

Day of Action Against GE Corporate Greed

UE GEB Statement in Solidarity with UE Local 506

May 16, 2013

The UE General Executive Board stands in solidarity with the officers and members of UE Local 506 in their current fight with the General Electric Company, to keep jobs in Erie.

Local 506 is the largest local in UE and one of the oldest, chartered in 1937. The local has played an indispensable role in UE's history. During the 1950s, when UE was under attack by employers, government, media, and "mainstream" labor leaders, our union lost many large and important locals, and our ranks were decimated in raids by other unions. Despite intense pressure from GE, the federal government, and powerful forces in Erie, the leaders and members of UE Local 506 refused to surrender. Their courageous loyalty was a major factor in UE's survival. Throughout UE history, Local 506 has supported other locals in need and provided leadership.



On April 9, management of GE Transportation announced that it intends

to transfer a substantial amount of work from Erie to a newly-built non-union plant in Fort Worth, Texas, and to lay off 950 UE members later this year. GE's announcement came after months of deliberately misleading Local 506 and the Erie community, with the company insisting that Ft. Worth would be an "overflow" plant that would not cost Erie any jobs. Local 506 members build locomotives and wheel motors for large mining trucks, as well as components for both, and GE has already begun to move both locomotive and motorized wheel work to Texas.

GE pays substantially lower wages in Fort Worth than in Erie, and this job transfer is part of its so-called "competitive wage" strategy, aimed at driving down the incomes of GE's manufacturing and other workers to near-poverty levels. The attack on Local 506 comes despite GE Transportation – GE's Erie-based division – making record profits in 2012. After the division's profits more than doubled between 2010 and 2011 to \$757 million, they grew another 36 percent in 2012 to \$1 billion. For the first quarter of 2013, GE Transportation revenues were up 12 percent and profits up another 15 percent. For its major contribution to GE's profitability, the company named the transportation division "business of the year" for 2012, and the head of GE Transportation walked around the Erie plant showing off the trophy that came with that title. Local 506 members made all of this possible – and this is how GE thanks them.

Local 506 members are ready to fight, and they kicked off the battle to save jobs with a strike and huge plant gate rally on April 16. The “Keep It Made In Erie” campaign, developed jointly by the local and the national union, endorsed by membership vote, and implemented with help from the national union and Eastern Region, includes petitioning, rallies, grievances, shop floor protests, community outreach and visibility, political action, media, legal challenges, labor solidarity and more.

Local 506’s officers are currently at the bargaining table, where the UE-GE Conference Board Secretary is helping them battle GE on this issue. UE organizers are assisting the Erie job campaign and bringing UE’s fightback message to non-union GE plants nationwide. The UE Legal Department’s current top priority is legal action against the job transfers. A section of UE’s website is now devoted to this struggle, and the union has produced a video on the Erie jobs fight.

We urge all UE locals and members to show solidarity with Local 506 in this major battle, and to be prepared to do whatever it takes to back Local 506 in whatever further action its members decide is necessary to defend their jobs. As an initial demonstration of solidarity, we call on UE locals to come together for a day of action in support of Local 506, to be conducted at an appropriate location in each of UE’s three regions on **Friday, May 31**.

