

VERIZON BUSINESS ORDERS U.S. FLAGS REMOVED

Airman Who Flew Flags in Iraq, Afghanistan Objects to Company's Removal of Patriotic Symbol

Verizon: Respect Our Troops...



Respect Our Rights! - www.putuptheflag.com

flew outside my tent in Afghanistan," Skiest said. "Now I'm back at my post at Verizon Business and I want to know why I can't display my flags outside my cubicle."

Terry exhausted every internal avenue of redress with VZB's management and human resources department to reconsider its decision. Terry and his co-workers are determined to continue their fight for justice until management puts the flags back up where they belong.

In response to mounting pressure from Terry's VZB co-workers, Verizon recently put up its own U.S. flag in the Acton office where he works. However, management still won't allow Terry to display the flags that he flew overseas.

"Wha's wrong with Terry's flags?" asked Mike Wheeler. "The whole point about putting up his flags is the honor and pride we feel for him and everyone else who has served our country. Since when does Verizon, or any other company, own our flag?"

VZB, formerly MCI, has several government contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan, including the installation of the wireless communications system in Baghdad. "If this company is on the side of men and women fighting for our country, why does it deny me the right to fly the American flag?" Skiest asks. "That seems un-American."

Skiest is part of a group of technicians at Verizon Business who formed a new union and had their majority verified by **Sen. John Kerry** and four U.S. Representatives last year.

Terry Skiest's union has produced a short video to help him get his message out. A new website, www.putuptheflag.org has a link to the video. It also provides an easy way for people to contact VZB management to show their support.

\$\$ CPS AWARD \$\$

Once again, it pays to belong to the Union!

The CPS Award for plan year 2007 is **\$777.00**. The award will be pro-rated for those employees who participated for more than 90 days but less than 12 months in the plan year. Employees who resign or are discharged for cause prior to December 31 of the Plan Year forfeit their eligibility. CPS Distribution for each eligible part-time employee will be prorated as a percent of the normal workweek for a full-time employee in the same title.

An employee who is otherwise eligible for a CPS Distribution will not lose eligibility due to the following separations (so long as the employee has a period of at least 90 days of active participation during the Plan Year): Retirement, Separation due to force surplus, Transfer, Death of the employee or Promotion to management. An employee who is separated from the active payroll for these reasons will receive a CPS distribution based on the above proration rules.

The award will be paid on **March 6 or 7** based on employees' regular payroll distribution schedule.

With all their faults, trade unions have done more for humanity than any other organization of men that ever existed. They have done more for decency, for honesty, for education, for the betterment of the race, for the developing of character in men, than any other association of men.

Clarence Darrow

Around 58 years ago, a group of men and women working for the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company of Maryland decided the time had come to form a Local Union, and with that decision the Communications Workers of America, Local 2108 was born.

While I'm not certain where the local union office was housed back then (very possibly in someone's garage or basement), I do know that before I was a member of Local 2108, the Local office was in the Forest Glen area of Silver Spring. It was leased space, the Local had a Building Fund in place with the intention of one day buying some property, and building a proper "Local Union Hall", we could call our own.

When I joined Local 2108 in 1983, we had recently moved from the Silver Spring location into leased space in the brand new office building built by the United Food & Commercial Workers, Local 400. The thinking then was we would move into this Union Made / Union Owned building until we were in the position of buying a place of our own.

Well, time moves on, as you hope it will, and 28 years or so later we have finally done it.

We moved into our new home, our own "Local Union Hall" on January 31 of this year. By all accounts, the move went about as smoothly as you can imagine when moving from somewhere you've lived for 28 years.



When we began this quest to find somewhere we could finally call our own we set some priorities.

First, it had to be something we could afford, now and into the future. We knew staying where we were on Garden City Drive was no longer a viable option. Local 400 sold the building several years back to a real estate company.

While we had a good relationship with Local 400, we didn't realize just how good we had it. We learned pretty quickly after the sale of the building. The new owners in no short order began taking advantage of every clause possible in our lease to raise the rent. It quickly became apparent staying put was not an option.

Second, in order to make it accessible we wanted a location centrally located to the Local's jurisdiction and preferably somewhere near our two largest work centers, Calverton and the Chesapeake Complex.

Third, we needed to find somewhere large enough to accommodate our needs. One of those needs was the ability to have our own meeting hall. It's an old cliché, but I always wanted the ability to say, "We're having a meeting at the Local Union Hall". While we had meetings at the Garden City Drive location, it didn't have the feeling to me of it being our "Union Hall". This is probably because the fact is, it wasn't. It was Local 400's Union Hall they allowed us to use.

Well, I'm proud to say that I believe we hit a home run when we found our new home.

We found somewhere we could afford. In fact, our expenses overall stayed about the same with one major difference, our rent will never increase.

As far as the location, to paraphrase George Clooney from the movie "Oh Brother, Where Art Thou", we are a geographical oddity, not two weeks from everywhere, but approximately 33 miles as the crow flies from everywhere in our jurisdiction.

To top it all off, we now have the space to have our own "Union Hall". We have enough space for a meeting room where we will now hold ALL of our Local meetings. Already we've had our first Membership Meeting (the second Wednesday of every month by the way) and two Chief Steward's meetings.

For those who haven't seen it yet, our location is approximately one mile from both I-495 and/or I-95 at 10782 Rhode Island Avenue in Beltsville. While we had to cancel the March Membership Meeting, we look forward to seeing you on April 9 at 6:00pm.

Les

Communications Workers of America

2108 news

published monthly by
CWA Local 2108

Printing done in-house

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- (301) 595-1826: VCSI
- (301) 595-1834: Avaya
- (301) 595-3072: Idearc



Local Office: (301) 595-2108 Local FAX: (301) 595-2412
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RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

By Dennis Strout, President RMC 2108

GOING DIGITAL

One year from now, on Feb. 17, 2009 TV stations will cease analog broadcasting as federal rules require the stations to transmit their signals digitally. Millions of viewers who watch television over the air using a set-top or rooftop antenna will have to take some sort of action by then to continue to watch. At our February meeting this issue was discussed by some of our members and I found out that a lot of people don't know what they are supposed to do. The following information should clear up any confusion you may have. It was printed in the Washington Post on Sunday, February 17.

The good news is you don't have to buy an expensive high-definition TV set.

If you subscribe to a paid TV service such as cable or satellite (some examples: Comcast, DirectTV, Dish Network, RCN, Verizon FIOS) you are ready and do not have to do anything.

If you use a rooftop antenna or set-top antenna you may still be okay. Check to see if your set has a built-in digital tuner. If your set was built in March of 2007 or later, it does and you are okay. If it was built in 2004 or later it might have one. Check your owners manual. Sets built prior to 1998 will not have one and you need to take action.

There are three options you can choose from.

- Option 1: Buy an analog to digital converter box that plugs into an existing television. (you need a box for each TV you want to use).

Boxes are available now at more than 250 retailers, including Best Buy, Circuit City, Sears and Target. Typical cost: \$50 to \$70. Through March 2009 you can apply for up to two \$40 coupons per household, good toward the purchase of a converter box that fits on top of most televisions. The coupons are good for 90 days after the date they're mailed. Retailers accept only one coupon per converter box. To get coupons: call 888-388-2009 or go online to www.dtv2009.gov

- Option 2: Subscribe to a satellite or cable provider and make sure each TV you want to use is connected to the service.

- Option 3: Ditch the old TV and buy one with a digital tuner.

I hope this helps some of you.

This next bit of information was also printed in the Washing Post on Saturday, February 16. This issue may already be settled but in case it isn't we should get behind it and try to see that it gets done.

About 7,500 low and moderate income seniors in Maryland would be eligible for a subsidy for their prescription drugs under a plan announced yesterday by Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) and health-care leaders.

A deal reached with CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, the region's largest nonprofit health insurer, would help senior citizens close a gap in Medicare drug coverage known as the doughnut hole. The Medicare benefit, passed by Congress in



RMC 2108

2003, covers annual costs up to \$2,510, but seniors then have to pay all of their drug costs until their total spending out of pocket hits \$4,000. Coverage kicks back in after that.

The gap, designed to hold down costs, has proved unpopular. Health advocates say seniors are left with bills for vital drugs they cannot pay. Many are forced to go off their medication, endangering their health, critics say.

The subsidy offered under the agreement announced yesterday would cover seniors with incomes from Social Security benefits or retirement plans up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level - about \$30,000 for a single person. CareFirst has agreed to pay the annual \$7million cost of the program.

The average benefit would amount to \$1,000 a person and depend on the senior's drug costs. About half of those eligible would spend less than \$500 on drugs in the gap coverage, and about 1,300 would spend up to \$3,000, entitling them to more help, BlueCross officials said.

CareFirst provides a monthly benefit of \$25 to about 29,000 low-income seniors in Maryland to help cover premiums for the Medicare drug plan. In return, the company is exempt from a tax on HMOs.

That \$14 million subsidy is administered through the Maryland Health Insurance Plan, but about \$3 million was not being used. Del. Peter A. Hammen (D), chairman of the House Health committee, approached CareFirst Chief Executive Officer, Chester Burrell almost as soon as he took the helm in December. Hammen proposed that the insured fund the additional subsidy, adding \$4 million to the pot. BlueCross has a surplus of about \$1 billion, officials said.

Hammen plans to introduce a bill next week to make the program official.

Since this is the political season we are going to try to have some of the people running in the local elections as guest speakers this year. I will give as much notice as I can as to who and when. We are also trying to get someone from the Social Security Administration. In the meantime, I hope to see you at a meeting. The next meeting is March 12th at the new local office.

Bowling For Gold a Success

The Bowling for Gold Tournament was held on January 27, 2008 in Crofton, Md. Local 2108's team "Fully Loaded" captained by Chief Steward Tony Gunn, placed second in the Tournament with a total score for all 3 games of 3084. They also collected \$2036.50 for the Community Services Agency's Membership Assistance.

Local 2108's Retiree Chapter also participated in the tournament and included members Dennis Strout, Kenny Roach, Mike Wallace and Lois Gershenow.

Many thanks for all who contributed to help this worthy cause, and we look forward to "striking" again for the Agency next year!

2008 CWA LOCAL 2108 SCHOLARSHIP GRANT

CWA Local 2108 is proud to offer scholarships to our members and their families. Please read the rules below, and call the Local if you have additional questions.

1. Three \$2,000 scholarships are available.
2. Available to members in good standing since last negotiated contract, their spouse and dependent children or dependent children of deceased members.
3. \$1,000 will be mailed directly to the institution per semester.
4. Student must take at least 9 credits per semester.
5. Must have a letter of acceptance to college or accredited learning institution with application.
6. Drawing at July membership meeting as a raffle.
7. Community Service Committee will screen applications.
8. Applications must be postmarked by June 30, of current year.
9. Resignation from the union will forfeit scholarship awards.

NAME: _____ SOCIAL SECURITY # _____

RELATIONSHIP TO MEMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____ HOME TELEPHONE #: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

MEMBER'S NAME: _____ WORK TELEPHONE #: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____



Attention CWA Members:

APPLY NOW FOR JOE BEIRNE SCHOLARSHIPS

Apply now for partial college scholarships of \$3,000 each for the 2008-2009 school year, and another \$3,000 for 2009-2010. (2nd year award based on satisfactory academic record.)

Thirty new scholarships will be awarded by CWA's Joe Beirne Scholarship Program.

Eligible are CWA members, their spouses, children and grandchildren (including those of laid-off, retired or deceased members) planning for college studies.

Final deadline for applications is April 30, 2008.

Applications are easy to make online at the Foundation's website (including submission of a short original essay).

Winners will be chosen in a lottery drawing.

The program honors CWA's founding president, who served for more than 30 years. Joe Beirne took great pride in the roles he played in furthering educational opportunity and working for social justice.

For more information, and to fill out and submit the application form, visit:

<http://cwa-union.org/members/beirne/>

FairPoint Sale Approved

The New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission's decision to approve the sale of Verizon Communications operations to FairPoint Communications represents the last regulatory approval required for the transaction to occur. The transaction sparked a spirited debate about whether the sale was in the public's best interest and its future impact on economic development in the three northern New England states.



Two unions (IBEW and CWA) that together represent nearly 2,500 Verizon workers in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont affected by the sale, mounted a vigorous campaign that won allies among many political leaders and community organizations, urging regulators to "reject the proposed transaction as being contrary to the public good." The sale, however, has now, with major revisions, obtained approvals from all requisite state and federal regulatory bodies.

"Efforts by union members, concerned elected officials, community and consumer groups, and thousands of residents and activists in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine resulted in changes to the original deal that will help bring about quality service and support for northern New England customers," said CWA President Larry Cohen.

The New Hampshire PUC acknowledged labor's contribution to the debate in its Feb. 25 decision: "Although they did not endorse the settlement agreement, in our judgment the Labor Intervenors' participation was key to the improved outcome."

"Those who united to raise their voices in opposition to the sale acted in the finest New England tradition of citizen participation," said Glenn Brackett, business manager of IBEW Local 2320 based in Manchester, NH. "We can take comfort in knowing that because of our involvement, FairPoint will be stronger financially than it would have been under the original deal. Verizon now has to put \$362 million more into the deal and FairPoint has to cut its dividends by at least \$200 million in order to reduce its debt."



Ladies and Gentlemen, put your walking shoes on!

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation walk is scheduled for **May 4th** in Washington D.C. Local 2108's team, captained by Chief Steward LaTasha Carpenter, is looking for walkers.

to Cure Diabetes



We will provide more information later, in the meantime mark the date on your calendar.

Any questions call **Jenny Sylvester** at the Local Office: 301.595.2108.

CWA Local 2108 Members

Welcome New Members

Sy Gaines

Brian Barrow

LaTasha Carpenter

Crystal Johnson

Mansur Mustapha

Brandon Gary
Cu-Sheer Monique Jones

Lynelle Vidale

Avis Moore

Lady Main

Barbara Oliver

Dierdra Young
Ogechi Elegalam
Ingrid McNeely
Carlton Brown, II
Keisha Boyd

Jenny Sylvester

Shay Colbert

Nolan Brown

William Fuller

Morinola Sokoya

Michael Sperry

Cynthia Swank

Vetta Ridgeway-Fulks

Sandra Diggs

Rhonda Burton

Tamica Mingo

Ryan McKenzie

Kim Lee

Brian Deenihan

Cheri Taylor

Ryan Young

Antoine McNeil

Transferred Members

Larry Gibson

Shawn Vala

Sharon Byrd

Debra Rosenberger

Tony Gunn

Joanne Carter

Bob Orr

Gary Pollard, Jr.

Yvonne Sampson

Barbara Oliver

Dolores Trevino-Gerber

Annette Beverley

Shannon Thompson

Retired Members

Eddie Albritton

Ava Johnson

Tom McCarthy

Gloria Jones

Personals

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

Correction: **Diane Craver**, a retired member and sister of **George Brown** who died on January 2, 2008.

Ruth Eleanor Woodrow, grandmother of **Rose Whiting** who died on January 16, 2008.

Rosa Maria Ralda, mother of **Guillermo Ralda** who died on January 22, 2008.

Kenneth Thomas Buckley, father of **Charlie Buckley** and father-in-law of **Patricia Buckley** who died on January 29, 2008.

Harriett Thomsen, mother of **Howard Thomsen** who died on January 29, 2008.

Joseph R. "Ray" Harding, a retired member and father of **Tom Harding** who died on February 16, 2008.

Daryl Wills, brother of **Derrick Gutrick** who died on February 16, 2008.

Eleanor G. Robbins, mother of **Stu Robbins** who died on February 16, 2008.

Congratulations To:

Carolyn and Jim Tomlinson on the birth of their granddaughter, **Madison Ruth Waldbauer** on January 28, 2008.

Denise and Preston Perry on the birth of their son, **Preston Emanuel Perry, Jr.** on February 12, 2008.

DELEGATE ELECTION RESULTS

Members of the CWA Local 2108 Election Committee met on February 25th to tally the votes for our 2008 Delegates-At-Large. A total of 515 members-in-good standing let their voices be heard by taking the time to vote. The results are:

LaTasha Carpenter	351 (Delegate)
Larry Gibson	338 (Delegate)
Carl Brogden	333 (Delegate)
Dave Madara	139 (Alternate)
Brian Simmons	123
Towanda Macklin	98
LaShawn Marks	63

While we haven't received our official notification from CWA Headquarters as to the number of Delegates that we will be entitled to take to our Convention in June,

based on our membership count it is anticipated that the number will be three.

Congratulations to all of the candidates, and a special thank you to the members of our Election Committee for another job well done: **Frank Walker** (Chair), **Christopher Smith**, **Barbara Eden-Balster**, **Ruben Flores**, **Dedria Tyree** and **Terri Anderson**.



Employee Free Choice Act...Did You Know?

For a number of years now there has been a sustained management attack on collective bargaining. Currently just over 12 percent of all workers and only 7.5 percent of private sector workers have the ability to bargain collectively over their terms and conditions of employment. We are right back where we started when the National Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935. This has been an assault on the middle class and all that we have been able to achieve in our collective bargaining agreements. At every bargaining session, employers are proposing that we go backwards, all of the time arguing that most workers do not have employer paid health care, retirement security or job security.

This year, we passed the Employee Free Choice Act in the House of Representatives and we would have had a majority in the Senate if they were not prevented from voting by filibuster rules. Both Democratic presidential candidates have pledged to support passage of this most important legislation. This law provides union recognition upon demonstration of majority sign up, first contract arbitration and stronger penalties for those who violate our labor laws.

While we have yet to have a winner declared as the Democratic nominee for President, one thing is clear, John McCain is no friend of the labor movement. **Listed below is a verbatim transcript of a speech McCain gave from the floor of the Senate on June 27, 2007** during the cloture debate trying to bring an end to the Republican led filibuster on EFCA. Just for the record his argument that passage of EFCA would eliminate elections is completely false. Employees would still be able to petition for an election with the traditional show of interest. All EFCA does is give them another option.

Mr. McCain: "Mr. President, I am strongly opposed to H.R. 800, the so-called Employee Free Choice Act of 2007. Not only is the bill's title deceptive, the enactment of such an ill-conceived legislative measure would be a gross deception to the hard-working Americans who would fall victim to it.

Since the inception of our democracy, we as citizens have placed a great amount of pride in our ability to freely cast votes and voice our opinions on how Federal, State, and local business should be conducted. Our ability to voice opinions through secret ballots stands as one of the hallmarks of our democratic process. Certainly, now perhaps more than ever, we should be working to uphold this hallmark, not tear it down for the convenience of organized labor, which has been struggling with a declining membership. This bill is the product of partisan politics at its worst, and it must be soundly defeated.

During the early 20th century, we experienced a rapid growth in our labor force and as a result, a push by unions to increase their membership. In response to aggressive and questionable recruiting practices by some unions, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act, NLRA, of 1947. One of the main tenets of this legislation was to afford hard-working Americans the right to privately cast their vote on whether to organize, free of intimidation and coercion from union representatives and employees. Unfortunately, before us today is a bill that seeks to strip this fundamental right from our Nation's workers. Ironically dubbed the "Employee Free Choice Act of 2007," this legislation would enact a "card check" process, allowing unions to bypass the long used and successful secret balloting system.

The proposed legislation is a direct attack on one of the most basic tenets of our democratic process, which is why it is opposed by a majority of American workers. A recent poll conducted by a the nonpartisan Coalition for a Democratic Workplace found that 90 percent of union households oppose this legislation. Another poll by McLaughlin and Associates indicated that almost 9 out of 10 voters agree that workers should continue to have the right to a federally supervised secret ballot election when deciding whether to organize a union.

My concern is -and it is a concern shared by many- that if enacted this measure would expose workers to intimidation and the fear of retaliation for votes cast. We simply cannot allow this assault on democracy to become law. Instead, we should be working for the swift enactment of S. 1312, the Secret Ballot Protection Act of 2007, which I am proud to cosponsor along with 26 of my colleagues, to ensure secret ballot elections for employees.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote no on H.R. 800 and to halt the full Senate's debate on this ill-conceived, flawed measure."

AFL-CIO Night at Camden Yards

Friday, June 13

Baltimore Orioles vs Pittsburgh Pirates

Game time – 7:05 pm

Tickets: \$5 per person

Join Local 2108 at the ballpark this summer as we travel up the road to see the O's play the Pirates. Tickets are only \$5.00, and we'll have plenty of tickets.

There will be fireworks presented after the ballgame, and we always have a great time.

To order your tickets, please call the Local Office: 301.595.2108. Don't be left out!



VERIZON INC. & VERIZON CONNECTED SOLUTIONS, INC. (VCSI)

CWA MEMBERSHIP BARGAINING SURVEY

LOCAL 2108 - BELTSVILLE, MARYLAND

Please complete this form and return it by Thursday, May 1, 2008 by one of the following methods:

Fax: :301.595.2412 • U.S. Mail: 10782 Rhode Island Avenue • Beltsville, MD 20705 • Hand deliver to your Steward

This survey is intended to give the Negotiating Committee an idea of which items the membership would like to see improved or changed in this year's bargaining and the relative importance of each. Please put a number 10 in the block opposite the item you consider the most important. Put a number 9 in the block considered next most important and so on down to number 1. Put as many number 1's (tenth choice) as you wish....

- Shorter wage progression schedules, Job and employment security, Pension improvements, Earlier retirement without penalty, Rights to privacy, Other Benefits, Shorter work week - shorter hours, Improvements in hospital & medical plan, Elimination of subcontracting, Increased holidays, Improvements in sick pay & beginning the first day, Union Jobs in other subsidiaries, Increased overtime premium payments, Elimination of the monitoring of employees, Safe/Healthy work conditions, New rules for due process (discipline suspended until grievance process is completed), Improve the savings plan, Better Management, Ban of supervisors performing bargaining unit work, Contractual rights to training and retraining, Base wage increase, Improved ISP, Further restrictions of supervisors returning to bargaining unit, Profit sharing, Elimination of tests or training to pass tests, Elimination of all forced overtime, Health benefits, Co-determination of company policies which affect employee's jobs, Improved dental plan, Child care, Paid clothing allowance, Upgrades, Employment guarantees, COLA, Less job pressure/stress, Better absence control

OTHER GOAL:

Four horizontal lines for writing other goals.

NON-ECONOMIC BARGAINING SUGGESTIONS - THESE SHOULD PRIMARILY CENTER ON CONTRACT LANGUAGE CHANGES AND WORKING ISSUES:

Five horizontal lines for writing non-economic bargaining suggestions.

Member's Name and Work Location (Optional):

CWA Local 2108 - Beltsville, Maryland

Horizontal line for member name and work location.

Local 2108 Union Calendar

March 2008

- 5 Chief Steward Meeting - 9:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 9 Daylight Savings Time Begins
Set clocks ahead 1 hour
- 9-13 Communications and Technologies Conference
Dallas, TX
- 12 Retired Member Club Meeting 11:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 12 General Membership Meeting 6:00pm (Cancelled)
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 19 VCSI Meeting 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 26 Stewards Meeting 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

April 2008

- 2 Chief Steward Meeting 9:00 am
Local Office
- 9 Retired Member Club Meeting 11:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 9 General Membership Meeting 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 6 - 9 CWA Legislative Conference
Washington, DC
- 9 - 12 CWA Civil Rights and Equity Conference
Washington, DC

WANT YOUR VOICE HEARD?
 FILL OUT AND SUBMIT THE LOCAL BARGAINING SURVEY
 ON PAGE 7 OF THIS ISSUE!



March 17th

**YOUR VERIZON AND VERIZON CONNECTED
 SOLUTIONS **CONTRACTS** EXPIRE**

ON AUGUST 2, 2008

WEAR **RED ON THURSDAYS**

Visit Local 2108 On The Web: www.cwacal2108.org

**Verizon Business
 Removes US Flag
 See page 1**

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