

This is a new era where workers are standing up.

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Hi Lauren,

After six weeks, UAW has reached temporary agreements with [all of the Big Three automakers](#). Pending a membership vote, this signals an end to the historic “stand up” strikes members have been staging at factories and warehouses around the country.

This incredible win is an added jolt to a labor movement that is fighting to win good jobs as we transition to a green economy. **While these agreements were penned in Detroit, there will be ripple effects all the way to Birmingham.**

The South was an important bargaining chip in the six-week strike. Some of the biggest and most lucrative Big Three factories are now in the South, part of a trend of major global manufacturers—fueled by [state tax incentives](#)—setting up shop in the region. Just before the automakers came to the table, the UAW strike expanded to GM’s highly profitable [SUV plant in Texas](#).

Despite the presence of these global manufacturers, the South is still plagued by poverty, a lack of union representation, unsafe working conditions and other measures of poor quality of life. A [report we supported this year](#) highlighted the lack of power and work-life balance among manufacturing workers in Alabama and Mississippi. Workers talk of “golden handcuffs” that keep

them from leaving their jobs—their jobs aren't good, but they're better than other employers in the area that pay an unlivable \$7.25 per hour.

But these agreements could be a sea change, especially as production of the crucial—and expensive—batteries for electric vehicles is starting to ramp up. A [“battery belt”](#) of EV battery plants is forming in the South, with facilities like Ford's 3,600-acre [Blue Oval City battery production facility](#) set to open in the next few years. **Battery plants are creating a clean economy, but so far, these companies are dirty: like many EV plants, these facilities are [nonunion, pay poverty wages, and have unsafe working conditions.](#)**

These tentative agreements provide pathways to workers at these battery plants to organize. GM agreed to include battery plants under its [master agreement with UAW](#), and Ford's agreement includes a pathway to unionization for workers at [future battery plants and its Electric Vehicle Center in Memphis](#).

A few weeks ago, Jobs to Move America staff gathered in Birmingham, Alabama for its annual retreat. We got grounded in the “why” of the work we do, celebrated successes, and planned for the future; it was especially comforting to gather during such a scary time in the world. Being in Alabama—the site of our first [multi-state community benefits agreement with New Flyer](#) and an area rich with labor and civil rights history—felt like good timing as the strikes continued.

The Big Three coming to the table shows that there is a way forward. **Major companies can build innovative technology, be profitable *and* make sure workers aren't left behind.** We hope these agreements spur organizing at nonunion electric car makers (especially [Tesla](#)).

Being in Alabama, a state where workers are up against so much but are now benefiting from [our life-changing CBA](#), was a reminder that getting big companies to do right by their workers is possible.

In solidarity,



Madeline Janis
Co-Executive Director

What We're Reading and Watching

- Madeline was quoted in a [New York Times article](#) about the tentative agreements: **“Elon Musk better be looking at this. Hyundai and Toyota better be looking at this. This is a new era where workers are standing up.”**
- JMA Southern Director Will Tucker [spoke to The Tennessean](#) about the strikes and creating good jobs in the burgeoning “battery belt.” **“If you raise the standard for what a good job is through an action like this,**

that's going to benefit Southern workers who can stand up and demand the same."

- Illinois Senior Researcher Marcos Feldman is quoted in a [Reuters article](#) about the ripple effects of UAW's victory could have across the labor movement. **"Unionizing efforts are the most aggressive they've ever been."**

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