

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### **Maryland House Bill 2 Income Tax - Subtraction Modification - Union Dues**

This bill would reinstate our ability to claim union dues as a subtraction modification for calculating state income tax obligations. We had the ability to do this as recently as 2017. The bill passed in the House and Senate in 2022 with no cap on our subtraction but was vetoed by Governor Hogan.



This year, the House of Delegates amended the bill by placing a \$250 cap on the subtraction. This means that most workers will only see \$12 in tax relief.

Together with other members of the AFL-CIO, Local 2108 president Marilyn Irwin wrote to the members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to

encourage them to remove the \$250 cap. Many union workers pay dues far higher than \$250 per year, creating a disparity between what all workers will receive in tax relief and what some pay in dues. For context, if a worker makes \$40,000 per year and claims the full subtraction they only decrease their tax liability by \$12. A worker making \$70,000 would see the same savings of \$12. Regardless of what a worker pays in dues, they will only see \$12 in tax relief.

Allowing workers to deduct their union dues is a direct investment in Maryland's workforce. Unionized workers are our public servants. They are our transportation workers, social workers, nurses, paraprofessionals, skilled construction workers, educators, and public safety workers. Our union dues help improve working conditions, wages, and benefits for all workers in the state, but the General Assembly wants to place a cap on a benefit we used to have.

### **Maryland House Bill 494 Right To Work**

Delegates Chisolm, Adams, Fischer, Kipke, Mangione, Morgan and Schmidt introduced this legislation, and claimed it would prevent Marylanders from being forced to join a union as a condition of employment. The reality is that federal law already makes it illegal to force a worker to join a union.

This law would prohibit contracts that require all workers who benefit from the union's collective efforts to bargain contracts and represent members to share in the cost of that representation and bargaining.

Unions are required to represent non-members with grievances, and non-



members enjoy the same pay, benefits and contractual improvements as members. It is only fair that they share in the cost associated with representation and bargaining. President Irwin wrote letters in opposition to this bill to all members of the House Economic Matters Committee and along with Executive President Amory Proctor they joined officers from CWA Local 2106 at the Committee Hearing in Annapolis to show our opposition to this bill.

MD HB 494 was introduced on January 30, 2023 and on February 28, 2023 it received an unfavorable recommendation by the Economic Matters Committee rendering that piece legislation dead for this legislative session.

## CWA Working To Protect Members In AVAYA Bankruptcy Proceedings

Earlier this year, when rumors of an Avaya bankruptcy first became public, CWA began working with our outside legal representation to protect our members and retirees.



After Avaya entered into bankruptcy on February 14th, CWA applied for a position on the Unsecured Creditors Committee (UCC) in order to monitor and influence the process. CWA also submitted proposed revisions to Avaya's plan of reorganization that would clarify and confirm Avaya's stated intent that the terms of our CBA and the benefits for active and retired members would not be impacted as a result of the bankruptcy.

Last month, we were informed that Avaya accepted all of our proposed revisions to their reorganization plan. We believe that these changes ensure that our members and retirees will not be harmed under the current plan. With our member's rights addressed CWA would prefer an expedited bankruptcy process. CWA will apply again to establish a UCC if the current reorganization plan changes for any reason.

Avaya is planning for a quick bankruptcy process. The currently scheduled date for the bankruptcy court to confirm Avaya's plan is March 22nd. Assuming the plan is confirmed by the court, Avaya would likely emerge from bankruptcy in the following few weeks.

CWA stands ready to fight for our members and retirees and will be engaged at every step of the reorganization process!

## CWA Health Care Benefit Coordinators Can Handle Your Verizon Benefit Issues

The current HCBC assignments for Verizon employees are as follows:

**Tom Ballek**, Retiree HCBC for Medical, Dental and Enrollment Issues  
866-248-4449 - [Thomas.L.Ballek@verizon.com](mailto:Thomas.L.Ballek@verizon.com)

**Ines Millard**, Actives' Medical, Dental, Vision Disability and Enrollment  
888-571-7218 - [Ines.I.Millard@verizon.com](mailto:Ines.I.Millard@verizon.com)

**Jodi Grant**, Actives' Medical, Dental, Vision, Disability and Enrollment  
888-324-4969 - [Jodi.I.Grant@core.verizon.com](mailto:Jodi.I.Grant@core.verizon.com)

The HCBC's can handle issues from any active or retired Mid-Atlantic CWA (MD, DC, VA, NJ, PA, WV, DE) represented members, regardless of their home state.

In my twenty fourth year as an officer of Local 2108 I'm having the pleasure of experiencing something for the very first time..... After the majority of workers at ZeniiMax voted "yes" to join CWA in December, I am now working with this group of young, energetic, intelligent ZeniMax employees as they band together to join a union for the first time in any of their careers.



The Communications Workers of America was founded in 1947, so I don't think there is any active or retired member reading my letter who wasn't represented by CWA since their first day of work at the "phone company". While I know many of you worked at jobs without a union prior to coming to C&P/Bell Atlantic/Verizon, your first day here you were covered by our union contract.

Our future members at ZeniMax bravely banded together and decided they needed to have more of a say regarding the terms and conditions of their employment. They did that in an environment that often results in those leading the charge being fired. While it is illegal to fire a worker for talking with and encouraging their peers to join a union, the majority of the time employers do it and away with it.

Our future members prepared a bargaining survey for their peers to indicate what their priorities are in their first contract, and have now elected a Bargaining Committee help bargain that first contract, will beginning on April 25<sup>th</sup>. Imagine your contract being a blank piece of paper! Our contract has been changed and added to for the past 75+ years, but each of us has always had a written pay scale and knew when we would get progression raises until we reached top pay. We knew how many days of paid vacation we would receive each year, what days were considered holidays, and how much we would be paid if we were scheduled to work on that day. We knew what the process was to file a grievance. These workers have none of that in writing, and no ability to do anything about it if their employer decides to change their compensation, paid time off or anything else.

Two of the most troublesome issues that the Rockville ZeniMax workers submitted to be addressed in their first contract involved hiring and job responsibilities. ZeniMax doesn't hire any regular, full-time employees; instead they hire "contractors" through a hiring service. Those contractors work side-by-side with the regular, full-time employees and perform exactly the same work (as they learn it), for less pay and no benefits. The contractors are never given any indication of what they need to do to be hired as ZeniMax employees or when that might happen. Some are hired in six months, some in 18 months, some are let go. No one is clear about how those decisions are made. There doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason to it. One contractor recently questioned if they were being kept on as a contractor once their six-month mark was reached and the reply was, "As long as you can log on to your computer in the morning, you still have a job." If a contractor does eventually become a ZeniMax employee, none of their time spent as a contractor is counted toward their seniority.

The second issues involves what we always called "TA" pay (see Article 22), when an employee is temporarily assigned by the company to a position in the bargaining unit with a higher maximum rate of pay...the employee is paid the higher rate for that day. At ZeniMax, they work the employees "up" to a higher-paid job, often for a year or more, but do not pay them the higher pay!

If we're honest with ourselves, I think we have to admit that we have often taken the guarantees our contract provides us for granted..... It's

just human nature, since it has always been there for us. I've walked more picket lines than I care to remember, and I bet you feel the same way! We've sacrificed and fought to maintain good provisions of our contract that the company wanted to take away, and we've fought to add even more.

But we've never been in a position that our contract was a blank piece of paper. Watching these young people donate their free time one or two evenings a week to join Zoom calls until 9 or 10pm in order to be part of the solution is really refreshing and heartwarming. I look forward to the day that we can welcome them all as members of Local 2108, and not future members!

In Solidarity,

*Marilyn*

## Thinking About Retirement?

You may want to check out these important workshops presented by **Networth Financial** Group to see if the reality of retirement is on your horizon!!

### CWA District 2-13 Health, Insurance & Medicare 2023

**Thursday, April 6, 2023 at 6:30 PM** - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

### Navigating a Surplus

**Thursday, April 27, 2023 at 6:30 PM** - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

**Reservations are required** and to RSVP you may call Networth at (800)-859-2212, or register online at :

<http://www.networth.net/event/marylanddcvirginia>



## RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

Spring has sprung and along with those seasonal changes, come changes to the political landscape that could affect retirees. While we have little control over the weather, we do have the ability to influence proposed changes over Health Care, Social Security and Medicare. The more informed we become with pending changes, we can develop strategies to head off negative impacts and ensure that we can preserve these benefits for future RMC members.



Our next RMC luncheon meeting will be on April 12, 23 at 11:00am in the local office and will be also on Zoom for those that are unable to travel. Deserts are always appreciated!!

See you there!!

**Calvin C Foster Jr**  
**President- RMC 2108**

**To receive CWA action alerts via text message, Text CWAAction to 69866**

## Local 2108 Member Represents CWA at White House Roundtable

Communications Workers of America member Autumn Mitchell, a Quality Assurance tester from Microsoft's ZeniMax studio, participated in a White House roundtable last month hosted by Vice President Kamala Harris and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh.

The roundtable highlighted forward-looking companies that are respecting their workers' right to form unions. Union members and executives from each company briefed Harris and Walsh on their experiences. Also participating were the United Auto Workers with Ford, the Baltimore Building and Construction Trades Council with Orsted, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers with Siemens.

"It was an honor to be invited to the White House to share our experience forming a union at ZeniMax with Vice President Harris and Secretary Walsh," said Mitchell. "When Quality Assurance workers at Activision announced they were joining CWA, they were threatened, intimidated, and illegally denied raises. Nothing like that happened when we decided to organize at ZeniMax. I have a lot of respect for Microsoft's leadership for taking a different approach and continuously working with us in good faith. I'm sure there's a lot of pressure on them to act just like all of the other tech and video game companies. But they made a commitment to trust us to make the decision that was best for us and they stood by that commitment."

While tech and video game companies like Amazon, Apple, and Activision have launched aggressive and often illegal anti-union campaigns to attack their employees who want to join unions, Microsoft has taken a different approach.



Last year, the company established its Principles on Employee Organizing and Engagement with Labor Organizations, outlining an "open and constructive approach" to promoting "dialogue, collaboration, and trust between business and labor." This was followed by the announcement of a ground-breaking, legally-binding labor neutrality agreement between CWA and Microsoft. The agreement, which would apply to the Activision Blizzard workforce once Microsoft's proposed acquisition of the company is approved, committed Microsoft to a neutral approach when employees express interest in joining a union.

In December, workers at Microsoft's ZeniMax studio announced that they were organizing with CWA. Microsoft agreed to a process that would enable the workers to freely and fairly decide if they wanted to form a union, in accordance with the company's stated principles. Managers were trained to remain neutral and refer any questions about the union to the organizing committee. Employees indicated their preference for the union either by signing a representation card or voting via a secure, online portal. In early February, a neutral arbitrator reviewed the results and certified that the ZeniMax workers had voted to be represented by CWA.

"Today's White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment roundtable showed Vice President Harris and the Biden Administration's continued commitment to encouraging union organizing and collective bargaining," said CWA Secretary-Treasurer Sara Steffens. "Microsoft's approach to worker organizing – letting the workers decide for themselves whether or not to join a union – is a model that other companies should emulate. By following the European Commission's approach on approval of the Microsoft acquisition of Activision Blizzard with consumer protection conditions, the Federal Trade Commission could bring this constructive approach to almost 10,000 video game industry workers in an industry that perpetuates some of the most toxic working conditions."

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### Personals

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

Retired member, **Raynod Dye**, who passed away on January 31, 2023.

Retired member **John Walsh**, who passed away on February 17, 2023.

**Raymonda H. Green**, wife of member **Kenny Green** who passed away February 24, 2023.

**Darnell Barksdale**, father-in-law of **Derrick Spinner** who passed away on March 7, 2023.

**Joan Dawson**, mother of Chief Steward **Rob Willis** who passed away March 21, 2023.

### Welcome to Local 2108

#### New Members



**Tamera Nelson**  
Justin Bachman  
Steven Witt



#### Congratulations to Recent Retirees:



Franklin Wood  
Tammy James  
Alisa Artis



## The CWA Joseph A. Beirne Foundation Scholarship Program

The CWA Joe Beirne Foundation was established in October 1974 by the Communications Workers of America Executive Board to honor the name and memory of the founding President of CWA, who served for more than 30 years. In his capacity as the first CWA President, Joe Beirne took great pride in the roles he played in the fields of education and learning and other areas of social concern.



Sixteen partial college scholarships of \$4,000 each are being offered for the 2023-2024 school year. Winners, selected in a lottery drawing, also will receive second-year scholarships of the same amount contingent upon satisfactory academic accomplishment. Part-time students, less than 12 credits, will receive half of the scholarship monies.

Eligible for the awards are CWA members and their spouses, children and grandchildren, including those of retired or deceased members. Applicants must be high school graduates or at least high school students who will graduate during the year in which they apply. Undergraduate and graduate students returning to schooling may also apply.

Applications are accepted during the months of November through April. **Final deadline for the 2023-2024 school year is April 30, 2023.**

**To apply online, go to:**

<http://www.cwa-union.org/pages/beirne>



# Workers Memorial Day - April 28, 2023

The Workers' Memorial Day was first celebrated in 1989 by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). AFL-CIO, established in 1955, is the U.S.A.'s largest workers union organization. There are several national and international unions registered with it. The aim of the establishment and the Workers' Memorial Day is to honor and remember the millions of workers who have lost their lives while at work. The day also aims to provide better safety regulations at workplaces.



Workers' Memorial Day on April 28, also known as the Day of Mourning or the International Commemoration Day for the Dead and Injured, also happens to be the legislative anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. It was on this day that the protection act was passed and the Occupational Safety and Health Association was formed.

# Local 2108 Calendar

### APRIL 2023

- 9 **Easter**
- 12 **RMC 2108 Meeting - 11am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 12 **Membership Meeting - 6:00pm**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 15 **Tax Day**

### MAY 2023

- 10 **RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 10 **Membership Meeting - 6:00pm**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 14 **Mother's Day**
- 29 **Memorial Day**  
Local Office Closed

## CWA Members Save 25% off Easter Flowers

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**FOR UNION MEMBERS**  
SPRING HAS SPRUNG



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### WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

*If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated or have any effect on my personal working conditions, I respectfully request my union representative, officer or steward to be present at this meeting. Without union representation, I choose not to participate in this discussion.*

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR: Membership Meeting - Wednesday, April 12, 2023 - 6:00pm RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, April 12, 2023 - 11:00am



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 Web Address: [www.cwalocal2108.org](http://www.cwalocal2108.org)  
 Local Office: (301) 595-2108 :: Local Fax: (301) 595-2412  
 Tamera Nelson - Vice President  
 LaTasha Carpenter - Vice President  
 Johnny Brown - Secretary-Treasurer  
 Amory Proctor - Executive Vice President  
 Marilyn Irwin - President

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