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Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's

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## WPP'S PR UNIT SLIPS 5.5% IN Q1

WPP reported a 5.5 percent decline in Q1 PR revenues to \$292M as its BCW and Hill & Knowlton units suffered the loss of Pfizer assignments and cutbacks in client spending due to the economic uncertainty.



**Mark Read**

The unit, which includes FGS Global, showed a 3.3 percent dip on a like-for-like basis. FGS Global posted growth during the quarter.

WPP CEO Mark Read said the plan to merge BCW and H&K to form Burson is making progress and the new entity will be fully operational in July.

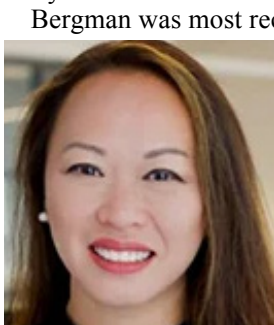
BCW CEO Corey duBrowa and H&K's AnnaMaria DeSalva are working to eliminate redundancies to forge an enterprise that can deliver modern communications at scale to clients.

WPP's Q1 revenues (less pass-through costs) fell 5 percent to \$2.9B, and 1.6 percent on a LFL basis. The firm showed strong growth in Europe and India but slipped in North America and China.

Read is confident that WPP will enjoy growth for the balance of 2024 powered by a strong new business pipeline, new AI capabilities and "a simpler structure that will drive organizational flexibility and stronger cash conversion."

## BERGMAN TO LEAD GOLIN HEALTH DATA UNIT

Golin appoints Rowena Bergman as EVP, head of data & analytics for its U.S. healthcare practice, Golin Health.



**Rowena Bergman**

Bergman was most recently VP of insight and analytics at WE Communications. Before that, she was responsible for digital and social measurement and analysis executions at companies including Syneos Health Communications, WCG, Chandler Chicco Companies and Cision.

At Golin, she leads a team of analysts to bring new tools, technologies and intellectual property to the practice's client roster.

"Rowena brings deep experience building teams and bespoke solutions to drive business results for her clients. I am thrilled to have her join our leadership team to advance our work," said U.S. managing director of Golin Health and Virgo Health Jaimee Reggio.

## IOWA \$5M ECODEV BUDGET IS UP FOR GRABS

The Iowa Economic Development Authority is looking for a firm to handle its \$5M annual strategic marketing and communications budget.

Working in partnership with IEDA's chief strategic communications officer, the selected firm will pitch the Hawkeye State as a great place to live, work and do business.



The campaign will target business influencers in targeted sectors (e.g., financial services, information technology and advanced manufacturing), job-seekers and people interested in relocating to Iowa, potential tourists, and Iowans (residents who are paying for the campaign via their tax dollars).

The communications partner will handle content development, media relations, digital marketing, website development, advertising and social media.

IEDA will issue a one-year contract with two extensions of up to another three years of service. The contract will go into effect around July 1.

Proposals, which are due May 3, go to [Iowa's e-procurement site](#).

[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

## MERCURY LANDS PACT FROM MINING GIANT

Mercury has landed a \$900K one-year pact to represent Gecamines, the cobalt and copper mining giant that is owned by the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The \$75K monthly retainer contract calls for strategy management & narrative development, think tank engagement, federal government relations, media relations and strategic communications services. Mercury also received a \$25K one-time fee for website development, which included creating an English-language platform for Gecamines.



**GECAMINES**

The US is playing catch-up to China for access to Africa's mineral assets that are vital for EV battery production.

Bloomberg News reported on March 29 that Jose Fernandez, US State Department under secretary for economic growth, energy and the environment, speaks frequently with Gecamines.

Mercury's Gecamines team includes partners Toby Moffett (ex-Democratic Connecticut Congressman) and John Loneragan (aide to ex-New York Republican Governor George Pataki).

Omnicom owns Mercury.

## **REDMOND CALLS FOR CRISIS PR FIRMS**

Redmond, a city of 77K people located less than 20 miles from downtown Seattle, wants a roster of firms to develop crisis communication plans, and be ready to answer the call in the event that an emergency hits.



The fast-growing city expects to have a population of 152K by 2050.

Selected communications partners will draw up crisis plans that include guidance on managing negative media, search engine optimization, and policies and procedures to follow during emergency events, according to the RFP.

The document identifies potential crises situations stemming from extreme weather, crime, cyber-attacks, malfeasance, reputation issues and PR incidents.

Firms may be tasked to draft letters, media statements, press releases, talking points, speeches and social media messaging for city leadership and staff.

Redmond does not guarantee a firm will receive a specific volume of work or contract award. The city plans to issue two-year pacts with options to renew for another two years.

Proposals are due May 10 at [Redmonds's e-portal](#).

[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

## **EDELMAN SAILS WITH VIKING**

[Edelman](#) handles Viking Holdings, the river and ocean luxury cruise line that plans to raise \$1B via an IPO priced in the \$21 to \$25 per share range.



**VIKING**

Launched in 1997, Viking says it offers “experiences for The Thinking Person” who is interested in history, science, culture and cuisine.

With a fleet of 92 small ships, Viking claims to be the only cruise line offering sailing adventures on all seven continents. Its itineraries cross five oceans, 21 rivers, and five lakes. The Bermuda-based company registered \$4.7B in revenues during 2023.

The IPO’s valuation falls in the \$10.2B range at midpoint of the proposed range. Viking will trade on the Big Board.

## **FGS WORKS THOMA BRAVO’S CYBER AI DEAL**

FGS Global represents private equity firm Thoma Bravo as it makes a \$4.6B bid for Darktrace, a UK-based cybersecurity artificial intelligence firm.



Andrew Almeida, partner at TB, said Darktrace is at the “very cutting edge of cybersecurity technology” and is driven by a culture of innovation.

The firm respects Darktrace’s position as a British tech champion, and promises to retain its R&D operations in the UK and the Netherlands.

It agreed to make no major changes to its Cambridge headquarters or other business operations.

Gordon Hurst, chair of Darktrace, said the acquisition provides access to a strong financial partner with deep software sector experience who will enhance the company’s position as a best-in-class cyber AI business headquartered in the UK.

FGS Global has Faeth Birch, Sophie Scott, Alastair Elwen and Amanda Healy representing TB, while Headland’s Nigel Prideaux and Henry Wallers handle Darktrace.

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

[Kaplow Communications](#) scoops up U.S. communications duties for **Forbes**, the global media company that focuses on business, entrepreneurship, leadership, investing, technology, and lifestyle. Kaplow’s efforts, overseen by EVP of Lifestyle Jee Nah Chang Walker, are focused on providing strategic communications planning and guidance, media relations and social listening for the Forbes brand, its editorial, events, programs, leadership team and journalists. Kaplow has also launched a revamped website and brand identity refresh.

**360PR+** lands **Norwex**, a line of eco-friendly home cleaning and personal care products. The agency will support Norwex’s mission to further establish the brand in the US and Canada by attracting customers across Norwex’s homecare, pet care and family care categories. Founded in Norway in 1994, Norwex has banned over 2,700 substances and chemicals from the product development process as part of its “No-No” clean product list.

[The Pollack Group](#) comes on board as agency of record for **Hall des Lumières**, Manhattan’s largest permanent center for custom-curated immersive experiences. The agency will start by focusing on HdL’s ticketed public events, centering on the one-day-only revival of its inaugural exhibition on April 20. TPG will also work to promote HdL’s catalog of event offerings and avant-garde exhibitions. The digital arts venue, located within the former teller hall and vault level of the landmarked Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank, boasts 130 video projectors, 54 speakers and 22 subwoofers.

[FINN Partners](#) is selected to provide integrated PR and marketing services for **Greentech Environmental**, which produces high efficiency HVAC filters and is a leading innovator in air purification and odor control solutions. FINN’s scope of work for the client will include creative storytelling, media relations, corporate communications and thought leadership, social engagement and creative projects. The program will support Greentech’s expected growth in commercial and consumer markets, with an emphasis on commercial buildings, hospitality, indoor agriculture, and pet.



**Greentech**

[Hemsworth](#) signs on as AOR for **Main Line Brands** (including its portfolio of home and commercial service companies, Mosquito Authority, Pest Authority and Fitness Machine Technicians), which will be part of its franchise brands division, and holistic wellness expert Dr. Raj Gupta, who will be part of its lifestyle division. For Main Line Brands, Hemsworth will create a comprehensive consumer and trade PR plan for all three brands. For Dr. Gupta, Hemsworth will showcase the chiropractic doctor’s work in holistic wellness, sharing his approach to reversing chronic diseases.

[Firecracker PR](#) is named agency of record for **L3Networks**, a managed service provider with top tier clients in Los Angeles and Orange County and Dallas, with a particular focus on cybersecurity, cloud hosting and IT consulting. The agency is tasked with increasing L3’s brand exposure, primarily through thought leadership activities. Founded in 2001, L3 works to help customers adopt leading technologies and meet critical standards required in their respective industries.



## 2023 A “MIXED BAG” FOR FINANCE

The numbers don't lie. The 53 firms [ranked by O'Dwyer's for financial PR and investor relations](#) this year brought



in a combined total of \$394 million in finance-related net fees in 2023, a 13.7 percent decline from the \$456 million those firms brought in the year before.

Looking at our top-ten-ranked financial PR firms, it was much the same story. The top ten were responsible for a combined total of \$326 million in

2023, similarly down 13.5 percent from the \$377 million netted by the top ten financial firms in 2022.

Unfortunately, 2023 wasn't the bounce-back year PR agencies representing the financial services sector had hoped for. Stubborn inflation, aggressive interest-rate increases to combat that inflation, never-ending stock-market volatility, decades-high mortgage rates and a series of high-profile bank collapses (namely, First Republic Bank and Silicon Valley Bank) all contributed to a roller coaster of a year that left consumers and investors skittish. At least the U.S. economy avoided a recession.

Indeed, it wasn't all bad news. In fact, six of the top 10 firms ranked by O'Dwyer's for financial PR and investor relations charted growth in finance-related fees last year. A seventh firm was even. You might say the numbers illustrate less of a bad year than a resilient communications landscape weathering a temporary storm.

### ICR inches ahead

Despite a dip in overall net fees last year, [ICR](#) exhibited strong growth in its finance practice in 2023, accounting for \$88.7 million in finance-related net fees, an increase of more than \$5 million from 2022's \$83.6 million.



**Tom Ryan**

The New York-based powerhouse, which was founded in 1998, claims the number-two spot in O'Dwyer's rankings of financial PR agencies.

ICR CEO and co-Founder Tom Ryan said he attributed the strength of his firm's financial practice to the degree of expertise it can offer clients operating in an otherwise volatile market.

“Although the capital markets remained fairly quiet in 2023, our teams continued to secure financial PR and investor communications support work with a broad range of clients across all industry sectors,” Ryan told O'Dwyer's. “The ongoing market volatility made it even more important for companies to manage their messaging and ensure they were effectively communicating their story at all times. We believe our extensive understanding of the markets, how investors think and how the financial media and other influ-

encers operate, resonates in the marketplace and allows us to build new and lasting client relationships.”

### APCO advances to #3

The strongest gains in O'Dwyer's financial/IR rankings this year came from [APCO](#), which shattered expectations in an otherwise lackluster year with skyrocketing finance earnings. The Washington-based firm, which maintains 32 offices around the world, brought in more than \$42.5 million in finance-related net fees last year, revealing gains of more than \$25 million from 2022's \$17.3 million.

APCO's otherworldly gains now place the agency in our number-three spot for finance, a two-place advancement from its previous number-five position last year.

According to the agency, APCO's growth was especially accelerated following the acquisition of London-based financial and corporate communications shop Camarco last year.

“One year on and we're seeing very strong demand from APCO's clients for these services, which is very exciting,” Camarco CEO and Chairman Geoffrey Pelham-Lane told O'Dwyer's. “It shows just how important it is for the top players to offer clients a more holistic perspective that includes maximizing their valuation in the capital markets.”



**Geoffrey Pelham-Lane**

### Problem-solving puts Vested ahead

“Financial services specialists [Vested](#) bucked a trend in the finance PR world last year by once again achieving healthy growth, earning \$24.7 million in finance-related net fees compared to 2022's \$23.8 million to maintain the number-four spot on O'Dwyer's list.

Group CEO Binna Kim said the agency's continued success in the face of economic uncertainty is a reflection of its core value proposition, which Kim referred to as a “true strategic marcomms consultancy for financial CMOs and CCOs.”

She also cited the agency's new online platform Finance Studio and new businesses such as financial CMO/CCO community Financial Narrative, both of which experienced exponential growth.

“We're in the business of problem-solving, and much of our strategic work in 2023 was around exactly this, from crisis communications and reputation management, to robust revenue generation programs for high growth companies, to rebranding and advertising campaigns,” Kim said.

When asked what trends we might keep on the lookout, Kim cited an ongoing evolution to make financial brands appear more human, which is



**Binna Kim**

*(continued on page 4)*

## “MIXED” 2023 FOR FINANCE *(continued from page 3)*

manifesting itself in several different ways. On one hand, Kim said her agency is currently handling several rebranding and repositioning exercises for financial brands that want to be more engaging to newer generations. Vested is also working on new creative campaigns that allow financial brands to engage a wider array of consumers, from robust social media campaigns—including TikTok—to physical experiences to more out-of-the-box creative. Third, the agency is helping firms remove complications from their messages.

“Much of the work we’re doing in PR is to try and eliminate corporate speak and unnecessary jargon,” Kim said. “This is very much aligned to Vested’s core mission which is to help financial brands bring more people into the financial system by making finance more engaging and human.”

### Team, client relationships spell success for Stanton

**Stanton** wrapped up another solid year in 2023, bringing in \$11 million in finance-related net fees compared to 2022’s \$10.4 million. The New York-based agency, which was founded in 2009, now takes the number-seven position, up from number-nine last year.



**Tom Faust**

Managing Director Tom Faust attributed the agency’s success to three key factors. The first was an expansion of existing relationships as clients began relying on the agency to do more. Second, Faust said the agency has invested in a great team that does impressive work, resulting in an agency with a reputation as

a partner of choice among many financial brands. Finally, Faust cited the growing roster of new clients looking for a proactive, engaged partner that can work across PR, digital marketing and content.

“The economy has put a premium on communications, and financial businesses are seeking out strong, nimble partners who proactively bring ideas and provide strategic guidance,” Faust said.

When asked where he sees the finance world headed in the coming year and beyond, Faust referred to the future as a “mixed bag,” a term that might also serve as a suitable characterization for the year the industry recently wrestled its way out of. Faust said the market continues to perform despite the myriad financial challenges facing businesses and individuals, and he’s confident dealmaking will return to robust health—it’s just a question of when.

“With uncertainty, financial firms need to actively engage with customers, partners and investors. An important impact is continued emphasis on developing content for various channels to reach audiences ‘where they live’ in both earned and owned media,” Faust said. “We see an acute need for a strong media presence that signals durability and credibility, and this is especially in alternative markets that continue to grow. There remains skepticism and confusion around alternatives among some audiences, despite their becoming more and more part of the mainstream. PR is the answer to this challenge.”

## ON THE MOVE

**Inizio Evoke** names **Stephanie DeViteri** president, North America. DeViteri rejoins the firm, where she previously worked for nearly 20 years, from the managing director, North America spot at MSL. Before that she was head of North America at Evoke KYNE. In her new role, DeViteri will oversee Inizio Evoke’s North America communications client portfolio and business development, executive leadership team and more than 150 employees across the region. Inizio Evoke has also appointed Sarah Dick to SVP, Strategy, to support its continued diversification and growth across North America.



**Stephanie DeViteri**

**Dentons Global Advisors-Albright Stonebridge Group** brings on Joerg (Jörg) Wuttke as a partner, based in its Washington, D.C. office. Wuttke was previously chief representative of BASF in China, based in Beijing, where he was responsible for guiding the company’s investment strategies for China. He also worked with ABB, a multinational power and automation technologies company, for 11 years on the development and financing of large projects in China, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Russia. Wuttke will strengthen the firm’s ability to assist clients in navigating a complicated global operating environment and developing their business strategies for moments of elevated opportunity and risk.

**Raptor PR**, a specialist tech PR agency for the global video games industry, brings on **James Law** as PR director. Law was previously PR manager at Heaven Media, which works with clients in the gaming and technology industries. At Raptor, he will play an instrumental role in the establishment of the agency’s new consumer gaming PR division, and will be leading on key B2B accounts at the agency.

**Prosek Partners** brings on **Diana Estupinan** to lead its first office in the Middle East, which will be located in Abu Dhabi Global Market, the international financial center of Abu Dhabi, and serve as Prosek’s regional hub. Estupinan, who was most recently chief operating officer and chief client officer for the Middle East at Instinctif Partners, will serve as managing director and head of MENA at Prosek.



**Diana Estupinan**

**Madwell** promotes **Gabriela Benitez** to president, a newly created role at the firm. Benitez previously served as SVP, client services. Before coming to Madwell, she was senior brand lead at ad agency the community, and held roles at McCann, KBS and BBDO. In addition to serving as president, Benitez leads Madwell’s DEI initiatives.

**Zonda**, which provides data-driven market solutions to companies in the homebuilding industry, names **Tom LeBaron** as VP, performance and growth marketing. LeBaron previously led SEO and organic growth in the home construction and owner/seller verticals at Realtor.com. Before that, he conducted performance marketing and customer engagement for the theme parks and consumer product businesses at Disney.



## INTERPUBLIC POSTS FLAT Q1 GROWTH

Interpublic CEO Philippe Krakowsky said the firm is off to a “solid start to the year” as its flat \$2.2B net revenues are in line with 2024 financial targets. Operating income fell 2.2 percent to \$184.2M.



**Philippe Krakowsky**

“Our data and tech driven media offerings, healthcare marketing, and PR capabilities continued to perform strongly, driving our growth,” he said. Noting that client sentiment has improved from the second half of 2023, Krakowsky said IPG’s new business pipeline has become more active.

Interpublic’s specialized communications & experiential solutions unit (Weber Shandwick, Golin, Current Global, R&CPMK, DeVries Global, Jack Morton, Momentum and DXTRA Health) registered flat growth to \$340.2M. It was up 1.5 percent organically.

The firm registered sharp Q1 growth in continental Europe of 8.9 percent, while the US was up 2.1 percent, and the Asia-Pacific region declined 8.1 percent.

Krakowsky expects full-year organic growth will fall in the one to two percent range.

## MD HIGHWAY ADMIN DRIVES OUT PR RFP

Maryland’s State Highway Administration has driven out an RFP for marketing communications, media support and public outreach.



The selected firm will work with SHA’s office of communications to inform the public about construction projects, highway safety initiatives and campaigns, and any other issue associated with planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining highways and bridges in Maryland, according to the RFP.

On an as-needed basis, the firm may handle copywriting, speechwriting, news release production, social media activity, market research, events, focus groups, website hosting, news monitoring, media buying, and crisis communications.

Proposals are due May 7 at Maryland’s [eMMA procurement site](#).

[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

## TENEO HANDLES CVC CAPITAL’S IPO

Teneo is handling the initial public offering of CVC Capital Partners, one of Europe’s largest private equity firms.



**CVC  
CAPITAL  
PARTNERS**

The IPO, which had been delayed twice due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the outbreak of Israel/Hamas war, is expected to raise more than \$1.3B.

Rob Lucas, CVC CEO, said the IPO “provides an enduring long-term institutional structure to further future growth.”

Neither Lucas nor any active partners are selling shares as part of the transaction.

CVC shares will trade on the Euronext Amsterdam market.

The Luxembourg-based company has nearly \$200B in assets under management and 29 offices in five continents.

Teneo senior managing director Tom Murray represents CVC.

## COLORADO CALLS FOR COMMS PARTNERS

Colorado is calling for the qualifications of PR firms, ad agencies and marketing services companies that are interested in working for The Centennial State.

Since the state’s communications needs vary, it wants to hear from firms that can handle comprehensive large-scale campaigns and those that specialize in small projects on an as-needed basis.

The selected partners will have track records in putting together highly creative, cost-effective campaigns that attain measurable results.

Proposers must have media negotiating skills that achieve maximum value-added or promotional opportunities related to media outlets, special events and onsite functions. They must indicate what regions of the state that they want to work in.

Colorado will issue contracts beginning in September with four additional one-year renewable options. Budgets will range from “a few thousand to several hundred thousand or more,” according to the RFQ.

Responses are due May 8 at [Bidnetdirect.com](#).

[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).



## NEWS OF FIRMS

**Crowe PR** is forming a strategic alliance with brand consultancy **Movetic**. Crowe PR and Movetic have collaboratively supported consumer goods brands for over six years and the formalized alliance will further optimize the teams’ collaborative work, starting with branding and content development through strategic communications plans, message elevation, media relations, influencer marketing and social offerings. “This alliance is truly built on shared values and a commitment to excellence,” said Crowe PR founder and CEO Anna Crowe.

**SKDK** founding partner Bill Knapp is inducted into the Association of Political Consultants Hall of Fame. The award, which recognizes industry pioneers who have made a significant and lasting mark in political consulting and issue advocacy, was presented at the AAPC Hall of Fame & Campaign Excellence Awards Luncheon on April 18. Knapp has served as the senior media strategist for six U.S. presidential campaigns and numerous congressional, gubernatorial and mayoral races. In 1996, he led the creative teams for the Clinton-Gore campaign and the DNC, and he played a key role in President Obama’s 2008 campaign. Knapp was also lead strategist and ad maker for all three of Mike Bloomberg’s successful New York City mayoral campaigns, his 2020 presidential run, and his nonprofit Everytown for Gun Safety.

**SixSpeed**, a creative marketing agency, acquires **KC Truth**, a media and creative agency. Both firms are based in Minneapolis. The acquisition is intended to provide SixSpeed with expanded integrated services, including robust media strategy and global placement capabilities. SixSpeed has worked with clients including Polaris, Red Bull, Titleist, Target, Knipex, Club Car and Dan-O’s Seasoning, while KC-Truth’s roster has included such brands as 3M, Cargill, Twin Cities Orthopedics and Minnesota Public Radio.



## COMMENTARY

**Grandstanders...** Republican tough-guy senators Josh Hawley and Tom Cotton want president Biden to send the National Guard to Columbia University to put an end to student protests.



**Josh Hawley**

The shameless Hawley is the guy who gave a big salute to the Jan. 6 Capitol Hill rioters, and then was seen running for his life when being pursued by the mob.

Josh and Tom may have slept through their American history class that dealt with the 1970 Kent

State massacre in which four students were killed and nine wounded by the trigger-happy National Guardsmen.

About 300 students turned out at the Ohio college to demonstrate against president Nixon's expansion of the Vietnam war into Cambodia.

They were on the right side of history.

The May 4 Kent State shooting followed a national strike on May 1, in which 4M college and high school students walked out of their classes to demonstrate against the war.

They helped turn the tide of public opinion against Vietnam War.

History will show whether today's college protests will have an impact on US policy regarding the Israel/Hamas conflict.

**Bernie Blasts Bibi.** Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders is fed up with Israeli prime minister Netanyahu's claim that any criticism of his government is antisemitic.

In an April 25 statement, Sanders said:

"Mr. Netanyahu. Antisemitism is a vile and disgusting form of bigotry that has done unspeakable harm to many millions of people.

"But, please, do not insult the intelligence of the American people by attempting to distract us from the immoral and illegal war policies of your extremist and racist government.

"Do not use antisemitism to deflect attention from the criminal indictment you are facing in the Israeli courts. It is not antisemitic to hold you accountable for your actions."

A poll conducted in March by the Israel Democracy Institute found the nearly six-in-ten (57 percent) of Israelis rate Netanyahu's response to the Oct. 7 invasion by Hamas to be "poor or very poor."

Nearly three-in-ten (28 percent) of respondents rated Bibi "good or excellent;" 14 percent rate his performance as "so-so."

A majority of Americans (55 percent) oppose Netanyahu's actions in Gaza, according to a March Gallup poll, and only 36 percent support his policies.

His disapproval numbers are up 10 points since November.

Bibi's unfavorable ratings will soar if the IDF invades southern Gaza and causes mass fatalities.

**Pay raises are bad for the working class**, but great for business recruitment, according to five southern governors who are upset with the United Auto Workers' historic organizing victory in the southland.

They charge the UAW used misinformation and scare tactics to persuade workers at the Chattanooga Volkswagen plant to join the union. The UAW recruitment message: you will earn more money and live a better life as a union member.

Volkswagen announced on April 19 that nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of the more than 3,600 workers at the plant voted to join the union. It is the first time that the UAW successfully organized a plant in the south.

The UAW's victory will destroy the efforts of the governors to bring "good paying jobs into their states," [according to a joint statement](#) by governors Bill Lee (TN), Greg Abbott (TX), Tate Reeves (MS), Henry McMaster (SC) and Kay Ivey (AL).

The hard reality is that the governors have used the low wages paid to working class people as their primary marketing tool to attract investment into their states.

Volkswagen's top hourly wage at its Chattanooga facility is about \$35, which is \$5 less than at a UAW organized plant.

Condescendingly, the governors believe that know what's right for their people. In their view, southern autoworkers would rather toil for lower wages at non-union plants than abide by contractual work rules that lay out "who can pick up a box or flip a switch."

The politicians also have "serious reservations that the UAW leadership can represent our values."

They got that right.

UAW president Shawn Fain said the victory in Chattanooga represents a historic moment for the union, and he is ready to win more for the working class of this nation.

The UAW is poised for another victory in the south as 5,000 workers at a Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance, AL, will vote from May 13 to 17 on whether to join the union.

Governor Ivey is in for a shocker.

**Razom delivers perfect PR pitch.** A Ukrainian human rights group played a key role in persuading Speaker Mike Johnson to hold the vote to spend \$95B in aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan.

Razom's appeal to Johnson's religious beliefs did the trick, [according to the Financial Times](#).

It paid for a billboard ad across the street from Johnson's Baptist church in Benton, LA. The ad quoted a biblical verse and showed an image of a Baptist church in Ukraine that was damaged by the Russians.

Razom arranged a speaking tour of the Pelican State for a Ukrainian basketball star who played for LSU, and had a helmet and a letter from Ukrainian firefighters serving on the front lines sent to Johnson, whose father was a fireman in Shreveport.

The group also set up meetings of Ukrainian evangelical leaders with Johnson, and a Ukrainian Baptist whose wife and son were killed by the Russians.

Private sessions between Johnson and persecuted Ukrainian Christians also were a "big factor" in winning his support for the vote, according to Melinda Haring, a senior advisor at Razom.

Ukraine, Europe and the US are the beneficiaries of Razom's PR/lobbying effort.

—Kevin McCauley