

Unpaid Leave of Absences to Begin February 6, 2022 for Failing to Submit Status Verizon Moves Forward With Vaccination Status Requirements

If you recall, on September 9, 2021, the U.S. government announced new vaccination requirements. This included an executive order requiring all federal contractors, like Verizon, to have their workforce vaccinated. This executive order was then blocked by a temporary injunction issued by a federal appeals court. Additionally, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) within the federal Department of Labor communicated a vaccination requirement that applies to all companies with 100 or more employees. It required that all employees be vaccinated or submit a negative Covid test weekly and wear masks indoors. This requirement was struck down by the Supreme Court on January 13, 2022.

In response to the mandate and to be in compliance with the federal requirements, Verizon had announced on October 14, 2021, that all of its U.S. based employees (with the exception of VCG “home based” employees) would be subject to the federal vaccination requirement. As a result of the temporary injunctions that were issued against the federal requirements, the nationwide requirement for current employees to be vaccinated remains suspended. Local vaccination requirements remain in effect in some locations, including New York City and apply to Verizon employees working in those areas. **Employees who have been asked to submit their vaccination status must continue to do so by the applicable deadlines previously communicated.**

The deadline to submit your vaccination status was January 4, 2022. **Verizon announced that those who have failed to submit the Vaccine Verification Form will be placed on unpaid leave status on February 6, 2022.**

Verizon has indicated to CWA that they are continuing to collect employee vaccination status for many reasons including: to comply with local vaccination requirements and in anticipation of others, in order to facilitate compliance with on-site vaccination policies of our customers and other third parties, to administer our policies and protocols (e.g., to manage quarantines in cases of COVID-19 exposure), to inform decisions about Verizon policies, and in order to prepare for future compliance with the federal vaccination requirements.

Local 2108 has received numerous call regarding the submission of vaccination status as it applies to HIPAA rules. These rules do not apply to employers or employment records. HIPAA only applies to HIPAA-covered entities like healthcare providers, health insurance plans, and healthcare clearing-



houses. If an employer asks an employee to verify and submit documentation that they have been vaccinated, that is not considered a HIPAA violation.

At the time 2108 News went to press, nearly 50 of Local 2108 members have not submitted their vaccination status. Employees who fail to respond to the Vaccine Verification Form by the applicable deadline will be placed on unpaid leave for up to 60 days beginning February 6, 2022. Healthcare benefits will initially continue during an unpaid leave and benefits treatment will depend upon the duration of the leave.

When you submit your Vaccine Verification Form, you can use that form to apply for a legally-recognized religious or medical accommodation. If approved, the accommodations that may be available will vary and may be dependent on individual circumstances. In some cases, the available accommodations may be limited to an unpaid leave. Any details on the basis for approving or denying accommodations will be communicated to the individual requesting the accommodation.

Local 2108 is encouraging all members to comply with the vaccination reporting status in order to eliminate unnecessary payroll disruptions. If you previously submitted proof of vaccination to Verizon, you will not need to re-submit unless you previously indicated you are either partially or not vaccinated and work in a jurisdiction requiring full vaccination (e.g., New York City). If you fall under a local vaccine requirement, you will receive communication indicating you'll need to update your vaccination status. Currently, that does not apply to any Local 2108 members.



CWA & Verizon Extend Covid-19 Agreement

COVID-19 Work at Home Agreement: This agreement has been extended through April 2, 2022 for all eligible employees working from home. In addition, an associate may withdraw from work-at-home. If an associate does so, he/she will only be eligible to subsequently re-elect work-from-home at the Company's discretion. The Company will honor an associate's notice to withdraw from work at-home as soon as practical (generally within 14 days but no more than 30 days). The Union and the company also agreed to specify that in the event that “face to face” feedback is required, such feedback will take place electronically.

CWA Local 2108 is urging all members to take advantage of readily available vaccinations to help ensure everyone's safety as you care for your day-to-day needs in preparation of returning to the office when the Work at Home agreement expires.

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

As this issue of the 2108News goes to press, nearly fifty members of CWA Local 2108 are poised to be placed on an unpaid leave of absence Sunday because they have not reported their vaccination status to Verizon.



At this time our members are not required to be vaccinated, but they are required to accurately report if they have been vaccinated or not. Verizon notified employees that proof of vaccination or acknowledgement of no vaccine was required by January 4th. A Vaccine Verification Form was sent to all employees at the end of November. That form was to be used to electronically send proof of vaccination, report that no vaccine had been received, and/or to request a religious or medical accommodation to be exempted from receiving the vaccine.

Because the September 9, 2021 executive order requiring all federal contractors, like Verizon, to have their workforce vaccinated has been blocked by a temporary injunction issued by a federal appeals court, Verizon suspended the nationwide requirement that all employees be vaccinated. It is possible the federal mandate could end up before the Supreme Court, just like the OSHA vaccine requirement for employers with 100+ employees did, but as of today that has not been announced.

While Verizon suspended the vaccine requirement for now, they did not suspend the requirement that employees report their vaccine status.

For those who can't complete the Vaccine Verification Form because they have lost their vaccine card, Verizon suggests your first step should be to contact your vaccination provider (CVS, Rite Aid, local government office, your doctor, etc.) Immunizations are also reported to the appropriate state health department's Immunization Information System (IIS). The CDC has IIS records for all 50 states listed online, where you can look up and obtain a digital copy of your COVID-19 vaccination records after verifying some personal information. While you are attempting to find proof of your vaccine(s), you should also notify your department's HR Business Partner, as Verizon will consider extending the deadlines for employees who have lost their proof of vaccination and are making a good faith effort to obtain duplicate proof.



Some of our members have expressed concern about the safety of Smartsheet to collect this data. Smartsheet is a tool that has been approved for use in the collection of highly confidential data, such as your vaccination status, and it has undergone privacy and security reviews. Verizon has contracts in place with Smartsheet requiring specific controls designed to protect any data Verizon gathers in Smartsheet, and Smartsheet will not have access to the contents of any of the forms.

For those of you who submitted the Vaccine Verification Form with an application for a medical or religious accommodation, Verizon announced that you will be notified when a decision has been made on your accommodation at the email address you provided in your submission. Some members have expressed concern about having to provide personal medical information to request a medical accommodation. Just like the medical information that you and your doctor provide to Sedgwick in order to get a Short Term Disability claim approved, the medical information provided will be kept separate from your other employment-related information, and access to the information will be restricted to only those persons with a need to know.

None of us has a crystal ball to see if there will be COVID-19 vaccines

mandated by the government or Verizon in the future. The good news is we are not there yet. At this point Verizon is requiring our members report their vaccination status. I hope that none of our members are placed on an unpaid leave of absence or removed from the payroll due to their refusal to report their status. If you have any questions about this requirement, I hope you will reach out to your officer at the Local office right away.

In the meantime, please stay safe!

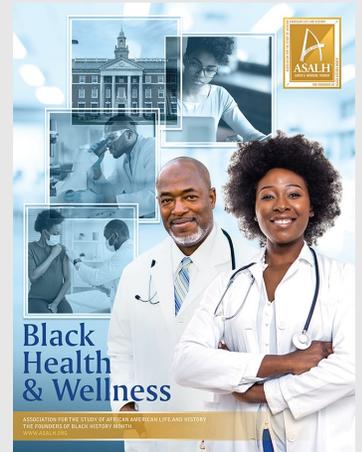
In Solidarity,

Marilyn

CWA Celebrates Black History Month

Black History Month wouldn't have been possible without Negro History Week's creation in the United States in 1926. Famous historian Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History proclaimed the second week of February to be observed as Negro History Week. Since the inception of this event, the main focus was to encourage the teaching of the history of Black Americans in educational institutes, particularly at the primary level. The departments of education of Delaware, North Carolina, and West Virginia were very cooperative. The overall reception was lukewarm, but Woodson considered it a success and "one of the most fortunate steps ever taken by the Association."

In February 1969, the idea for Black History Month was promoted by Black students and educators at Kent State University, followed by the first celebration of Black History Month on campus and local surroundings one year later. Fast forward six years and Black History Month was widely being celebrated across the country, and not only in schools, colleges, and community centers. In 1976, President Gerald Ford praised Black History Month, urging all citizens to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."



The creation of Black History Month also led to some controversy. Celebrating Black history for one month seemed too confining, with many labeling it downright inappropriate. Another concern was that Black History Month would glamorize the delicate subject and lead to Black historical figures being simplified as heroes.

Since 1976, every American president has designated February as Black History Month and endorsed a specific theme.

The theme for 2022 focuses on the importance of Black Health and Wellness. This theme acknowledges the legacy of not only Black scholars and medical practitioners in Western medicine, but also other ways of knowing (e.g., birthworkers, doulas, midwives, naturopaths, herbalists, etc.) throughout the African Diaspora. The 2022 theme considers activities, rituals and initiatives that Black communities have done to be well.

The rise of fields, such as Public and Community Health and Health Informatics have led to a rise in preventive care and a focus on body positivity, physical exercise, nutrition, exploring other dietary options such as veganism and vegetarianism, and gardening. Black Health and Wellness not only includes one's physical body, but also emotional and mental health.

You may want to check out this important workshop presented by **Nettworth Financial** Group to see if the reality of retirement is on your horizon!!

Retirement Income Planning

Thursday, February 24, 2022 at 6:30 PM - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

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



Flowers and Gifts

These union supermarkets offer flower arrangements created by union workers.

- ♥ Vons
- ♥ Safeway
- ♥ Pavillions
- ♥ Gelson's
- ♥ Costco
- ♥ Ralphs
- ♥ Giant
- ♥ Teleflora



(Offered through Union Plus, union members save 20% on orders when the shop through the www.unionplus.org website)

Sweets and Treats

- ♥ Allan Candy Company
- ♥ Brown & Haley
- ♥ Dare Foods Limited
- ♥ Frankford Candy & Chocolate
- ♥ Ghiradelli Chocolate Company
- ♥ Parrson's Candy Company
- ♥ Hershey Foods Corp.
- ♥ Sconza Candy Company
- ♥ See's Candy
- ♥ Jelly Belly Candy Company
- ♥ Nestle USA
- ♥ Tootsie Roll Industries
- ♥ Russel Stover
- ♥ Necco

(Hershey operates a number of non-union manufacturing facilities in the U.S. and Mexico that produce Hershey products, including Reese Peanut Butter Cups and more)

RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

Welcome to 2022!! Let's make this a great year!! I am hoping that this year will be without all the drama of we dealt with last year. The best thing we can do is to practice safe health habits and good ol' common-sense. If we stay on course, the members of our RMC "will" have a better year.

With your continued participation this year, The RMC is committed to share information about planned political activities with our members as well as information about impending legislation which may positively or negatively impact retirees and seniors. We must have a say in our future.

The RMC will have our meeting on February 9, 2022 at 11:00am. This will be a zoom meeting. Members will receive access information prior to the meeting. If there are login problems, please call Janice Crowe on 410-533-5370 or Jenny Sylvester on 301-873-9645.



Calvin C Foster Jr
President- RMC 2108

Personals

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

Sophia Delores LeSane, mother of **Tim LeSane**, who passed away on January 8, 2022.

Kathryn "Kathy" Johnson, wife of retiree **Earl Johnson**, who passed away January 12, 2022.

Congratulations to:

Tina Mischou on the birth of her granddaughter, **Holley Marie Glodeck** on December 11, 2021.

Welcome to Local 2108

New Members



Kendra Whitaker Hughes
Angel Anderson
Michael Peay



Congratulations to Recent Retirees:



Craig Laubach
Elliott Woods



CWA & AT&T Extend Labor Agreements

CWA members covered by the AT&T Midwest and national Legacy T agreements have voted to extend their contracts for four years. The extended agreements include annual wage and pension increases, keep healthcare cost share percentages at their current levels, protect employment security, and continue recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a company holiday. The Legacy T agreement preserves commitments on the number of jobs that will remain in the unit.

"This extension meets our key goals: improving our members' standard of living, protecting retirees, providing employment security, and maintaining affordable health care costs," said Linda Hinton, Vice President of CWA District 4, which covers the Midwest.

"We have been able to preserve the hard-won gains we have made over the years and provide stability for our members during these challenging times."

"Our ability to reach an agreement to extend our contracts with AT&T at their current levels is a testament to the strength and resilience our members at Legacy T have shown over the past few years," said Lisa Bolton, Vice President of CWA's Telecommunications and Technologies sector. "I am particularly proud that we were able to keep our employment watermarks, the foundation of our job security, at their current levels. Maintaining these watermarks for 8 years is an unprecedented achievement."



Are you "WEARING RED" on Thursdays?

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 2022-2023 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 2022-2023 school year is April 30, 2022.**

To apply online, go to:

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

CWA & Verizon Negotiate 5G Home Trial

Last month, CWA was notified that Verizon Wireless would begin selling 5G Home in the Baltimore area of Maryland and has agreed to contract a majority of the professional installation and maintenance dispatches on that product in that area to Verizon Maryland LLC beginning on or about January 31, 2022 for a trial period of six months. The Company agrees that it will assign this work to Services Technicians and/or Cable Splicing Technicians for this six-month period and that they and other employees such as Storekeepers may perform some work incidental to this assignment.

Currently, this trial has been implemented in Buffalo, NY and has been going well. Home 5G is a data only service that will provide high speed internet to areas not currently being served by FiOS.

Local 2108 Calendar

FEBRUARY 2022

- 2 Chief Stewards Meeting-9:30am Via Zoom
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 9 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am - Via Zoom
- 9 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 14 Valentine's Day



- 21 Presidents' Day
Local Office Closed

MARCH 2022

- 9 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am - Via Zoom
- 9 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 13 Daylight Savings Time Begins
Set clocks ahead 1 hour
- 17 St. Patrick's Day



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, February 9, 2022 - 6:00pm
RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, February 9 - 11:00am - Via Zoom



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LaTasha Carpenter - Vice President

Johnny Brown - Secretary-Treasurer

Amory Proctor - Executive Vice President

Marilyn Irwin - President

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