

CWA Pushes Guaranteed Health Care For All



There hasn't been a round of bargaining during the last 28 years where the cost of health care coverage wasn't the number one obstacle to reaching an agreement. The companies we work for constantly attempt to shift an ever-increasing share of the

burden onto our members. Our success at beating back these demands has been extraordinary. The real question is, "How long can we keep this up?"

The United States' outdated approach to health care is to rely on employers voluntarily providing health insurance coverage for American workers. This approach is no longer sufficient as out of control health care cost increases are causing more and more corporations to shift ever-increasing costs upon workers, diminish the quality of the health care benefits offered, or not offer health care benefits at all. US outsourcing forced many working families into lesser paying jobs and priced them out of health care, forcing a choice between paying the rent and having health care coverage for their families.

The situation for retirees is worse. As more and more employers abandon their group health plans, those companies continuing to provide coverage find their costs rising even faster. A recent study found the cost of caring for the uninsured adds over \$900 to the annual cost of an employer-sponsored family insurance plan. That means that every employer pays an additional 8.5% in health care costs that do not directly benefit their own employees.

The World Health Organization ranks the United States at 37th among the nations of the world in delivering quality care. That's despite our spending double the amount per capita that Japan, Canada, and European nations spent on health care. When it comes to infant mortality, we're 44th in the world, far behind all other advanced economies.

CWA's mission for health care reform is to drive a political solution to the current health care crisis that will achieve guaranteed, affordable health care for all by the year 2012. Two key goals of our effort will be to reduce the cost associated with providing retiree benefits, positively affecting our ability to negotiate meaningful health care benefits for our active members. This effort will involve recruiting employers and lobbying politicians to support our health care agenda. To achieve this goal, our members must be educated and mobilized. This will require a multi-year campaign.

The Communications Workers of America has adopted the following key principles for health care reform. These principles will guide our work as we press forward with our efforts to enact national health care reform.

GUARANTEED COVERAGE FOR ALL

Everyone should have health care without exclusions or penalties.

While the market has an important role to play, our government - as the voice of all of us - must play a central role in regulating, financing and providing health care.

Coverage should be comprehensive.

Unions and employers should retain the ability to supplement coverage.

All retirees should have guaranteed health care coverage.

FINANCING THROUGH SHARED SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Since all Americans face the possibility of poor health, risks should be broadly shared to ensure fair treatment and equitable rates, and all Americans should have shared responsibility for contributing to the system through progressive financing.

A level playing field should be provided for all businesses so that no employer in exercising their responsibility for health care is disadvantaged because of the age or health of its workforce or number of retirees.

COST EFFECTIVE QUALITY CARE

Quality care means that the patient receives the right care at the right time in the right place and gets the best possible outcome.

Investments should be made in systems and technology to reduce medical errors and costs, streamline administration, and promote best practices

Reform efforts must include effective mechanisms for controlling costs and require information on provider performance while enhancing efficiency.

As front-line caregivers, health care workers should have a protected voice in improving health care and the working conditions that affect the care they give. Quality metrics should include safe staffing levels and provisions for relevant training.

CHOICE OF PROVIDERS

Individuals should be able to select their own doctors and other health care providers.

For More Information visit the CWA Local 2108 website at:

www.cwalocal2108.org

From The President's Desk

Strikes have their evils but they have their good points also, and with proper organization, strikes do generally result to the advantage of labor. Strikes ought to be, and in well-organized trades they are, the last means to which workers resort to protect themselves against the almost never satisfied greed of their employers.

Samuel Gompers

It's July already and we are in the middle of the hot, muggy days the summer brings to the residents of the Washington Metropolitan area.

August 2, 2007 begins the countdown to the expiration of the Verizon Core and Verizon Connected Solutions General Agreements.

Now is the time to begin preparing for what may turn out to be the mother of all contract negotiations with these corporations.

The changes in telecommunications are setting the stage for the 2008 contract to set the standard for years to come. It really doesn't matter if you're approaching retirement age or just starting out in the company. We all have a lot at stake next year.

My guess is at the time of our last contract negotiations with Verizon, seniority averaged 18 years. That means many of our members had been through contract negotiations resulting in a strike in order for us to get our fair share.



When I look around today, I believe the average seniority is closer to 8 to 10 years. This means many of you have never been through a strike. In fact, a substantial number of our members have never been through any contract negotiations at all.

In my 27 years, I have been through contract negotiations nine times. I have been on strike four times and worked without a contract twice. I have learned the most important thing is to be prepared for whatever happens.

Some people say they can't afford to go on strike. If you haven't heard this before, let me be the first to tell you, sometimes you can't afford **not** to go on strike. As an officer, I have often heard our members say, "I'll be happy if we can just keep what we have". Thank goodness, we have never followed that sage piece of advice. With that approach, we wouldn't have a healthcare plan, paid vacations, holidays and the many other things we enjoy today.

We have all seen the many changes Verizon has been going through for the past couple of years. They continue to cry poor mouth everyday. Ivan and his friends would like to convince all of us they have no money and we are bankrupting the company.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is Verizon is a very profitable company. In fact, Verizon ranks 13th among the Fortune 500 companies and is ranked number one among telecommunications companies.

The only way we are going to prevail against a corporation of this size is to stand together. August 2, 2008 is not that far away. Begin now by saving an extra \$20.00 a week out of your paycheck. That's one night out at the movies. Put that money aside between now and next August and be prepared to go the distance against these selfish bastards.

We must be prepared to go one day longer than they can. I have no doubt we will do so, but only if we prepare now and stand together as brothers and sisters and Union Members.

Les

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Printing done in-house

Les Evans.....President and Editor
Amory Proctor.....Executive Vice President
Johnny M. Brown.....Secretary-Treasurer
Marilyn R. Irwin.....Vice President
Jenny K. Sylvester.....Vice President
Paul Goldbeck.....Managing Editor
Dave Madara.....Contributing Editor

Recording Announcements

(301) 459-8381: Avaya and Lucent
 (301) 459-8422: Verizon
 (301) 459-9541: VCSI



Local Office: (301) 459-2108 Toll Free: (800) 427-2108
 Local FAX: (301) 459-1859 Web Site: www.cwalocal2108.org

RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

By Dennis Strout, President RMC 2108

Retiree Health Care seems to be the hot topic of the month so I am reprinting some info that you may be interested in. Read on.

Victory in Congress Will Help Protect Retiree Health Care

For retirees and future retirees, CWA and the IBEW, in a coordinated campaign with Alcatel Lucent, won a key tax code change that will help preserve retiree health care at that company and others

An amendment to the supplemental war funding bill, adopted by Congress and signed into law, permits companies like Alcatel Lucent to transfer more than one year's worth of retiree health costs from excess pension assets. Federal tax law had allowed employers to transfer only the equivalent of one years costs for health benefits for retirees and their dependents, if pension assets were overfunded by more than 120%.

The change allowing additional retiree health care funding – if pension assets are sufficiently overfunded – will enable CWA and Alcatel Lucent to build up a VEBA trust fund (Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association) with CWA's goal to see that fund grow to cover future retiree health costs and limit the company from trying to shift more health care cost to retirees.

Ralph Maly, CWA Vice President for Communications and Technologies, said CWA and IBEW locals, especially those with Alcatel Lucent members, spent a great deal of time and effort urging their members of Congress to make this change.

He thanked Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) and Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) for their efforts throughout the two-year fight to get the change adopted.

Especially for the Alcatel Lucent retirees, this will help preserve retiree health care going forward.

CWA represents about 2,600 active workers at Alcatel Lucent and some 120,000 retirees and dependents.

Correction Of ARA Press Release

On May 3, 2007 the Alliance for Retired Americans issued a press release which indicated that the Verizon Corporation had told the CWA that it wanted to eliminate all retiree health care in 2008. For the record, this statement is not correct. Verizon has not officially communicated this goal to CWA.

Nonetheless, it is critical that everyone understand that unlike pension benefits, health coverage for retirees is not guaranteed or protected by the law. Instead, strong collective bargaining agreements backed by mobilized union members and retirees are what protect health coverage

for retiree workers at Verizon, AT&T, Goodyear and countless other major employers. In that light, we will continue to fight, in every round of negotiations with every employer, to maintain quality and affordable health benefits for all those we represent.

But CWA will also continue to fight in the political arena for reforms that guarantee everyone – whether they work or are retired - coverage by comprehensive health benefits.

We believe that the solutions to our nation's health care problems cannot be won at the bargaining table and certainly not by shifting cost burdens onto our members.

Only a comprehensive national solution can alleviate the burden of soaring health care costs and guarantee all of that we will be able to get the care we need.

The fight for health care benefits is just one of the battles being waged by the CWA.

From an e-mail I received

You may already know about this. There is a motion in congress to put a stop to corporations like Verizon from robbing their retirees of their health care benefits. You know and I know that it is a matter of time before they try to cut back or even eliminate them.

We run the risk of VZ deciding to reduce or eliminate our benefits any time they choose. To reduce that risk, write to your Senators and ask them to sponsor/support the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act. The companion bill to H.R. 1322. Also write to your Congressional Representative and ask them to support H.R. 1322. If we can get these bills passed we will have a good shot at holding on to our benefits.

Future Meetings

Our August meeting has been cancelled by a vote of the membership. We do this every year to give everyone a chance to relax and enjoy their summer.

The September meeting will be run by Vice President Calvin Foster as I will be out of town.

We hope to see everyone at our July meeting.



RMC 2108

Take Me Out To The Ballgame

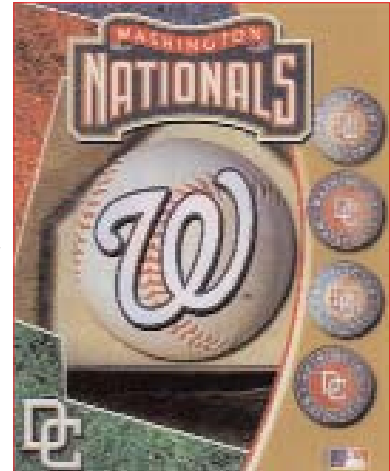
Join Local 2108 and a whole bunch of union friends and family at Labor Night with the Nats!

We are getting 100 tickets to the Washington National's home game against the Colorado Rockies on **July 20, 2007** with a start time of 7:05 p.m.

Tickets are **\$6** each, with \$1 dollar from each ticket going to the Community Services Agency of the Washington Metropolitan Council of the AFL-CIO. This agency provides assistance to area union members and their families during times of need.

Don't delay; sign up for your tickets today! Tickets are available on a first come first served basis. Money for ticket purchases should be sent to Local 2108.

So mark your calendars now and make plans to enjoy a balmy summertime evening of baseball near the scenic banks of the Anacostia River. Ain't the beer cold!



CWA LOCAL 2108



ANNUAL FAMILY PICNIC

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

BE SURE TO COME TO:

MAYO BEACH PARK - EDGEWATER, MD

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2007 - NOON TO 5 PM (RAIN OR SHINE)

FOOD * SODAS * BEER * SPORTS * GAMES * MUSIC * SWIMMING

FOOD CATERED BY GLEN'S BBQ UNLIMITED

\$10.00 PER TICKET

CHILDREN UNDER 2 ADMITTED FREE

ALL TICKETS MUST BE PURCHASED IN ADVANCE

NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT THE GATE

LIMIT OF 6 TICKETS PER MEMBER - NO PETS ALLOWED

LAST DAY TO PURCHASE TICKETS IS FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2007

MAYO BEACH HAS LIMITED ATTENDANCE AT THE PARK, SO TICKETS WILL ONLY BE AVAILABLE

ON A FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS. PLEASE SEE YOUR CHIEF STEWARD OR CALL THE

LOCAL OFFICE AT (301) 459-2108 FOR TICKETS.

To Mayo Beach from I-95 Using Rt. 214 East (Central Avenue)



(This flyer produced by Local 2108 in the Local Office)

CWA Local 2108 Members

Welcome New Members

Larry Gibson

Christopher Titus

Wayne Stephens

James Thompson
James Boyd
Derace Lauderdale
Ronald Baynes

Carmen Butler

Marlyn Bowman, II
Julius Clark, III

Mike Carter

Ricardo Goines
Dwayne Johnson
Vaughn Phyll
Reuben Hall
Mark Sigmund
Carlos Valdez
Robert Venzke
Karlos Strange

Kim Lee

Adrienne Haggins
Miles Monday
Scott Owens
Rhonda White
Damon Bullock
Richard Abrahams
Olivia Cox
Willis Gray
Syed Ahmed
Dana Cook
Eric Anthony

Dedria Tyree

Pamela Devore
Andre' Parker
Rondal Bryant
Dominique Cooper
Laurence Wilson

Ed Anderson

Toni Cobbs

Transferred Members

Marlena Duckett

Antoine Allen

Wayne Stephens

Richard J. Iacono

Carmen Butler

DeWaine Williams

Lorraine Williams

Gerald Hill

Latasha Carpenter

Remi Alamutu
Charles T. Douglas

Hank Allred

Dermot Colston

Ruben Flores

Wesley Worrell

Personals

We wish to extend sincere sympathy to the family and friends of:

John Gillette, husband of **Joan Gillette** who died on May 10, 2007.

Mildred Waldron, grandmother of **Sabrina Daniels** who died on May 21, 2007.

Elizabeth Porter, mother of **Kevin Sima** who died on May 27, 2007.

Wayne Clore, a retired member who died on June 5, 2007.

Teresa Rigby, sister of **Valtina Grant** who died on June 18, 2007.

Richard Shorter, brother of **Patricia Evans** who died on May 31, 2007.

Verizon Benefits Notice: Sponsored Parents Clarification

Questions have been raised regarding the eligibility requirements for Sponsored Parents in the Verizon Managed Care Network and Medical Expense Plan for Mid-Atlantic Associates. Specifically, the Plan Administrator's interpretation of the word "vicinity" in the following eligibility requirements:

"Resides with the Employee or in a home provided by the Employee in the vicinity, for at least six (6) months before he/she becomes covered under the Plan and throughout the period he/she is covered under the Plan, and..."

The Benefit Plan Administrator has clarified that the term "vicinity" means within 50 (fifty) miles of the employee's residence.

The Company reinstated medical coverage for those who did not meet this requirement during the audit and will continue such medical coverage subject to the participant submitting proof of compliance with all plan eligibility provisions (including the 50 mile vicinity requirement) during the 2008 open enrollment period.

PROPOSAL TO INCREASE DIVERSITY ON THE CWA EXECUTIVE BOARD

During the course of the past year the CWA formed a committee to study the issue of diversity (or the lack thereof) on the CWA Executive Board. Chaired by Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Easterling, the committee included other members of the Executive Board as well as Local Officers. Charged by the delegates to the CWA 68th Annual Convention to bring a proposal to the this year's convention, the committee has put forth the following proposal.

For more information or to join in the discussion about the proposal go to:

<http://www.cwa-union.org/future/diversity-committee/>

Recommended by the CWA Committee on Executive Board Diversity and adopted by the CWA Executive Board March 23, 2007

1. Add four at-large diversity board members to the CWA Executive Board. At least three should be persons of color and at least two should be women. The four at-large diversity board seats shall represent four geographic regions within CWA.

At-large Northeast Region (154,000 members*)

Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edwards Island, New Brunswick, Ontario, Quebec, London and Frankfurt.

At-large Southeast Region (120,000 members*)

Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Puerto Rico

At-large Central Region (147, 000 members*)

Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas

At-large Western Region (115,000 members*)

Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, California, Nevada, Hawaii, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, Hong Kong and Narita Tokyo.

***Membership numbers as of October 2006**

2. At-large diversity board members will have the same policy making responsibilities and voting authority as other board members.

3. At-large diversity board members will not be full time. Expenses and lost wages will be paid for attending Board meetings and performing other Executive Board responsibilities as assigned by the President.

4. At-large diversity board members will not be delegates to the convention. They will have the same rights as other Board members at convention.

5. The Executive Board will appoint one at-large diversity board member from each region following the 2007 Convention from nominations submitted by the National Committee on Equity, the National Women's Committee, and the Minority Caucus. Each of these groups will provide to the Executive Board a minimum of six and a maximum of ten nominations for each geographic region by September 1, 2007. Nominations must be representative of the ethnic diversity of the union and include Sector nominees. Each nomination will contain a short bio. The Executive Board will act on the nominations at its first scheduled Board meeting following the convention and it will be guided by the goal of having at least three people of color and at least two women in the at-large diversity seats.

6. Members interested in being nominated should contact the National Women's Committee and/or the National Committee on Equity.

7. Elections for at-large diversity board members will be held at the 2008 Convention. Nominations will be taken from the floor using the same procedure as that used for National officers. Members shall be eligible to be nominated and run for the at-large diversity seat in the region in which they hold their membership. A member can only be nominated and run for one at-large diversity board seat. All nominated candidates shall be placed on the ballot. Each delegate shall vote for one candidate from each geographic region. The candidate from each geographic region who receives a majority of the votes will be elected to the Board.

8. Establish an Executive Board Diversity Committee composed of the four at-large diversity board members plus other board members as appointed by the President. The Committee will track diversity of membership and interact with the National Committee on Equity, the National Women's Committee, and the Minority Caucus.

Annually, the Executive Board Diversity Committee shall review the membership represented by each geographic region and determine if the membership numbers remain roughly equal. If the regional membership numbers are no longer roughly equal, the Executive Board Diversity Committee shall make a recommendation to the Executive Board on the make up of the regions. Any changes in the composition of the regions will require a constitutional amendment.

9. If a vacancy occurs in an at-large diversity board seat, the President will request nominations from the National Committee on Equity and the National Women's Committee. The Board will appoint someone from these nominations to fill the vacant seat until the next convention guided by the goal of having at least three persons of color and at least two women in the at-large diversity board seats.



CWA ANNOUNCES COLA AND CONTRACT WAGE INCREASE FOR AUGUST

Based on the recently announced National Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), eligible associates in the Mid-Atlantic areas will receive a 0.38% cost of living adjustment (COLA). The 0.38% COLA and the negotiated 2.00% general wage increase will result in a 2.38% wage increase.

The effective date of the increase is **August 5, 2007** and will be reflected in paychecks dated **August 17**.

Negotiated Increase: **2.00%** PLUS: COLA: **0.38%** EQUALS: Total Basic Weekly Wage Increase: **2.38%**

Calculation for COLA: 1/2 of the increase above 2.0% in the CPI-W for May 2007 over May 2006, applied to the scheduled rates in effect in each wage schedule on Aug. 4, 2007.

HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS REPORTING

During the course of the past year, we have had reports from technicians who have come across hazardous conditions while working. When notified, the supervisor instructed them to leave the hazard unprotected and go to their next job. The CWA District 2 Safety Representative Mark Balsamo brought this to the attention of management and as a result, the Potomac Regional Operations Support issued Document No. 2007-00209-ROS.

This document outlines the procedure technicians should use when they encounter hazardous conditions on the job. These conditions include energized plant, downed power lines, toxic spills, escalated police activities and more. When a Verizon employee recognizes such a hazardous condition, please take the following actions:

Immediately secure the area to ensure the safety of themselves, other technicians and the public;

Immediately contact their Local Manager to advise them of the situation. If there are down or sparking electric wires, then the technician will first contact the appropriate Power Company;

Contact appropriate Power Company to advise them of the address of the hazard and try to get an estimated time of arrival;

Notify a management person from the Dispatch Resource Center. The technician will provide the address, central office, cable pairs (Both Feeder and Local) and any other pertinent information that may be required;

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD THE TECHNICIAN LEAVE THE AREA UNATTENDED UNTIL A SUPERVISOR OR POWER COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE SHOWS UP ON THE SITE!

The CWA is committed to the safety of our members. We are currently in a dispute with Verizon over the issue of technicians not having rubber blankets and gloves on each technician's vehicle. Verizon believes they don't have to have them on each vehicle; rather, they only have to make them available when a technician needs them.

Once again, Mark Balsamo has taken the lead on this issue and has filed a complaint with Maryland Occupational Safety and Health to try to resolve this problem. We will keep you informed as to the outcome of the complaint.

ARE YOU SURE THAT CEV IS SAFE?

Several years ago, the Verizon Real Estate Operations department stopped performing routine maintenance tests on the gas monitoring systems in CEV's (Controlled Environment Vaults). They deferred this important task to the Network Services Group (NSG). The SLC crews in each Directors area should have taken on the responsibility for the routine quarterly testing of these gas detection monitors. However, not every Director followed through on acquiring the test equipment and training needed to perform this most important task. In some cases, among those who did they pushed this task aside for the sake of the almighty bottom line.

A CEV essentially is a manhole. Verizon trains their technicians in all of the procedures necessary to work safely in an underground environment. Yet, in some areas routine maintenance of CEV sites are a thing of the past. It's the penny-wise and pound-foolish theory of, "if it ain't broke don't fix it".

This situation could be extremely dangerous should a technician enter a CEV with an improperly calibrated gas monitor. Just because you have a green light when you open the lid, doesn't mean it's safe to enter. If the gas monitoring system is out of calibration, you could encounter explosive or deadly gases when you enter. You wouldn't know this until it's too late. And the lack of any bad odors doesn't mean it is safe. No odor is present when you have a condition known as "dead air". No oxygen is present either. *It only takes seconds in a dead air environment before you pass out and die!*

In speaking with our technicians in Prince Georges County who have responsibility for the maintaining these sites, they informed us they have maintained the testing and calibration routine. We trust that will continue and expect to hear otherwise if it doesn't. In Montgomery County the testing routine has only recently re-started. The plan is to create a system of posting the information on the lid of the CEV when the last calibration took place.

The bottom line is, don't take chances. If you are unsure of when the gas-testing monitor in a CEV was last calibrated you must treat it like a manhole. While your job earns you a living and provides for your family, it isn't worth your life.

Local 2108 Union Calendar

July 2007

- 4 HOLIDAY-Independence Day
Local Office Closed. Union Negotiated Holiday
- 11 Retired Members Club Meeting 11:00am
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 11 General Membership Meeting 6:00pm
American Legion Post 268 - Wheaton, MD
- 16-17 CWA 69th Annual Convention
Toronto, Canada
- 20 Labor Night with the Nats
Nats vs Colorado Rockies 7:05pm
- 29 - Aug 3 CWA Leadership Training @ WVU
Morgantown, WV

August 2007

- 1 Chief Steward Meeting 9:00 am
Local Office
- 7-8 Blood Drive
Chesapeake Complex
- 8 Retired Members Club Meeting
CANCELLED
- 8 General Membership Meeting 6:00pm
Local 2108 Office - Landover, MD



Visit Local 2108 On The Web: www.cwafocal2108.org

**COLA & Wage
Increase in
August...
See Pages 7**

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LOCAL 2108
4301 Garden City Drive, Suite 102
Landover, MD 20785-2210
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