



# The Highball

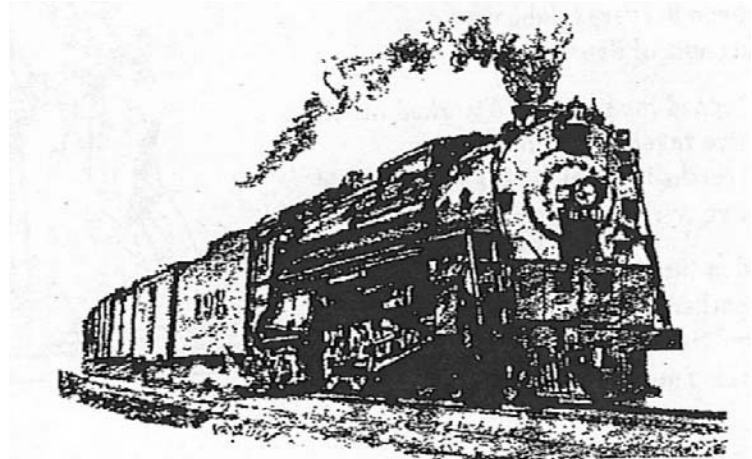
Official Publication of  
**Railroad Workers United**

## RWU Adopts Resolution of Support for Furloughed Railroaders

Recent months have witnessed a dramatic drop in rail employment, as rail workers - mostly in the train-and-engine crafts - are furloughed coast-to-coast. Sadly, most union leadership appears to accept this as a natural fact, as something that is completely beyond our control, something that labor can do nothing about. We beg to differ!

While we recognize that the decline in rail freight traffic and jobs is part and parcel of the downturn in the worldwide global economy, RWU believes that it is time, not to despair and become fatalistic, but rather to go on the offensive. Not only must we refuse to leave our furloughed brothers and sisters hanging out to dry, we must take action to defend the jobs and working conditions of those of us who remain working.

After much consideration and input from members and supporters, Railroad Workers United has adopted a comprehensive resolution that speaks to what can be done -- by the carriers, government, the unions and rank-and-file workers -- in the face of this deteriorating situation. Please read over the document, share it with your fellow workers, and bring it to the attention of your union leadership. Your local may just want to adopt the resolution as well. **See Page 3 for the full text of the RWU Resolution.**



## Workers Emergency Recovery Campaign Launched

In response to the corporate and bank oriented bail out, a new national campaign to defend the interests of working people has sprung up. The Workers Emergency Recovery Campaign (WERC) is an effort to organize working people to fight specifically for gains that would benefit them; for example, massive job creation programs, single-payer health care that would eliminate the for-profit insurance companies from the picture, and a moratorium on home foreclosures. The Campaign wants to tax the rich, NOT working people. It is based on a ten-point program that can be summarized with the slogan: "Bail out working people - not Wall Street."

At its monthly International Steering Committee meeting in April, RWU leadership voted unanimously to endorse the Campaign and help build the movement for economic reforms that focuses on the needs of poor and working people rather than the banks, stockholders and CEOs. **For a full text of the 10-Point Program of the Campaign, please see Page 4.**

*Continued on Page 2*

## Workers Economic Recovery Campaign

*Continued from Front Page*

The Campaign seeks to bring people together as workers, regardless of their political affiliation, into an organization that is run democratically and can effectively fight for our interests. As isolated individuals we are weak, but together we can wield tremendous power.

Working people now face the worst crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Workers are losing their jobs to the tune of roughly 19,000 per day, and there is no end in sight. On the railroad, around 7,000 workers have been furloughed in the U.S. alone. Similar job loss numbers are the case in both Canada and Mexico as

well. More than 2.3 million home owners suffered foreclosures last year, which was an increase of 81 percent over 2007. This number could rise to over 10 million in the coming years, as housing prices continue to careen downward.

The Campaign has developed a Program consisting of 10 fundamental demands to be included in a Workers' Emergency Recovery Plan to Bail out Working People -- NOT Wall Street. To view this list of demands, see Page 4. To view the WERC website, go to <http://wercampaign.org/>.



*Railroad Workers United was organized in April 2008 at a Founding Convention in Dearborn, MI. RWU grew out of decades of struggle within the craft unions for unity, solidarity, and democracy. We are carrying on a tradition of rank-and-file activity which dates back to the 1890s and the time of Eugene V. Debs.*

*RWU is a cross-craft inter-union caucus of rail labor activists across North America. All rail workers of all crafts from all carriers who support our Statement of Principles are welcome to join in our efforts. Please write, call or email the address below.*

### Statement of Principles

- *Unity of All Rail Crafts*
- *An End to Inter-Union Conflict*
- *Rank-and-File Democracy*
- *Membership Participation & Action*
- *Solidarity*
- *No to Concessionary Bargaining*

**Railroad Workers United**  
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[www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)  
[info@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:info@railroadworkersunited.org)

## Railroad Workers United

### International Steering Committee

<b>Jon Barron</b>	UTU #662	CSX	Richmond, VA
<b>Ron Davison</b>	UTU #194	CP	Elkhart, IN
<b>Steve Desavouret</b>	TCU #6608	CN	Chicago, IL.
<b>Jim Eubanks</b>	UTU #656	UP	Little Rock, AR
	BLET #182		
<b>Jon Flanders</b>	IAM #1145	CSX	Selkirk, NY
<b>Ron Kaminkow</b>	BLET #51	Amtrak	Reno, NV
<b>Brian Lewis</b>	UTU #239	UP	Oakland, CA
<b>Ed Michael</b>	BLET #724	UP	Salem, IL
	UTU #979		
<b>Hugh Sawyer</b>	BLET #316	NS	Atlanta, GA
<b>Matt Weaver</b>	BMWED #2624	CSX	Detroit, MI
<b>Chet Whyers</b>	UTU #979	UP	Salem, IL

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## RWU Resolution of Support for Furloughed Rail Workers

**Whereas**, the rail carriers of North America have reaped exorbitant profits from the hard work and dedication of the rail workers of North America; and

**Whereas**, railroad workers' productivity is known to have grown exponentially in the last few decades; and

**Whereas**, railroad workers did not cause the current economic crisis but rather had it foisted upon them by the reckless and irresponsible actions of banks, big business, government and an unjust economic system; and

**Whereas** thousands of union brothers and sisters are now subject to devastating furloughs and layoffs by the very carriers that they helped to make wealthy; and

**Whereas**, the rail carriers, the Railroad Retirement Board, rail unions and rank-and-file members all have an obligation to assist the less fortunate rail workers now furloughed by all means at our disposal;

**Therefore, be it resolved**, that RWU supports the following actions on the part of the Rail Carriers:

- Pay the health insurance premiums for furloughed employees until recalled to service.
- Pay relocation expenses for those who must relocate to a new terminal.
- Provide at least a sixty day notice of impending layoff of employees
- Shorten the work week for those on regular shifts -- with no loss in pay - in order to provide employment for those on furlough.
- Rather than wait until July 16th, immediately implement the necessary changes and adjustments in staffing that will be necessary to meet the mandates under the new "Safety Bill", providing employment opportunities for those on furlough.
- Make full use of "reserve extra boards", provide opportunities for employees to qualify on new territory, utilize full crews wherever possible, allow employees to mark off when they wish, and otherwise provide for a workplace that keeps employees on the payroll.

**Be it further Resolved**, that RWU supports the following changes to the Railroad Retirement System of furlough benefits:

- Amend the system to facilitate early retirement, thereby freeing up jobs for a return-to-work for those on furlough.
- Amend the system's bi-weekly unemployment benefit for furloughed rail workers by raising it to a level on par with state unemployment rates such as New York and California.
- Amend the system's eligibility to collect unemployment benefit beyond the current six months.

**Be it further Resolved**, that RWU calls upon the rail unions to take the following actions:

- Adopt the above positions and build campaigns in defense of our fellow workers who are unemployed.
- Educate and otherwise assist furloughed members in seeking and obtaining unemployment and other benefits available to laid off workers.
- Utilize the time, energy and power of the unemployed themselves by organizing unemployed rail worker participation in the campaign.
- Organize those union members still employed to materially support those on furlough through yard office food drop boxes, bucket collections of funds, raffles & drawings, benefit concerts & suppers, etc.
- Encourage their members to remember that others are furloughed; therefore refrain from performing extra work that in effect takes a job from a less senior union brother or sister.

**And Be it Finally Resolved** that RWU encourages its members and supporters across North America to circulate this resolution as broadly as possible, making copies for co-workers, posting it at workplace locations, and bringing it to local union meetings for consideration and adoption.

**-- Adopted by Railroad Workers United 4-07-09 --**

# **Workers Emergency Recovery Campaign -- 10 Point Program --**

- 1) Put a halt to the Wall Street bailout plan. Not one more penny should be earmarked to bail out the bankers and speculators. It's time to bail out working people.
- 2) Enact a moratorium on all home foreclosures, utility shut-offs, evictions and rent hikes.
- 3) Enact H.R. 676 - the universal, single payer healthcare plan. Take the private insurance companies out of the healthcare equation. Guarantee fully-funded pensions for retirees, along with healthcare and other benefits.
- 4) Enact the Employee Free Choice Act so that every worker can have union representation.
- 5) Stop the layoffs in auto and other industries across the country, retool the auto industry to build rapid mass transit, solar, and wind systems.
- 6) Stop the scapegoating of immigrant workers. Stop the ICE raids and deportations.
- 7) End all funding for the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and bring our troops home now. The war expenditures in these countries alone are estimated at \$3 trillion. Redirect all war funding to meet human needs.
- 8) Enact a massive national reconstruction public works program (minimum expenditure needed of \$1 trillion) to rebuild the nation's schools, hospitals and crumbling infrastructure and to put millions of people back to work at a union-scale wage. Provide all necessary funding for a genuine Reconstruction program in the Gulf Coast; enact the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act (HR 4048).
- 9) Defend and expand the rights and economic security of those who are unable to work. Grant living wage benefits to single parents, disabled, seniors, and the unemployed. End the arbitrary, punitive time limits, sanctions, denial of education, and forced unwaged work fare in the TANF welfare program.
- 10) Tax the corporations and the rich -- not working people -- to finance a workers' recovery plan. The rich currently enjoy historically high levels of wealth while being taxed at bargain basement rates. Implement a retroactive tax on windfall revenue on the oil-energy industry, return capital income taxation to 1981 levels, and repatriate the \$2 trillion from the offshore tax havens.

**-- Campaign Endorsed By Railroad Workers United April 7, 2009 --**

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info@railroadworkersunited.org  
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## Railroad Retirement Reform Campaign Takes Off!

**Ron Friend**

**Chair, RWU Committee on Railroad Retirement Reform**

The signed petitions and the letters in support of RWU's Campaign to Reform Railroad Retirement are coming in daily. To date, signatures of over 2,000 railroad workers from 19 states have been sent in. That proves that ALL of rail labor is in favor of the proposed changes.

With the economy in the shape it's in, the time for the proposed changes could not be better. The Surface Transportation Board (STB) reported that in 2008 while many businesses' profits were down, as was the stock market in general, the Class I railroads actually were making healthy profits.

The proposed change of removing the caps from railroad retirement earnings taxes for ALL working railroad employees would provide an additional \$347 million per year into the railroad retirement fund.

That means that everyone pays into railroad retirement from January 1 through December 31. That includes the CEOs, Presidents, and other railroad carrier officers as well as the railroad labor leaders that have earnings over the current set cap.

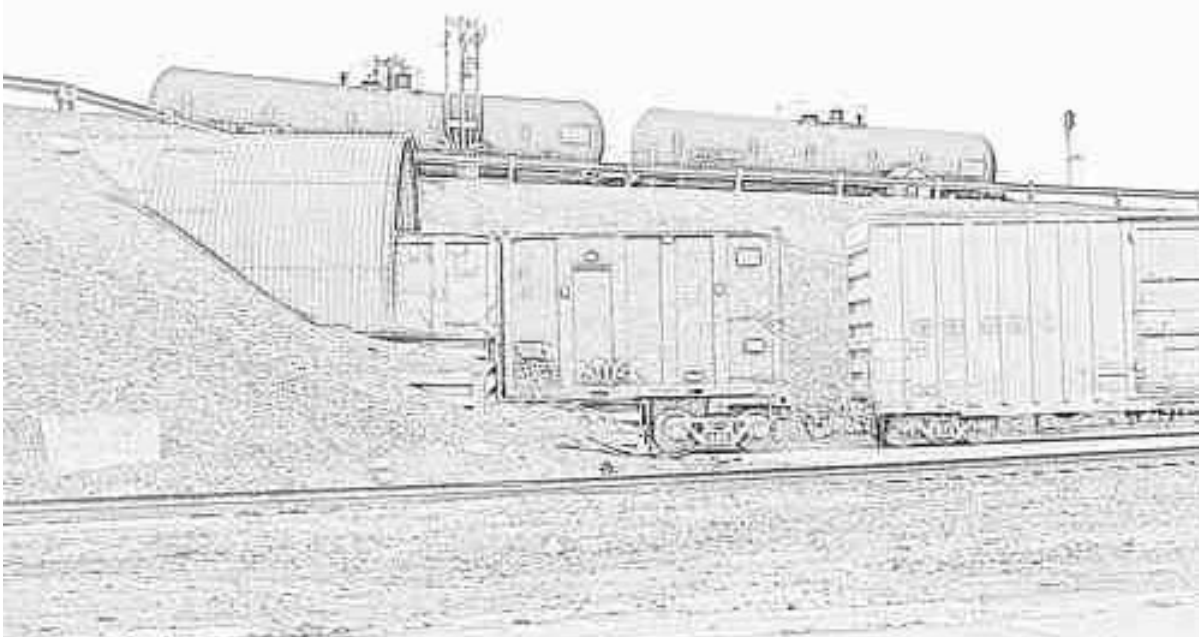
Some folks may have an issue with removal of the caps at first glance. However, the increased funds would do all of the following: provide a means to afford our spouses to receive benefits at an earlier age; provide our disabled brothers and sisters and their qualifying dependents with adequate medical coverage; provide our retirees with lower insured

benefit premiums; make provision for all rails to have the choice of retiring earlier than is currently the case. And should we choose to retire earlier than 58 years of age, or less than 30 years service, we will not be hit with a penalty of at least 20%, but rather just 2% per year up to 5 years less. These are the reasons for removing the caps!

In order for any positive action to happen we must encourage our rail labor leaders to help us make these proposed changes a reality. Then the same encouragement must be forwarded to our Congressmen, our Senators, our President and our Vice-President. And we need to do so with U.S. Mail as well as emails. And don't limit yourself. Have your spouse/significant other send letters as well. Those unemployed fellow workers? Give them a letter to send. Add a copy of the proposed changes so they know exactly what we are asking for.

With the struggle that finally led to the Railroad Survivorship Act of 2001 the labor leaders kind of lost sight that the original proposal was for age 55 OR 30 years service. Some of them even forgot that the original idea wasn't theirs! This time let's make it crystal clear exactly what we, the rank and file, are in support of. Need a copy of the proposed changes? Go to <http://railroadworkersunited.org/> and click on the "Retirement Campaign"

If you want to be added to the email list, please email Ron Friend at: [railroadron@suddenlink.net](mailto:railroadron@suddenlink.net) Subject Line "Change Railroad Retirement".



## Outcome of UTU/SMWIA Merger Attempt Still Uncertain

The lawsuit which put the UTU/Sheet Metal merger on hold continued in court this week. On Tuesday, April 21, the attorneys for each party to the suit -- the rank-and-file UTU members who filed the suit, the UTU International and the four remaining UTU officers who are acting in concert (against the UTU) with the SMWIA -- presented oral arguments before three judges in the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. Federal Court Judge John Adams had previously issued a Preliminary Injunction which stopped the merger until the case could be settled. Four UTU Vice Presidents -- Babler, Baffoni, Cumby and Iannone -- who are intervening in the case as defendants, appealed the Preliminary Injunction. Their legal fees and expenses are being paid by Mike Sullivan, president of the SMWIA.

The court case itself is clear cut and the rank-and-file Plaintiffs expect that in the end they will prevail in upholding the legal rights of UTU members to a full informed vote. In the original 2007 vote on the merger, members were denied their rights when former UTU president Paul Thompson refused to submit a SMART constitution for their ratification. The intervening vice presidents want to continue denying those rights to members. Working hand-in-hand with SMWIA President Sullivan, they are attempting to force the undemocratic merger to take affect.

As a result, charges of dual unionism and usurping the President's powers were filed against the intervening Vice Presidents. The UTU Executive Board will resume hearing the charges on May 18.

## Has Your Union Endorsed Single Payer Health Care ?

*By Jon Flanders -- RWU Co-Chair IAM #1145*

Has your union local endorsed HR 676, the Conyers Single Payer Health Insurance Bill that would provide coverage for all residents of the United States?

If not, why not? With layoffs cascading down through the economy, many workers are suddenly discovering the downside of employer-based private health insurance. It is high time for the U.S. to join the rest of the leading industrial countries and even some less developed countries and provide the people of the United States with universal health insurance, whether they are lucky enough to have a job or not.

HR 676 has been endorsed by 516 union organizations in 49 states. Endorsers include 121 Central Labor Councils and Area Labor Federations and 39

In addition, the UTU filed a motion in Judge Adams' court asking that the four intervening vice presidents be enjoined from receiving SMWIA payment of legal fees and expenses. A hearing was held on the UTU's motion and a ruling is expected soon from Judge Adams.

In sort of a bizarre twist of internal politics, the entire UTU Board of Directors recently traipsed to Washington, DC for two

days of meetings with Mike Sullivan the SMWIA president. The UTU called it a failed attempt to convince Sullivan to negotiate a SMART constitution for membership ratification. What is hard to understand is that the UTU said the "entire" board met with Sullivan to convince him to do what is right. But it seems hard to believe that Babler, Baffoni, Cumby and Iannone have done an about face and were actually there to convince Sullivan. They certainly have not publicly since done that about face, nor have they withdrawn from the lawsuit or begun advocating for the rights of their members. The "keystone cops" antics in the UTU boardroom leave many UTU members grateful that the legal efforts to save the UTU are in the hands of clear-headed rank-&-file members, not in those of the officials.



state AFL-CIO's (KY, PA, CT, OH, DE, ND, WA, SC, WY, VT, FL, WI, WV, SD, NC, MO, MN, ME, AR, MD-DC, TX, IA, AZ, TN, OR, GA, OK, KS, CO, IN, AL, CA, AK, MI, MT, NE, NY, NV & MA).

Twenty international/national unions have endorsed HR 676: including the Electrical Workers (UE), Steelworkers (USW), Autoworkers (UAW) and three unions that represent rail workers -- UTU, Machinists (IAM) and Sheet Metal Workers (SMWIA).

Right now, 74 congress people have endorsed HR 676. Has yours?

If you want to learn more, there are a couple of labor single payer websites you should check out.

<http://www.laborforsinglepayer.org/>

<http://unionsforsinglepayerHR676.org>

## COMMENTARY: Support for Furloughed Railroaders Begins with You !

In less than a year, employment in Train & Engine Service has declined by nearly 10%. The statistics are grim indeed. In the U.S. alone, employment has dropped by around 7,000. While a portion of this job loss has been by attrition, the overwhelming majority of these job cuts have resulted in furloughs of junior employees. All the major U.S. carriers have resorted to layoffs of trainmen (and in some cases engineers who cannot even hold a position "set back" as a trainman).

This tragedy should be the concern of every North American railroad worker. Just because you might still be working does not mean that you will not be adversely affected. Besides the basic fact that those unlucky enough to be furloughed are your union sisters and brothers, your fellow workers, your allies in the struggle with the rail carriers, there are a host of other very real and very tangible reasons why you should concern yourself with the plight of your furloughed co-workers.

1 - High unemployment rates in any industry or sector breeds fear among the workforce and has historically served to drive down wages, benefits and working conditions. Sadly, when such "choice" is posed as one between a good contract or no job at all, workers are often tempted to vote for concessions in order to save jobs.

2 - In the event of a strike in the upcoming round of contract negotiations, the employers would have a vast national pool of skilled railroaders who they could attempt to recruit by offering them good paying jobs as strike breakers ("scabs"). Unfortunately, some of them would inevitably accept such scab jobs.

3 - If you had any plans for your son or daughter, brothers, cousins or other family members to hire out on the railroad, as long as there are thousands of laid off rails already, you may as well kiss those plans goodbye.

4 - Less rail employment means less union members, less union power and fewer workers to pay into the Railroad Retirement System.

5 - Less rail employment means less aggregate dues money to go into the coffers of the rail unions (in particular the UTU), putting pressure upon the union to cut services, downsize operations, and/or raise dues upon the members who

still remain working.

6 - Countless rail workers still on the job have been "set back"; force assigned to the yard, forced to the road, forced to another terminal, are "back on nights", or have gone "booming" to a locale where they still can "hold". The knock-on effects of these layoffs has reverberated throughout the ranks of train and enginemen across North America. Very likely, especially if you are in the train-and-engine crafts, this includes you.

7 - The carriers -- who in the last few years have already broken all records for their assessment of discipline against our members -- now really have us in their sights. Rail companies have used "lean times" like these to increase harassment, intimidation, discipline and firing of union members.

8 - All of the above adds up to a drastically increased "fear factor" among the rank-and-file. As such, we tend to keep our heads down, don't rock the boat, and wish for better times somewhere down the road.

Ironically, this is exactly the time when individual thinking and "watching your own ass" will NOT help you! Remember the old labor adage, "An Injury to One is an Injury to All!" Now IS the time for us to come together, to stand tall and make our voices heard. There are countless things that we can do together to confront this situation. A number of them are listed in the RWU Resolution of Support for Furloughed Railroaders (see Page 3). The time is now to get involved. Attend your union meeting and fight back. "Si Se Puede!" "Yes We Can!!"



***What time is it? Time to organize!***



# Railroad Workers United

## Membership Application

Railroad Workers United needs you! If you believe that our unions should fight the carriers and not each other, then RWU is for you. If you believe that the carriers' "Behavior Based Safety" Programs do more harm to us than good, and If you want real union-based safety committees built upon cross-craft solidarity and rank-and-file control, then RWU is for you. If you want to help reform Railroad Retirement; if you wish to see an active, informed and mobilized union membership -- of all rail labor -- then RWU is for you. Please fill out this Membership Application form and mail it in today!

**Sign Me Up!!** *I want to join and help RWU build labor unity, democracy & solidarity!*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Union \_\_\_\_\_ Local # \_\_\_\_\_ Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Terminal \_\_\_\_\_ Craft \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Service \_\_\_\_\_

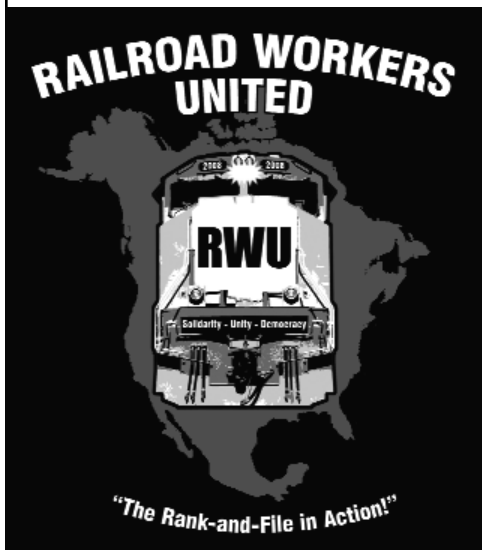
Union Position (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to join for (check one):

1 year \$50.00     2 Years \$90.00     3 Years \$120.00

Clip and mail together with your dues to:  
**RWU P.O. Box 1053 Salem, IL 62881**  
 OR join on-line at [www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)

### Get Your RWU Union-Made-in-the-USA T-shirts and Hats



**T-shirts** now available in Black or Gray in S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL, or 4XL. RWU logo at left is on the front of the shirt.

**Hats** are available in Black, Gray or Red, one-size fits all. RWU Logo on the front is stitched embroidery.

Both T-shirts and hats are union made in the USA, 100% cotton and include the RWU 4-color logo.

T-shirts and hats cost \$20.00 each (\$15.00 for RWU members).

Postage Paid By RWU in the U.S., Canada and Mexico

Make your check to RWU and mail with your order to:

**RWU P.O. Box 1053 Salem, IL 62881**

**OR**

Order and pay with your paypal or credit card via our website at [www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)