

RAILROAD WORKERS UNITED

ANNUAL REPORT
2022



RWU
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Greetings from the RWU Organizer

The calendar year 2022 was extraordinary and definitive for [Railroad Workers United](#). As I write this introduction, I reflect on the events that took place for rank & file railroad workers and our organization, and see their profound reverberations in this first half of 2023 — the organization continues to grow, diversify, develop, and expand its reach.

Early in 2022, the rail labor scene ramped up. We mobilized when the Class One carriers refused to bargain in good faith in national handling. They implemented [draconian attendance policies](#) while continuing to downsize the workforce, and moved ever further down the destructive road of “[Precision Scheduled Railroading](#)” (PSR) — playing hardball with working railroaders. In the face of this, our efforts over the past 15 years served us well, and our vocal and organized resistance to the carriers’ attacks began to attract public attention. Journalists and media outlets reached out in early winter, followed by engaged, expansive worker-centered media coverage reaching unprecedented levels as the year progressed — amplifying the voice of rank & file railroaders across the country and globally. RWU conducted our 8th Biennial Convention in Chicago in June 2022, in partnership with the [2022 Labor Notes conference](#), where we loudly communicated to 4000 union activists that a showdown on the nation’s major freight railroads was coming. By August — when RWU [rejected](#) the [recommendations](#) of the Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) — we captured sustained

national attention on the working conditions of railroaders and the harmful policies and procedures of the Class One carriers.

Once RWU proclaimed a [“Vote NO”](#) campaign on the Tentative Agreements (TAs), our news coverage escalated proportionately. While rail union officials largely accepted the PEB lock-stock-and barrel, RWU, alone, resisted. Working railroaders looked to us — all rank & filers, like them — for leadership and guidance.

We were steadfast in the belief we could do better. Our polling of [over 3000 rail workers](#) revealed the vast majority were unhappy with the PEB and the TAs growing out of it, and that respondents were overwhelmingly in favor of a strike. While union officials, at worst, sang the praises of the PEB (e.g. [IAM](#), TCU, BRC) and, at best, buckled and agreed to the Biden-Walsh brokered deal (e.g. SMART-TD and BLET), RWU led and organized the charge for rejection and a move toward a strike. We distributed [hundreds of strike tshirts](#) and thousands of [buttons and stickers](#), and explained in [12 points why rail workers should vote NO](#). We did what a democratic organization of railroad workers should do in the face of overwhelming member dissatisfaction and thirst for action. And when Biden and Congress clamped down on our right to strike - when not one rail union official said a word - RWU issued a [Statement of Opposition](#) to their actions.

As a result, new memberships, sustainers, and donations grew by orders of magnitude. In one month, we [raised over \\$25,000 in one-time donations!](#)

We added 250 media contacts to our database and built an active and ongoing Media Outreach Committee of railroad

workers. We solicited dozens more railroaders — RWU members and non-members alike — [to tell their story](#).

In October, with the contract battle raging and the Class Ones discredited in the eyes of most rail workers across craft and union, RWU launched our [Campaign for Public Ownership of the Railroads](#), hoping to move rail labor from a defensive to an offensive posture.

Throughout 2022, RWU became well known to thousands of rail workers and union activists across North America. Many more members of the general public learned of our existence. Our principled stand on the issues that confront rail workers and our industry is resonating with the working class as a whole, and RWU has emerged as a leading voice in workers’ struggle.

We invite you to review this annual report for more specifics and highlights of 2022. We hope you become as inspired as we are to be part of this organization and this movement. [If you are not yet an RWU member, please join!](#) If you are a member who has yet to get involved, let us know [and we will assist you to get involved in RWU](#). Let’s consolidate the gains of 2022 and make the coming years a time of robust rank & file action as we continue to build solidarity, unity, and democracy among rail workers, and by extension, all workers of North America!

In solidarity,



Ron Kaminkow, RWU Organizer

RWU International Steering Committee (11)

Chuck Abbate	SMART-TD #898b	KEOLIS	Boston, MA
Gabe Christianson	SMART-TD #1043	UP	Sparks, NV
Jason Doering	SMART-TD #1117	UP	Las Vegas, NV
Ross Grooters	BLET #778	UP	Des Moines, IA
Ron Kaminkow	BLET #51	AMTK	Reno, NV
Paul Lindsey	BLET #228	UP	Pocatello, ID
Hugh Sawyer	BLET #316	NS	Atlanta, GA
Matt Weaver	BMWED #2624	CSX	Toledo, OH
Andrew Weir	TCRC-LE #240	CN	Sarnia, ON
Nick Wurst	SMART-TD #1473	CSX	Framingham, MA
VACANT			

RWU Executive Committee (7)

Co-Chairs

Ross Grooters	BLET #778	UP	Des Moines, IA
Gabe Christianson	SMART-TD # 1043	UP	Sparks, NV
Andrew Weir	TCRC-LE #240	CN	Sarnia, ON

Recording Secretary

Nick Wurst	SMART-TD #1473	CSX	Framingham, MA
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General Secretary

Jason Doering	SMART-TD #1117	UP	Las Vegas, NV
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Treasurer

Hugh Sawyer	BLET #316	NS	Atlanta, GA
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Organizer

Ron Kaminkow	BLET #51	AMTK	Reno, NV
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RWU Alternates (5)

Eric Basir	ATU #208	CTA	Chicago, IL
Matthew Grouix	BLET ##325	NS	Conway, PA
J.P. Johnson	SMART-TD #117	AMTK	Milwaukee, WI
Ian Kaminski	SMART-TD #898	Keolis	Boston, MA
Tim Miller	NCFO #1218	NS	Conway, PA

RWU Trustees (3)

Ed Michael	BLET #724/ SMART-TD #979	UP – Retired	Salem, IL
Jeff Kurtz	BLET #391	BNSF – Retired	Fort Madison, IA
Bill Connell	SMART-TD #1473	CSX	Framingham, MA

RWU becomes the “Vote NO” pro-worker voice in 2022 contract battle

2022 contract negotiations between the railroad unions and Class One rail carriers were historic — the most contentious and publicly visible in more than three decades, calling widespread public attention to rank & file railroad working conditions and job quality.

Negotiations — a complex process governed by the **Railway Labor Act** — **gathered steam in the first half of 2022**, leading to a rejection of the National Mediation Board’s (NMB) proffer of arbitration in mid-June by the Coordinated Bargaining Coalition and the BMWED/ SMART Mechanical Coalition. By August, after a first 30-day cooling off period, President Biden had established the Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) who issued **PEB #250** on August 16th — a **report and set of recommendations** for a negotiated settlement between the United Rail Unions and the National Carriers Conference Committee. From those recommendations, union officials and the carriers quickly drew up a series of Tentative Agreements, and presented them to railroad workers in the hope of averting a nationwide **strike**. A number were voted down by the respective memberships, including the machinists, track workers,

and boilermakers, as was the **Tentative Agreement (TA)** brokered by President Biden and Labor Secretary Walsh in mid September with SMART-TD.



On August 31st, Railroad Workers United issued its **official statement on the PEB #250 recommendations** and soon after launched a principled **“Vote NO!” campaign**, urging cross-craft rail union leadership to reject the TA and exercise the right to strike.

A significant part of the campaign centered around aggressive railroad worker and general public education through RWU communications and solidarity building — including newsletter articles, email blasts, position statements, “Vote NO” stickers and buttons, strike t-shirts, issuing of press releases and building national media

relations. RWU pushed messaging about the long erosion of working conditions, job quality, work-life balance, and dignity of the railroad workforce exacted by Class One rail carrier greed — manifested by punishing attendance policies, massive workforce reductions, lack of sick leave, neglect of worker safety, the push for single-person crews, anti-worker Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR), and the growing and dangerous use of long and heavy freight trains.

We reinforced the message that Class One management unscrupulously weaponizes the global supply chain crisis against railroad workers, scapegoating us at every turn, despite the truth — that the excessive profit-seeking structure (and constant restructuring) of the railroad industry is what has hijacked and hobbled the pace of delivery of crucial inputs and goods to our nation’s businesses and citizens.

The “Vote No!” campaign included a survey of railroad workers — generating over 3000 responses — on their reactions to the PEB recommendations and the Tentative Agreement. **Results showed** overwhelming hostility toward PEB #250 with over 90% of respondents stating they expected to vote NO. After four of the 12 craft unions, representing 115,000 workers, voted down the Tentative Agreement, subsequent Congressional intervention in December

imposed the terms of the TA and outlawed a strike.

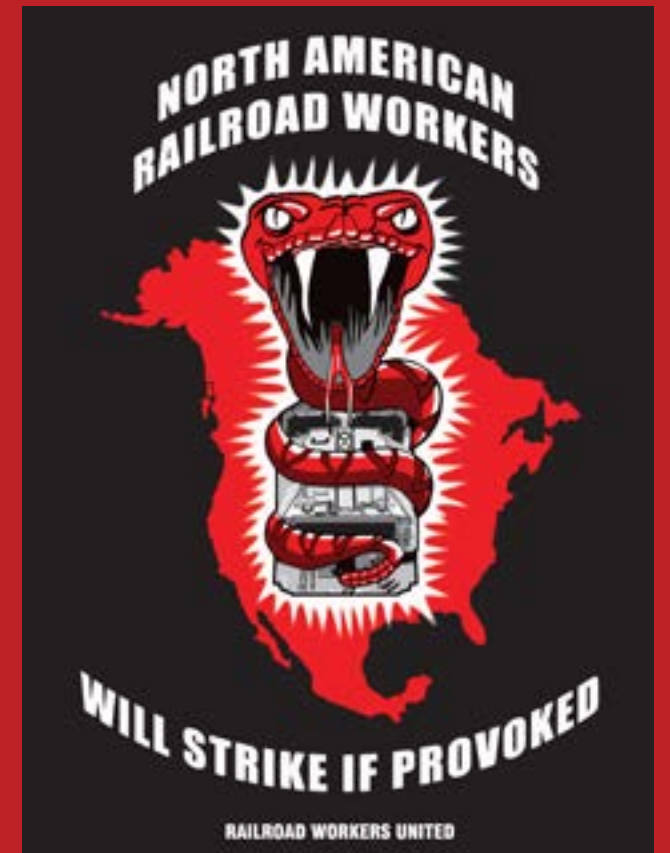
While the outcome of 2022 contract negotiations garnered our deep disappointment on behalf of the railroad rank & file, our movement saw extraordinary gains and alliances that fuel our optimism and frame our work in 2023. We provoked historic outpouring of intergenerational solidarity from workers across numerous industries — solidarity we actively reciprocate and nurture.



You’ll read further in this annual report that the establishment of RWU’s Media Committee and its round-the-clock outreach and response during the negotiations positioned us as an essential source for national, specialist, and trade media to easily access the rank & file worker voice of the railroad industry — filling a void left by the silent craft union officials.

The negotiations made crystal clear a long held belief on the part of RWU, that a massive shift in the ownership and structure of the railroads — from private ownership to public ownership — **for which we have historical precedent**, is critical to protect rail workers, to ensure the integrity of a pivotal piece of infrastructure in our supply chain, and to realize the promise of the expansion of rail — both passenger and freight — for our economy and environmental sustainability.

Importantly, the visibility of the railroad struggle amplified the shared struggle of all rank & file workers across North America. The fight of railroad workers is also the fight of the Teamsters, the airline workers, Starbucks baristas and Amazon warehouse employees, our longshoreman, teachers, truckers and healthcare workers.



An RWU resolution ignites a campaign in support of public railroad ownership

On October 10, 2022, RWU adopted and published our “**Resolution in Support of Public Ownership of the Railroads**,” which gave voice and purpose to our long held belief that the 140,000 miles of U.S. railroad track - the largest national network in the world - should be transferred from private ownership ruled by profit-seeking, anti-worker hedge fund logic, to public ownership in the public interest. We are convinced this is the only way to achieve the economic, social, and environmental promise of this historic and essential infrastructure.

The **full resolution** delineates a point-by-point justification for this position, and references the fact that many rail systems across the globe operate, in part or in full, under public ownership; that American highways and inland waterways — other crucial pieces of our supply chain — are federally owned and maintained; and that we have historical precedent in the United States of the freight rail network being taken out of private hands.

The Resolution provided the basis for RWU to launch a **formal advocacy campaign** in late 2022, taking greater shape in 2023, to

argue for railroad public ownership. Among other information available on the web page are links to dozens of **articles** and **interviews and webinars** about public ownership of the rails. The vision for the campaign includes an alliance of rank & file railroad workers in partnership with environmental and community groups, social justice organizations, rail advocacy groups, and policy experts on de-privatization — a group that will collectively conduct research and commission studies to articulate the detailed specifics of “public ownership,” define clear campaign goals, strategy and tactics, and fundraise. RWU issued a **press release** shortly after adopting the Resolution October 5th.

To **voice your organization’s support** or interest in getting actively involved in the work of this campaign, please email **info@railroadworkersunited.org**.

Therefore, be it Resolved that RWU supports the public ownership of the rail infrastructure of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, to be operated henceforth in the public interest, placed at the service of the people of all three nations; and

Be it Further resolved that RWU urges all rail workers to voice their support for this proposal; and

Be it Further Resolved that RWU urges the rail union leadership of North America to take a similar stand, thereby providing the leadership necessary to see such a proposal through to fruition; and

Be it finally Resolved that RWU urges all labor unions, environmental and community groups, social justice organizations, rail advocacy groups and others to push for a modern publicly owned rail system, one that serves the nation’s passengers, shippers, communities, and citizens.

RWU 8th Biennial Convention in June reunites members for the first time in four years

A long four years passed leading up to the [RWU 8th Biennial Convention on June 16-17, 2022](#). The realities of the pandemic severely limited our 7th Convention in 2020 — conducted virtually with a pared-down agenda. This made convening in Chicago in June, in partnership with the historic 2022 Labor Notes Conference, an electrifying homecoming. In addition to our business meeting, [RWU planned and delivered 13 educational and organizing workshops](#).

RWU membership elected a new International Steering Committee (ISC), Executive Committee, and Trustees, approved several changes to our Bylaws, and adopted two new Resolutions

At the [Labor Notes](#) conference that followed, most RWU Convention attendees stayed on to take part in their wide array of workshops and plenaries conducted over three days. A number of RWU members served as invited panelists for Labor Notes workshops [throughout the weekend](#). Meanwhile, RWU hosted dinners and social gatherings of rail workers and friends in our hospitality suite, and staffed a literature and merchandise table throughout the weekend, selling hundreds of T-shirts, hats, books, stickers, and more, all while making

countless new friends and spreading the word of the rail workers' struggle to thousands of union activists from all industries. Detailed summaries and [write-ups](#) of the Convention are available for reading online.



RWU members and guests raise solidarity fists at the close of our 8th Biennial Convention in Chicago, June 17, 2022.

RWU 8th Biennial Convention Workshops

- *Using the Railway Labor Act to Our Advantage*
- *The Climate Rail Alliance*
- *The Future of Rail Labor and Railroad Workers United*
- *Building Up the Committee Structure of RWU*
- *Building the RWU Membership Base*
- *Effectively Making Use of Social Media in RWU Organizing*
- *Struggles Along the Supply Chains: Rail & Cross-Sectoral Solidarity*
- *The Field, B.C. Runaway Train Wreck and Private Railroad Police Forces*
- *The National Association of Retired & Veteran Railroad Employees*
- *Insights on Italian Rail Labor*
- *High Speed Rail - Just Exactly What is It?*
- *Exploring Options of Railroad Ownership and Operations*
- *Alternatives to a Full-Blown FELA Case: Mediation*

Opposite Page RWU Convention 2022 Photos (Top to Bottom): RWU Treasurer and member Hugh Sawyer stands to participate in discussion; RWU solidarity member Gifford Hartman leads a packed workshop about labor organizing along the supply chain; Sarah Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO joins RWU for a panel on labor organizing under the Railway Labor Act. All photos courtesy of RWU member Jon Flanders.

RWU committee builds crucial media relations capacity

Throughout RWU's existence, we've routinely acted as a source for journalists — offering a worker-centered, rank & file, pro-labor perspective for those covering the railroad industry, transportation, and organized labor. With some exceptions, those who have sought our perspective have typically included industry trade publications, specialty periodicals covering rank & file and movements, Left political publications, and transportation beat reporters. We have always, and continue to be grateful for space and/or time in reported or opinion pieces.

To say that 2022 was unprecedented in the volume, intensity, and diversity of media attention on RWU is a gross understatement. The progressive intensity, visibility, and high stakes drama of the 2022 national contract bargaining, and our formidable "Vote No!" campaign against the Tentative Agreement and calls for a national railroad strike, attracted hundreds of media requests within extremely condensed time periods.

RWU established and mobilized a 16-member Media Committee — all volunteers and all working (and a few retired) railroaders — to field requests, serve

as sources and/or direct journalists to other RWU members and railroad unionists to amplify the voice of the working railroader.

We filled a crucial gap. Our aspiration for our twelve craft unions is that union leadership engage actively with journalists to regularly communicate rank & file demands for contracts that achieve better working conditions, job quality, and expansion of the railroad workforce to ensure safety, efficiency and sustainability. Too often, our top union executives are cautious, conservative, and timid, failing to articulate labor's perspective to the media.

In 2022, RWU turned up the volume on the working railroader perspective and shared it widely with both the alternative media and the mass public. Many Americans, who might have an affection for and interest in trains and rail transportation, but don't know the stories and lived experiences of rail workers, learned about eroding working conditions on the railroads for the first time, and connected our struggle to their own worker struggles.

The groundwork laid by the RWU Media Committee in 2022 means that we now have strong rapid response capacity for

media relations. This means more RWU members comfortable and enthusiastic to speak with journalists, and a greatly expanded database of reporters and editors to offer source expertise.

A comprehensive collection of RWU media coverage and other journalist coverage of railroad worker-relevant topics can be explored in depth on our website where we archive each of our [Rail & Labor News Weekly Digests](#).



2022 RWU Media Committee

Mark Burrows, SMART-TD

Gabe Christenson, UTU

Jason Doering, SMART-TD

Fritz Edler, BLET

Ross Grooters, BLET

JP Johnson, SMART-TD

Paul Lindsey, BLET

Ron Kaminkow, BLET

Jeff Kurtz, BLET

Matt Parker, BLET

Tim Sloper, SMART-TD

Hugh Sawyer, BLET

Marilee Taylor, BLET

Matt Weaver, BMWED

Scott Wilcox, BLET

Nick Wurst, SMART-TD

New resolutions adopted in 2022

In 2022, RWU adopted three resolutions prior to the 2022 Biennial Convention in mid-June, two resolutions at the Convention, and two by the International Steering Committee following the Convention — for a total of seven. These can be found and read in full, along with all previous resolutions, on the RWU website on our [Resolutions page](#). They include:

[Resolution on National Rail Strike](#)

adopted 1/5/2022

Urging all railroad workers to consider the strike option in national contract negotiations, and to prepare for such a strike.

[Resolution on Berkshire Hathaway and BNSF Leadership Failures](#)

adopted 6/1/22

Demanding that Berkshire Hathaway form a committee consisting of its union employees, shippers, and B-H board members to investigate multiple leadership failures and behavior of the CEO.

[Resolution Calling for DOT Action on Rail Safety](#)

adopted 6/1/22

Calling upon Department of Transportation Secretary Buttigieg to review all the rail carriers' attendance/availability policies, and to declare null and void all of those that create undo fatigue and stress.

[Resolution in Support of Passenger Rail Expansion](#)

adopted 6/17/22

Supporting the effort to revitalize and upgrade the passenger rail network in the United States and condemning the efforts of the Class One rail carriers to thwart it.

[Resolution in Opposition to Any and All Concessions](#)

adopted 6/17/22

Pledging to support the movement for “no concessions at the bargaining table in the 2022 round of national handling.

[Resolution in Support of Public Ownership of the Railroads](#)

adopted 10/5/22

Supporting public ownership of the rail infrastructure of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, to be operated henceforth in the public interest, and placed at the service of the people of all three nations.

[RWU Resolution on Hazardous Substances Near Schools](#)

adopted 11/2/22

Calls on governmental agencies for full transparency in the dissemination of information identifying safety threats related to the transport of hazardous substances, including petroleum oil and HHFTs, to parents of students attending, and faculty employed by, schools at risk of negative impact.

Resolutions, in and of themselves, will not change the world, but they serve multiple important purposes. They are a symbolic statement of support for, or in opposition to a specific issue, event, struggle, or organization. They can raise awareness of bad actors and build solidarity.

Resolutions outline the trajectory of our organization, give it depth and principle, and serve as testament to what we as RWU believe and stand for. We make it clear who our friends and allies are and also who, precisely, we struggle against. If you are a railroader and find yourself in agreement with many, most, or all of our basic Resolutions, we hope you will **join RWU**, or continue to **renew your membership!**

Ongoing Campaigns

In addition to the Campaign for Public Ownership of the Railroads highlighted more in-depth in this report, RWU maintains an ongoing series of campaigns. These are connected to one another and, in many ways, the product of the broad reach of the Class One rail carriers' disregard for the job quality, working conditions, safety, and dignity of railroad workers. Click on any campaign below to learn more and get involved.

RWU Ongoing Campaigns

- [Support for Public Ownership of the Railroads](#)
- [Opposition to "Precision Scheduled Railroading" \(PSR\)](#)
- [Opposition to One Person Crews](#)
- [Opposition to Long and Heavy Trains](#)
- [Support for Coordinated Bargaining of All Rail Labor](#)
- [Opposition to "Behavior-based Safety" Programs](#)
- [Support for a "Just Transition"](#)
- [Stop Crew Fatigue!](#)
- [Railroad Whistleblower Defense](#)
- [Railroad Worker Defense](#)

2022 Fundraising

In recent years, RWU's fundraising has consisted of our annual Fundraising Drive, concentrated in the months of October through December. We add to this an option to give a [one-time donation](#) at any point during the calendar year online or by mailing a check, for those who prefer analog methods of donation. Members or non-members, individuals or institutions, can give directly to RWU, or to our sister, tax-exempt 501c3 organization, the [Railroad Workers Education & Legal Defense Foundation \(RWF\)](#).

In a typical year, we hope these donations will add \$5000-\$10,000 to our operating budget, but 2022 was truly exceptional. While the formal Fall Fundraiser garnered roughly the usual dollar amount, countless additional one-time and recurring donations (Sustainers) came pouring in as well, the result of the high profile of our national union freight contract battle with the Class One freight rail carriers. For example, a basic GoFundMe campaign yielded over \$25,000 in a one-month period alone.

Overall, we ended 2022 increasing our operating budget to allow for meaningful capacity planning - authorizing a contract grant writer position for truly long-term

capacity growth, and planning for a part-time, paid executive secretary staff position to carry out the day-to-day tasks of the organization.

Sustainability and capacity building are two of RWU's primary goals in 2023. As a member, friend, and/or supporter of RWU's mission, if you have insights to share on fundraising and grant seeking — both which entail careful planning and patient networking — we remain grateful for your thoughts, advice, and expertise. Feel free to email us at info@railroadworkersunited.org.



RWU Memberships

Our dues-paying membership base grew by over a third in 2022. Working railroaders as well as enthusiastic Solidarity Members joined at a furious pace September through December, motivated by our contract battle, and Vote No! Campaign. We welcome all of the new working railroad members and urge them to get plugged in and involved in RWU activities and actions. Likewise, we thank all of those workers in other industries - longshore, trucking, warehouse, education, healthcare, etc - who joined as solidarity members and urge them to spread the word of the rail workers struggle and continue to build solidarity between railroaders and the working class in general.

If you're not a member, **please join!** If you need to renew your membership for 2023, **please do so now!** When you become a member of RWU, you choose among membership types:

VOTING MEMBERSHIPS (exclusive to railroaders and family)

- Railroad Worker | Actively Working
- Railroad Worker | Retired (Voting)
- Railroad Worker | Family of Railroad Worker (Voting)

SOLIDARITY NON-VOTING MEMBERSHIPS

- Railroad Worker | Retired (Solidarity Member, Non-Voting)
- Railroad Worker | Family of Railroad Worker (Solidarity Member, Non-Voting)
- Solidarity Member | Friend of Railroad Workers

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

Lifetime membership is open to any and all workers - rail and otherwise - and enables membership in good standing for life.

Newsletter

We continued to publish *The Highball* in 2022, our quarterly print newsletter mailed to all RWU members each season. We also make it available digitally on the RWU website, on our social media channels, and share it with the RWU news and information email list. In publication for over 15 years, *The Highball* continues a long tradition of labor periodicals dedicated to educating members and rank & file workers on worker-centered industry issues, providing insight and analysis, calling attention to anti-worker policies imposed by rail carrier management, and reporting on our organizing campaigns.

The Highball is an organizing tool — we publish it so that working railroaders can distribute it in their workplaces, union meetings and gatherings, or in conversation with co-workers who might benefit and find empowerment in the collective struggle we articulate within its pages. Some members choose to receive a print bundle (generally 10, 25, or 50 copies) each issue to distribute, while others make their own copies from a .pdf at home, work, or copy shop. All working railroad members are encouraged to distribute *The Highball*.

While, historically, *The Highball* was published by the RWU General Secretary, in recent years, a dedicated editor and

RWU member has led a small Newsletter Committee to lead quarterly planning and editorial, and work with our printer for publishing and distribution. Production is thoughtful, time consuming work, executed by volunteers, and RWU is always — including at present — seeking more Newsletter Committee members to help in planning and authoring articles, editing and proffing. If you'd like to get involved, pitch an article for *The Highball*, or provide feedback on published newsletter content, please email us at newsletter@railroadworkersunited.org.



You can [read our full archive of newsletters here on our website](#). Articles published in 2022 offer even more detail on RWU's activities highlighted and summarized in this annual report.

Social Media and RWU Weekly e-Newsletter

RWU continued to increase our presence on social media and to engage our members and followers through our [weekly email newsletter](#), the “[RWU News and Info Service](#),” using the Constant Contact platform. All issues since 2019 are [archived on our website](#).

In 2022, we had over 11,000 [Facebook followers](#) and gained 11,878 [Twitter followers](#) in the calendar year alone. For all of social media’s shortcomings, it has served as a valuable organizing, promotional, and conversational tool to engage railroaders, trade unionists, journalists, institutional allies, and the mass public in our work, and to express solidarity and shared struggle with workers across North America.

A small handful of RWU members dedicate volunteer time to post to social media each week. They also run our [RWU Instagram account](#).

We plan to launch an active YouTube presence in 2023 to use strategically for worker education. We continue to hold discussions about how to optimize our social media channels for organizing and pro-rank & file community building.

Finally, our highly active email newsletter program publishes several times a week and is open to members and non-members alike. At the end of 2022, we had over 4000 subscribers receiving the weekly news summaries, press releases, campaign announcements and updates, notices of newly adopted resolutions and position statements, organizing updates, notifications of new merchandise added to our store, and more.

We welcome feedback on our social media content, as well as on our approach to the email newsletter service. We’re always seeking suggestions on how to use our communications more effectively. If you have ideas to share, please contact us at info@railroadworkersunited.org.

RWU Website

The **RWU website** is an information packed resource for railroaders and non-railroaders alike to learn more about the organization — our principles and campaigns, our allies, as well as news and information on rail labor and the rail industry. The website also serves as a comprehensive archive for all RWU newsletters, news digests, articles, resolutions, current and previous leadership, campaigns, and important organizational administrative information — including how to join or renew your membership, get involved, and how to donate to support our work.

In 2022, we began early preparations for a web redesign in 2023. The site has been a labor of love for many years, built and faithfully updated by members of our volunteer steering committee who taught themselves basic web skills. Our audit of the site in 2022 has helped us articulate our goals for the redesign:

- Improved discoverability** — reorganizing the content so users can find the information we, and they, find most important;
- Simplification and streamlining** — condensing information under logical hierarchical categories and removing redundant info;
- Better navigation for users** — replacing our vertical, left rail navigation with a top/horizontal mega menu; and
- New, more reader-accessible typography, graphic design elements, and imagery** — which add to our simplification goals, enhance aesthetics and navigation, and render the site more on trend with member, partner, and funder expectations.

RWU has a small website committee, and we always welcome more hands on deck, especially in the year to come when we need to sort and organize 14 years worth of content, write and edit copy, and make content organization and design decisions. If you’re a member of RWU interested in joining the committee, please email info@railroadworkersunited.org.

RWU Store

The **RWU Store** continues to offer a full line of organizational, campaign, and rail labor-related merchandise. 2022 saw historic sales during the heights of our contract battle - with many of our items, in particular our strike t-shirts (which read, "North American Railroaders, Will Strike if Provoked!") and stickers, as well as our "Vote No!" items - selling out.

This past year the Store exceeded all expectations and sold more items than any year previously by far. We stocked additional T-shirts in a number of colors previously unavailable, the Strike T-shirt referenced above, and updated our "Strike!" and "Vote No!" line of stickers and buttons for the contract fight. We brought back ball caps and winter knit hats, and added a number of new books.

We sell RWU store items at or close to cost. While RWU Store sales contribute to our income, they are minimal. We view the sale of union merchandise — or "union drip," in the parlance of today's young, energetic, budding labor movement — as part of a long tradition of using union buttons, stickers, T-shirts, hats and pins as an organizing tool, to build both solidarity and enthusiasm for our campaigns and to build rank & file union democracy and membership involvement and action.

Any proceeds that are actually generated from the RWU Store go straight back into the organization's operating budget to support our work.

The platform we use is called **Storenvy**, which accepts PayPal or credit/debit card payments online. **Anyone can make purchases from the RWU Store** - you need not be an RWU member. We **encourage you to become a member** and when you join, you get a 25% discount on most merch stocked in the Store. Regardless, we are grateful for every sale, which supports our work, builds solidarity, and increases our public visibility in a lively and fun way!



RWU Sustainers

In 2017, RWU instituted our **Sustainer Program**. Sustainers are individuals — usually RWU dues paying members, but not always — who have opted to donate a set amount each month to RWU, giving as little as \$5 a month or as much as \$100. Our **Sustainer Program** is a great way for those who can't afford a large donation at one given time, but can easily donate a smaller amount on a recurring basis. Sustainers allow RWU to more accurately gauge what our financial picture will look like in the coming year. They add to our financial sustainability. As of December 2022, we had 58 Sustainers — contributing collectively more than \$10,000 to our future annual budgets — and the ranks continue to grow.

We'd be grateful if you would consider becoming an RWU Sustainer. NOTE: If an RWU Member becomes an RWU Sustainer and opts to donate \$10 or more per month, that Member is relieved of future payment of annual membership dues, and remains in Good Standing as long as they continue as that level of Sustainership!

[Click here to become an RWU Sustainer!](#)



Fallen Rails Program

Every year, on April 28, RWU observes [Railroad Workers Memorial Day](#). We do this in tandem with the national [AFL-CIO Workers Memorial Day](#). We ask that all railroad employees wear black to the workplace on this day in remembrance of our fallen fellow railroaders killed on the job. We use this as a day to organize and educate our fellow workers and the public about workplace policies instituted by Class One rail carriers that compromise our safety.

RWU continues to keep a running list archiving and memorializing our brothers and sisters who lost their lives simply by coming to work.

We continue to issue Alerts through our email list whenever a railroad worker is killed, and urge action on their behalf, regardless of craft, union affiliation, carrier or contractor.

Note: a number of key members of the Fallen Rails Committee have recently retired or left the industry. If you are interested in assuming a position on this Committee, please contact RWU at info@railroadworkersunited.org.



