

JMA stands with workers across the South standing up for a better life.

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Hi Lauren,

It took just six weeks for the United Auto Workers (UAW) to [win transformative contracts](#) with the Big Three automakers: Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis. The impact on workers of all kinds, all around the country—but especially in the South—was clear and immediate.

For proof, look no further than Vance, Ala., the home of a large Mercedes-Benz manufacturing facility. The United Auto Workers there announced late last month that [a majority of workers at the plant](#) have signed cards in support of the union. **Workers at other plants are standing up, too, in a genuine movement across the auto manufacturing industry—and JMA stands with them.**

In a [video announcement](#) on the UAW website, Mercedes worker Jeremy Kimbrell, surrounded by his Mercedes coworkers, announces that “a majority of our coworkers at Mercedes here in Alabama have signed our union cards and are ready to win our union and a better life with the UAW.”

That’s right: the workers organizing today see through the union-busting talking points. Instead, they view the union as the pathway to a “better life.” At JMA, we know this is true. As

unprecedented investments create a nationwide electric vehicle manufacturing boom, it's more important now than ever to seize the moment and ensure that these investments lead to good jobs.

The work is cut out for us. As of January 2024, the [unemployment rate in Alabama](#) was 2.9 percent, but the [poverty rate](#) was 16.1 percent—a stark disparity and an injustice that is even worse in Mississippi. These statistics reveal that in the South, many jobs simply aren't good jobs. Far too few companies provide their workers with a living wage that can support a family, adequate benefits, a chance at a dignified retirement, or fair training and advancement opportunities. **What's more, Southern states' social, political, and economic policies remain rooted in a centuries-long legacy of slavery, segregation, and racial discrimination, making the task of addressing these injustices that much harder.**

Fortunately, we can help even the most marginalized workers in the South chart a different future. Of course, to bring the poverty rate down while creating good jobs and to make sure all Southern workers have the dignity they deserve, we must support the workers organizing into unions. Following their lead, we will help hold companies accountable and make it harder to silence workers' voices. JMA is already seeking new [Community Benefits Agreements](#), calling out the state for continuing to flood these companies with subsidies and investigating the use of prison labor in the big auto-makers supply chains.

The workers at Mercedes aren't alone. They have thousands of their fellow autoworkers and our Southern communities on their backs—including JMA. **And we hear their message loud and clear: demand better and don't stop until we succeed across the South.**

In solidarity,



Will Tucker
Southern Director

Join us in the fight for good jobs and healthy communities.

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Jobs to Move America
525 South Hewitt Street
Los Angeles, 7302

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