant during the layoff. I think all of us are gaining a new appreciation for the critical work they do to keep us safe. I, for one, want to say thank you.



Karen Mahoney, of Local 249s Women’s Committee, displayed a T-Shirt quilt and sold traffic tickets to win it at the March membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.



Local 249 membership accept nomination for union offices in the election scheduled for May. Photo by Don Lehman.



UAW: Protect the Affordable Care Act

By Rory Gamble

In my more than 40 years with the UAW, I have had the benefit of very good health care coverage. Unfortunately, I can't say the same for so many Americans across this nation. Our national health care crisis is truly a disgrace and something we are compelled to remedy. When hard working men and women can't afford to go to the doctor or are making decisions between buying food and filling life-saving prescriptions, we know something is very wrong.

That's why in this election year, we must protect the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Since its inception in 2010, the ACA, commonly referred to as Obamacare, has provided quality health care for millions of Americans. As of 2018, more than 20 million Americans have gained health care coverage as a result of Obamacare. With the ACA in place, we have seen the largest decline in the uninsured rate in decades — the lowest level on record.

This is an accomplishment that we can all be very proud of. But I am sorry to say that our opponents in Congress are hell bent on tearing down the protections of the ACA.

So, let's take a look at what we lose if they succeed. ACA protections include preventing insurance companies from discriminating against people who have pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, cancer or asthma. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid estimate that pre-existing conditions could affect one in two Americans. Before the ACA, Americans were at the whim of insurance companies that could deny or take away health insur-

ance based on pre-existing conditions. Doing so now is illegal.

But the gains of the ACA are under attack. Republicans in Congress have steadfastly opposed the ACA and have attempted to eliminate, weaken or repeal it more than 100 times. In addition, the ACA's navigator programs — which raise awareness about the availability of marketplace plans, help people apply for federal subsidies, and provide information about plan options — have been cut by nearly 84 percent. Medicare and Medicaid are also being whittled away by Republicans in Congress and wealthy special interests.

And they are not bringing better alternative ideas to the table. They are simply chipping away at what we've gained.

In 2017, House Republicans passed the American Health Care Act (AHCA), providing hundreds of billions in tax cuts to the rich by taking away health coverage from over 24 million people. This bill would have raised health care costs for seniors and discriminated against individuals with pre-existing

conditions. Following the House vote on the AHCA, the Senate made attempts to pass the bill. The UAW fought against the AHCA in Washington, D.C., and around the country as tens of thousands of UAW members called on their elected leaders to oppose the bill. We were victorious and it did not pass.

However, since that time, it has become clear that the AHCA was a precursor of things to come. And the lack of success in efforts to repeal the ACA should not leave us unconcerned. The assault continues and in this election year, it is critical we support candidates that support the protections afforded by ACA.

We must look closely and make sure we are well informed when choosing a candidate in regards to health care coverage. The conservatives in D.C. are trying to chip away at the ACA — lessening individual and employer mandates; encouraging health insurance plans that do not conform to ACA rules; and cutting back on Medicaid spending while promoting the use of health savings accounts.

Access to health care coverage has improved under the ACA. Yet too many people remain uninsured. The UAW's ultimate goal continues to be a comprehensive, universal health care plan that will provide quality coverage for every person in the United States, which will bring down the cost of UAW negotiated health benefits.

Just ask the AARP, which lists key benefits of the ACA to include requir-

ing insurers to provide: ambulatory patient services, prescription drug coverage, emergency care, mental health services, hospitalization coverage as well as pediatric and maternity care among other benefits.

The UAW has long supported various approaches to ensure working families have access to affordable health care. Preserving the ACA and access to health insurance and quality care ensures that health care costs remain under control. We need the right to negotiate strong health care coverage and Universal Health Care — it is not an either/or situation.

Please support your brothers and sisters in the UAW community, as well as our external communities, by educating yourself on the ACA. Share the facts with friends and family. Get the word out that health care and insurance for all is primary to our coming election and critical for the hard working men and women of this country.

No one in this great nation of ours should be making decisions between filling prescriptions for insulin and buying groceries. This is not the America I know and certainly not the America I want to know.

Note to Retirees:

The March Retiree meeting was cancelled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The monthly retiree article will return when meetings resume.



COVID-19 shows need for Medicaid expansion

By Chrissy Kline

During a time filled with turmoil and frightening scenarios of the spread of COVID-19 happening daily on the news, in our communities and within our homes it is no wonder many are crying out for relief. This crisis has highlighted a major gap within our healthcare system, not only in medical supplies and equipment but also in our coverage for the impoverished and vulnerable.

Previously in an article titled "Medicaid Expansion: Why should I care" in the October 2019 issue of *First Local News*, the effects of this lack of coverage were already beginning to be felt in remote and rural areas through hospital closures and in the hundreds of thousands of children and elderly in the state in need with no coverage.

Refusing Medicaid expansion has led to less jobs, higher insurance premiums, sicker children and families stressed about how to keep their families healthy, all while taxpayers continue to bear the burden.

Now, as a viral pandemic is upon us, those hospitals that have closed are more necessary than ever, and those in

need of coverage need it most. Testing for the coronavirus is costly, difficult to obtain and those most susceptible to infection are the population most in need of Medicaid coverage.

UAW Local 249 Community Action Program (CAP) committee chairperson spoke passionately when asked about Medicaid and its relation to the coronavirus. "How many will stay home and die because we didn't use our own federal tax dollars to expand Medicaid?"

Medicaid expansion, especially during our current situation of dealing with COVID-19, would allow a fraction of peace of mind by knowing that out of pocket costs would be greatly reduced compared to being uninsured. Those who are sick would have an

opportunity to seek treatment instead of continuing to work, possibly further infecting others. Medicaid coverage would keep hospitals open in rural areas where treatment is needed, preventing the sick from travelling into heavier populated areas.

In a system where we already pay taxes towards Medicaid, the federal government providing 90 percent of the funding costs, and it is benefitting our families and communities it is difficult to see a downside to expanding Medicaid.

So why, with all this information in mind, do we continue to refuse the expansion of coverage for a service that Missouri taxpayers already pay for? Why do we continue to allow our hard-earned taxes to be spent in the states surrounding us while our most vulnerable grow sicker, are swallowed by insurmountable debt from being uninsured or perish from lack of life saving treatment?

The answer is simple. Because our Governor, Mike Parson has allowed it. And we as voters need to remember

that when the time comes to make our voices heard. Not just on the petitions we circulate but with a vote for a governor that will stand up for us, because our legislators have shown that they hold no regard for our desires or our well-being. It is time as Missouri voters and taxpayers to take a stand on where our money goes, how we care for our friends, neighbors and cities in this state.

Nicole Galloway, state auditor and governor-elect stated, "the COVID-19 crisis has exposed glaring gaps in our healthcare system. Missourians shouldn't be afraid of going into debt if they need testing or treatment during a public health emergency. Every person in our state, regardless of whether or not they have insurance, should be able to access the care they need. We can't wait any longer."

We can wait no longer. It is time to speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves. That is what we do. That is what unions are about. Educate yourself, make your voice heard, and most of all stand up for what is right.