



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

# CONVENTION NEWS

29<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION  
TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 2016

## Workers Share Tales of Organizing During Convention's Second Day

Day two of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters' 29th Convention told the story of organizing and growing the union through the voice of the union's own members.

Whether it was freight, warehouse, tech or port, workers across different industries shared the details of their hard-fought victories in the workplace. But despite myriad backgrounds, they all had something in common – the resolve to stand up and fight back against greedy employers looking to take advantage of them.

There might be no greater example of that than McKesson Pharmaceuticals. Glen Gray, a member of Local 79, has worked for company for more than a decade. He joined colleagues at his Lakeland, Fla. facility who in 2011 in organizing with the union, but then was fired two years later after he spoke out publicly.

"Losing my health care was difficult," he told attendees. "My wife has a chronic illness. But I never gave up, I never lost faith. The company offered to pay me off to go away. But I told them no because somebody needs to say no to corporate greed, somebody needs to say no to corporate bullying."

After an appeal to the National Labor Relations Board,

Gray won his job back in 2015 with back pay and benefits. "When I marched back to my job last year, I marched back with my head held high," he said.

The fight for fair wages and benefits, however, continues with McKesson. Despite being one of the nation's richest companies, its workers in Florida still haven't be awarded a first contract.

There have been greater stories of success in freight organizing. Gordon Sweeton, IBT International Vice President-Central, noted four FedEx Freight facilities have organized with the Teamsters in recent years and the courts just recently ordered the company to hold contract negotiations. Since then, Locals 71 and 107 have done so. And that's thanks to a lot of hard work.

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GLEN GRAY, MEMBER LOCAL 79

"This victory was made possible by those at the local unions and the international unions working together," he said. "We've got a long way to go, but at least we've started negotiating."

Mel Mendieta, a Local 439 member who works at FedEx Freight in Stockton, Calif., said workers will benefit from these deals. "This is about winning a secure future," he said. "Our families deserve this and we deserve this."

**TEAMSTERS LOCAL 710 | JOHN T. COLI, TRUSTEE**

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Meanwhile, at XPO/Con-way, similar steps have been made. IBT International Vice President Tyson Johnson noted three locals have won their organizing fights. But the process still has a ways to go.

“XPO has misrepresented and misled the Con-way workers about the closing of facilities,” he said. “Our organizers have educated XPO workers about the fact its pension plan shut down in 2006. It’s hard to believe but many didn’t know they weren’t going to receive pension benefits.”

Juan Narron, a member of Local 657 in Laredo, Texas, said workers are going to remain strong in the fight. “The company is trying to break our spirit,” he said. “But you know what, it won’t work. Because we are proud Teamsters.”

Warehouse workers shared similar sentiments while discussing efforts to organize Sysco and US Foods workers. Kip Cortez of Sysco Atlanta said workers there stood up because it took advantage of them. “This company made billions and billions of dollars, and in 20 years they never shared a raise with us,” the Local 528 member said. “We went against Sysco Atlanta and we won. And it was worth it for us.”

The struggle, however, continues for US Foods warehouse workers in Maryland who have been out on strike for

62 days. Some 3000 US Foods workers nationwide have honored their picket line at different times since then, said Steve Vairma, an IBT International Vice President.

In the booming Silicon Valley, the Teamsters led by IBT International Vice President Rome Aloise have helped shuttle bus drivers working at some of the best-known tech firms in the world gain better wages and working conditions.

Local 853 member Rosie Silva, a Loop Transportation driver, said the organizing effort has changed her life. “The benefits were better, the pay was better,” she said. “I saw [about the organizing of drivers] in the paper last year, and I decided it was time to move on.”

And finally, port truck drivers have for the last several years been standing up against misclassification and wage theft at the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. And they have met success, as government agencies and the courts have sided with workers over employees on the issues.

That hasn’t necessarily stopped the companies in their effort to tamp down on workers. Daniel Uaina, who works for Intermodal Bridge Transport and is a member of Local 848, said “the company may have a little fight in them. But that just means we need to stand up!”

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