

UNITED STEELWORKERS
USW News
UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS

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USW Applauds Obama State of the Union Speech

President's Focus on Jobs and Income Inequality is Cause for Optimism

(Pittsburgh) – United Steelworkers (USW) International President Leo W. Gerard issued the following statement after President Obama delivered his 2014 State of the Union Address.

“President Obama made it clear that promoting economic growth and making sure that everyone shares in it is his top priority. His speech laid a roadmap for results and made clear that he will not wait for Republicans to stop protecting the top 1% while everyone else suffers.

“The President has turned the nation’s economy in the right direction with no help from the Republicans. The economic and financial collapse of the economy brought on by the excesses of the Bush Administration has taken years to reverse. During his time, the President helped create a new framework for financial regulation and has put health insurance within everyone’s reach. The seeds of recovery have been sown, but much work remains. Ensuring growth and making sure that everyone can share in it is far from certain.

“The President admitted that he previously had more faith in Congress’ willingness to do what is right, but partisan gridlock has robbed America of jobs and economic opportunities. President Obama will work with Congress when he can, but he cannot sit on his hands waiting for them to act: One hand holds a pen, the other grips a phone to promote whatever possible positive steps.

“In our not-so-distant past, workers shared in the fruits of their labors. Their hard work and productivity was compensated with rising wages. Today, income equality and rising living standards are just a false promise for the majority of Americans. Today their efforts result in higher CEO pay, offshored jobs and stagnant wages. That must change.

“President Obama has made it clear that economic justice -- a fair wage with decent benefits is his priority. It should be America’s priority as well.

“President Obama has also made it clear that revitalizing growth in the manufacturing sector is a fundamental for a strong economy. While progress has been made under his Administration, we are still suffering the effects of the loss of more than 5 million manufacturing jobs and the closing of 60,000 manufacturing facilities. We must ensure that reviving the manufacturing sector must be a top economic priority because absent this, there is no long-term hope of creating the opportunities that middle-class Americans want and deserve.”

The USW is the largest private-sector union in North America, representing workers in a range of industries including metals, mining, rubber, paper and forestry, oil refining, health care, security, hotels, and municipal governments and agencies. For more information: www.usw.org.

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