**Headline:** Why Americans Support Unions and Distrust Big Business

By David McCall

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**[Article Body:]**

Justin Arango said support for a union built over the years among workers at JSW Steel in Mingo Junction, Ohio, as the company repeatedly failed to deliver fair pay, sufficient sick time, and safety improvements.

The workers ultimately beat back management’s nasty anti-union campaign and voted in March to join the United Steelworkers (USW), winning a long-overdue voice at the [prosperous](https://www.jsw.in/groups/jsw-steel-reports-financial-results-q4-and-fy-2024-25) company.

Their victory reflects the nation’s growing consensus on the only real way to ensure a fair shake on the job. More Americans support unions and feel disillusioned with big business than at any time since the 1960s, according to a study by the [Economic Policy Institute](https://www.epi.org/blog/americans-favor-labor-unions-over-big-business-now-more-than-ever/) (EPI), a think tank in Washington, D.C.

Support for unions versus big business soared to a record 16-point margin in recent years, according to EPI’s analysis of survey data from the federally supported American National Election Studies initiative.

Just as important, EPI researchers found the pro-union sentiment surging across educational, ethnic, geographic, and racial groups, as increasing numbers of fed-up workers demand their fair share and stand up to exploitation on the job.

Workers waging high-profile fights against out of touch owners at Amazon and Starbucks [helped to drive](https://abcnews.go.com/Business/amazon-starbucks-workers-led-union-resurgence-2022/story?id=95090198) the widening support for labor, EPI concluded. In addition, the pandemic underscored workers’ need for unions to provide a bulwark against bosses who put them in harm’s way.

And runaway corporate greed, such as the padding of CEO salaries and shareholder dividends on workers’ backs, fueled [rampant economic inequality](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ceo-pay-workers-169-years-salary/) and left ordinary Americans struggling to make ends meet. It would take the average worker two lifetimes to make what the highest-paid CEO racks up in a year.

“It’s the corporations that have let the people down,” noted Arango, a millwright at JSW for about five years.

Two previous organizing efforts at JSW fell short. But in 2025, Arango said, workers understood that collective action represented the only path forward.

“It was just a matter of time before it happened,” Arango said, noting he and many of his coworkers grew up in union families and knew the USW’s record in empowering workers across numerous other industries.

“I think everybody’s tired of the lies and broken promises that JSW told. We all banded together and got the vote. Now it’s on to the next step,” added Arango, referring to upcoming negotiations for a first contract.

He and his coworkers manufacture components for offshore wind turbines. It’s their skill that generates wealth for JSW, the U.S. wing of a $22 billion conglomerate headquartered in India.

In 2024, the U.S. Department of Energy awarded JSW [$43.5 million in assistance](https://reimagineappalachia.org/follow-the-money-how-the-inflation-reduction-act-is-rebuilding-appalachia/) for [capital upgrades](https://www.energy.gov/mesc/applicant-self-disclosed-48c-projects) through the USW-backed Inflation Reduction Act—support that boosted the company’s prospects and also fueled the workers’ drive for fair treatment.

“If they’re willing to take the money the union helped to provide, why not turn it back to the people who are part of that union?” Tyler Stillion, an inspector in JSW’s logistics department, recalled thinking.

Stillion reflects on the EPI study’s finding about union support expanding among workers of all backgrounds.

He never belonged to a union before. But trusting in coworkers with union experience, and recalling the stories of relatives who praised the benefits of union membership, he embraced the USW as a means of helping everyone at the plant move forward.

 “We have a lot of good people there. We have a lot of smart people there,” he added, noting a union contract ensures equitable treatment and gives all members an opportunity to advance.

That’s exactly what vigilant USW members achieved at Kaiser Permanente, a giant health care system in Southern California.

A few years ago, Local 7600 learned that many of its members in the Inland Empire received significantly lower pay than counterparts doing the same jobs in the system’s Los Angeles and Orange County facilities. They fought for parity and won a contract earmarking millions in catch-up raises.

“It makes a difference,” observed Maggie Gamboa, one of those who received a big wage bump. “I’m a single mom. My kids rely on me for everything.”

Gamboa helps to conduct orientation meetings for new coworkers. “Congratulations!” she tells them about landing a USW-represented job with the health care system. “This is the best step you’ve made.”

By empowering workers, she noted, workers also help their patients. Local 7600 members use their voice to advocate for safer working conditions and other improvements at the facilities they operate.

“When you have a happy workforce, when you have a competent, well-trained workforce, that translates to better care for patients,” Gamboa said.

She expects support for unions to continue to grow in the wake of sociopathic billionaire Elon Musk’s attacks on the federal government’s unionized workers and contempt for the ordinary Americans who keep the country running every day.

In addition to EPI, [Gallup](https://www.afge.org/article/new-gallup-poll-70-of-americans-approve-of-labor-unions/) and other researchers documented soaring support for unions even before anti-labor President Donald Trump took office and gave Musk permission to decimate the federal workforce.

“It’s not real surprising, but it’s impressive to see the strength that unions are developing,” Gamboa observed. “As people become more educated as to what unions mean, I feel that’s drawing more people in.”

Stillion considers the union at JSW to represent a new chapter ultimately benefiting not only the workers but also the company and community.

“We’re excited to start this,” he said, noting he and colleagues not only desired a change but also wanted to find out “what could be” by moving forward together. “We’re excited to see where it brings us.”