

# WRENCH & WOOD

Wood, Pulp and Paper Workers News



July 2020

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## STAYING THE COURSE FOR ORGANIZING

*An update from IAM Organizing Director Vinny Addeo*

As the IAM entered the “unchartered” waters of the COVID-19 pandemic back in March, the Organizing Department was confronted with the task of continuing the goal of growing our Union through non-traditional means. Although face-to-face interactions in organizing is the most effective way to educate and empower workers to organize their workplaces, the restrictions and safety precautions required due to the COVID-19 pandemic has dwarfed our ability to do just that.

With that being said, standing idle is never an option for organizing and growing our Union. The Organizing Department has resorted to utilizing and fine-tuning many of the electronic skills and tactics we were already using in order to reach out to potential organizing opportunities via social media, digital ads, virtual meetings, etc. The only difference is now this is the only means that our Organizers have available to them of continuing our communications with these potential organizing leads.

When it comes to the Woodworking industry, the Organizing Department along with the Southern Territory and the Woodworkers Department have collaborated together to pursue an organizing lead at

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## WORK CONTINUES AT THE BUILDING AND WOOD WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

### ***NORTH AMERICAN REGIONAL MEETING and BWI WORLD BOARD MEETING HELD***

Virtual meetings were held to carry on the work of the BWI North America (NA) Region and the BWI World Board Meeting to adapt to the coronavirus pandemic.

First, on May 12th, Mike Rose as VP of BWI North American Region hosted a Zoom meeting for the union affiliates. Representatives from North America and Europe shared information about how the pandemic was effecting their respective Unions and membership and each of their countries' response and status during this time. The main change in the future action plan will be the big shift to digital for organizing, education, meetings and campaigning.

Woodworkers Department COS and BWI Board Member Mike Rose also participated in the BWI World Board Meeting which was held virtually May 25. The BWI COVID-19 Solidarity Initiative was presented and unanimously endorsed by the World Board. BWI had quickly responded to the pandemic and had the foresight to consider how this would affect workers and trade unions and developed a plan to meet some of these needs. The initiative was to raise funds to meet immediate needs of unions in the

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## VERSO to INDEFINITELY IDLE TWO PAPER MILLS



*The Verso paper mill is among the largest employers in Wisconsin Rapids. The Ohio-based company announced June 9, 2020 that it would idle mills in Wisconsin Rapids and Duluth, Minnesota, laying off 1,000 workers.*

The Verso paper mill, and the largest employer in Wisconsin Rapids, has announced they will shut down by the end of July, as well as idling a mill in Duluth, Minnesota at the end of June. This move will lay off more than one-quarter of the company's employees and 57 of our IAM members.

The global pandemic has led to a dramatic decline in demand for specialty paper products. In the industry, printer paper and newsprint both fall into this category, as does the coated magazine paper produced at the Wisconsin Rapids mill. After the pandemic caused many offices to shift to having employees work from home, demand for these printer paper and other graphic paper products has cratered. A steep fall-off in advertising revenues has led to layoffs and reductions across the media industry, including for producers of glossy magazines.

Other parts of the paper industry, including [manufacturing of toilet paper and packaging material](#), have seen demand soar amid the pandemic.

In its statement, the company left open the possibility that the mills could restart production if demand returns. But they could also be sold or permanently closed.

## Walk, Run, Ride... Whatever GUIDE DOGS OF AMERICA

With in-person events cancelled for most of the year, Guide Dogs of America (GDA) had to come up with a new socially distant fundraiser idea.

GDA initially considered a walk, run or ride to help raise money for the school, but decided there was a way to include everyone. Now, no matter how old you are or where you live, you can participate for an hour of anything in this year's [Walk, Run, Ride... Whatever](#).

From July 31 to August 2, 2020 challenge yourself, family and friends to get outside for an hour dedicated to GDA and the good work it does year round. You decide if you want to run, walk, ride a bike or motorcycle, bungee jump or whatever! The important thing is to put "fun" into this fundraiser.

[Register here for GDA's Walk, Run, Ride... Whatever.](#)

Guide Dogs of America is the IAM's favorite charity. At the beginning of this year GDA completed a merger, and now provides hardworking service dogs for people who are blind/visually impaired, veterans, individuals with autism and facilities to become trusted companions that bring confidence, independence and mobility. Their services are provided free of charge to residents in the U.S. and Canada.

### There Are Many Ways to Help Guide Dogs of America

Please click here for many more ways to give and individual links for more information.

<https://www.guidedogsofamerica.org/ways-to-give/>

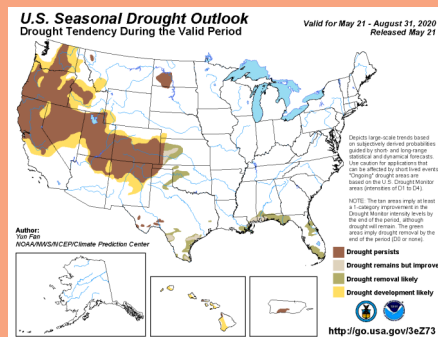
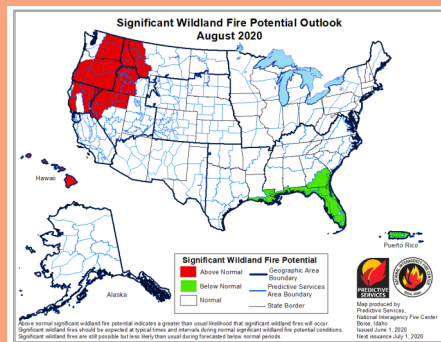
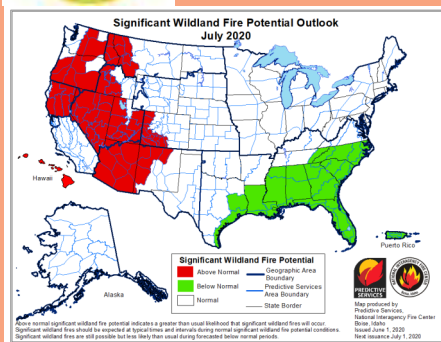
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PotlatchDeltic, a timber company located in West Waldo, Arkansas, for approximately 150 mill workers. We originally had an NLRB election date set for April 2, 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our election was postponed indefinitely until the NLRB decided on which way they would proceed to conduct the election. Unfortunately, any delays in organizing overwhelmingly favors the company and gives them more time to coerce and intimidate their workforce into voting against Union representation.

The NLRB finally decided on June 24<sup>th</sup> that they will be conducting a “mail-ballot” election for these workers at PotlatchDeltic. The ballots will be mailed out to the eligible voters on July 8<sup>th</sup> and will be counted at the NLRB Region 15 office on August 5<sup>th</sup>, more than four months after the original election date. While this extensive delay and lack of ability for our Organizers to interact with these potential members using traditional organizing means, we have continued communications with them during the pandemic utilizing every electronic means available to us. While these means are not as effective, we will continue to communicate with the eligible voters until the ballots are counted and hope for the best possible outcome. This delay has disenfranchised the workers and delivered a large blow to the momentum we had leading up to the original April 2<sup>nd</sup> election date, but we will stay the course and grant these workers the opportunity to better their lives by giving them the chance to vote for IAM representation.



## Wildfire Potential for July and August



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COVID19 response as well as offer humanitarian assistance to workers that find themselves in dire situations. The initiative is also to support unions that will face hardships from reduced membership and will need support to continue organizing as well as to build capacity and communications and campaigning support to respond to worker needs and challenges that arise during the pandemic.

Noted during the meeting was that the IAM has given stamps to its members that are valid for 6 months even if they are unemployed so that they remain members. They have also given dispensation to their local affiliates who have had to cancel meetings. Alternative processes have been implemented for our next Convention that would allow every member an opportunity to vote, submit resolutions and Constitutional amendments.

The IAM and BWI affiliate unions are also using calls to action on their websites, showing members how they can contact their representatives to ask for general and specific worker protections through email and phone calls.

## BIO-CORNER

Leroy Rue, Jr., recording secretary at Local Lodge W433 in Meridian, Mississippi, has dedicated more than 50 years of service to Atlas Roofing and the Union. Leroy was there when the International Woodworkers of America merged with the IAM in 1994. Still employed and working at Atlas as a Lift Truck Operator we applaud his service — thank you Brother Rue!

A Baptist Deacon, Leroy is a fisherman and sportsfan, too. He and his wife of 25 years are the proud parents of 8 children, 11 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

*Pictured below:*

*Leroy Rue, Jr., Recording Secretary*

*Local Lodge W443*

*Meridian, Mississippi*



## WOODWORKERS

### ON-THE-JOB



*Brady Erfourth, Millwright Apprentice*

*Local Lodge W130 Weyerhaeuser Raymond Sawmill*

*Raymond, Washington*



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