

Could Elon Musk Use U.S. Infrastructure Funds for Starlink's Satellite Deployment?

In 2021, the U.S. government passed a sweeping infrastructure bill aimed at rebuilding the country's aging infrastructure and expanding broadband access to underserved communities. Among the largest portions of this bill was a focus on broadband, specifically ensuring that all Americans, especially those in rural areas, have access to high-speed internet. But with Elon Musk's Starlink satellite network gaining momentum, the question arises: could Musk tap into these infrastructure funds to further deploy his constellation of satellites? And if so, what would that mean for existing broadband providers?

The U.S. Infrastructure Bill and Broadband Expansion

The infrastructure bill, formally known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), allocates \$65 billion to broadband expansion. This funding is intended to close the digital divide, particularly in rural and remote areas that have long struggled with slow or non-existent internet service. The goal is to create a more equitable internet landscape and bring high-speed broadband to communities that are currently off the grid.

Much of this funding is set to go toward developing new infrastructure, including fiber-optic networks and wireless technologies. However, it also includes provisions for satellite internet, which is where Starlink comes in.

Starlink, the satellite internet service provided by Musk's SpaceX, has been working to provide high-speed internet to rural areas worldwide. With thousands of low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellites already in place, Starlink promises to offer faster speeds and lower latency compared to traditional satellite internet, which has historically been plagued by long delays and slower connections.

Starlink, as one of the most advanced and ambitious satellite internet projects in the world, is clearly aligned with this goal. If Musk were to apply for government support, his service could be eligible for a portion of this funding, especially as it expands its reach to more rural and underserved communities.

Impact on Existing Broadband Providers

Starlink's satellite-based model has the potential to undermine the monopoly that large broadband providers hold in these regions. With Starlink offering a viable alternative that doesn't require the same extensive (and expensive) ground-based infrastructure, it could be seen as a threat to the established players in the broadband space.

Potential Impact on Jobs

One significant consequence of Starlink's potential expansion could be its impact on jobs in both the broadband and satellite industries.

In the broadband sector, the widespread adoption of satellite

CWA

PROTECT OUR WORK

Make Sure that Public Funding Supports Fiber Buildout.

The 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law included \$42 billion in funding to build out internet infrastructure.

CWA members have worked hard to ensure those funds will be used to build reliable, high-speed fiber and create good, union telecom jobs. Because of that work, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration has prioritized investment in fiber.

But now the **future of that funding is in jeopardy**. Satellite company CEOs are pushing to funnel more of the money intended for fiber buildout to **unreliable satellite internet service**.¹ Satellite employs fewer workers—and there are currently no union-represented satellite internet providers.

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz has called for broader use of "alternative technologies" to fiber,² and senior Trump Administration officials have testified against "preferring fiber builds."³ **The outcome of this debate will have huge impacts on the success of this buildout and the creation of good union jobs.**

TAKE ACTION

Tell the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to stand up to pressure to redirect funds to unreliable satellite internet service and continue to create good, union jobs by investing in reliable, high-speed fiber internet.



Scan the QR code or visit CWA.org/ProtectOurWork

technology could shift the job landscape for internet providers. With fewer needs for ground-based infrastructure like fiber optic cables and maintenance of physical networks, traditional broadband companies might reduce investments in such areas. This could result in job displacement for workers in fiber installation, network maintenance, and physical infrastructure development.

While it remains uncertain whether Elon Musk will successfully tap into U.S. infrastructure funds to expand Starlink, the potential is certainly there. With billions in funding allocated for broadband expansion, and satellite technology specifically mentioned in the infrastructure bill, it's not out of the question that Starlink could play a major role in bridging the digital divide in the U.S.

To receive CWA action alerts via text message, Text CWAAction to 49484

AFL-CIO Endorsements in the Prince George's County Special Elections

If you weren't aware, Prince George's County, MD is preparing to hold a special election for County Executive and Council District 5. In-person voting in this election will begin on February 26, 2025, and will conclude on Tuesday, March 4.

Late last month, the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO conducted a candidate consideration process with several of the candidates in these races. The endorsement process included written questionnaires as well as in-person interviews and announced the endorsement of Aisha Braveboy for Prince George's County Executive, and Shayla Adams-Stafford for Prince George's County Council, District 5.

The members of the Council's Committee on Political Education for Prince George's & Montgomery Counties were impressed by the strategic vision that both Braveboy and Adams-Stafford put forward, as well as their clear track records of being on the side of workers, union members, and working families in our region.

If you live in Prince George's County, your ballot may have already arrived in your mailbox. We encourage everyone in Prince George's to vote for Aisha Braveboy for County Executive, and voters in Cheverly, Bladensburg, Glenarden, Colmar Manor and parts of Glenn Dale to vote for Shayla Adams-Stafford for County Council District 5.



Striking Workers' Right to Picket Affirmed as Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Loses Final Appeal

On Wednesday, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania denied a final appeal by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (PG) and affirmed a Superior Court ruling that upheld the right of striking workers to picket, which is protected under both state and federal laws. The Post-Gazette had initially sought an injunction to prevent their striking employees from picketing a PG facility where scab workers were doing the work of union members.

As a result, the Post-Gazette now owes the cost of legal fees to the striking unions, Communications Workers of America (CWA) Locals 14827 and 14842, the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh (CWA Local 38061), and PPPWU Local 24M/9N.

"Based upon those factual findings, PG did not establish that the Unions caused property damage, engaged in violence, or seized PG's property," the Superior Court of Pennsylvania wrote in its decision. "The question of whether the Unions were trespassing on PG's property is intertwined with the question of whether the Unions' strike activity was protected under section 7 of the NLRA. See *Sears*, 436 U.S. at 201-03. As such, the trial court did not err by determining that the NLRA preempted PG's request for an injunction premised upon Pennsylvania trespass law."

"The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania rightly saw through the Post-Gazette's attempts to intimidate workers exercising their right to join together and has denied the PG's effort to waste all of our time in court when we should be meeting at the bargaining table," said CWA District 2-13 Vice President Mike Davis. "CWA members have been on strike for more than two years, and with their dedication and solidarity, they have won important legal victories that affirm the rights of all working people in Pennsylvania."

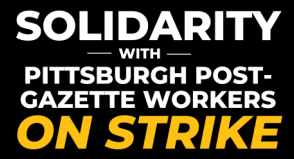
The Post-Gazette is facing multiple court cases for its unlawful conduct during contract negotiations with its union employees. On Tuesday, the Western Pennsylvania U.S. District Court will hold its final hearing on the National Labor Relations Board's request for an injunction against the PG for its numerous violations of labor law against striking advertising workers, mailers, and press workers.

The 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals is awaiting a final response from the company regarding the NLRB's request for an injunction over the PG's numerous violations of labor law against its editorial workers—members of the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh (CWA Local 38061).

In 2020, the company illegally and unilaterally tore up the editorial workers' union contract, claiming they had bargained to an impasse. Both an administrative law judge and the National Labor Relations Board in D.C. ruled that the company broke federal labor law in this instance, in addition to bargaining in bad faith and illegally surveilling its workers.

In October 2022, the PG unilaterally cut off the health care of its production, advertising, and distribution workers by refusing to pay a \$19-per-week increase in health care costs in an attempt to force them onto a company plan with no year-to-year cost controls. The workers, represented by the Communications Workers of America (CWA) Locals 14842 and 14827, and PPPWU, went on strike on Oct. 6, 2022. Members of the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh joined on October 18, demanding restoration of their 2014-17 contract and dignified health care.

The striking workers have maintained their picket lines for over two years in America's longest-running strike, winning many legal victories over the Post-Gazette.



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 2025-2026 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 2025-2026 school year is April 30, 2025.**

To apply online, go to:

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

CWA Condemns Trump's Firing of NLRB's Jennifer Abruzzo and Gwynne Wilcox

CWA members across the country are deeply disappointed by Donald Trump's firing of National Labor Relations Board General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo and NLRB member Gwynne Wilcox.

Abruzzo is a member of our CWA family, having served as the Special Counsel for Strategic Initiatives at CWA prior to her appointment as NLRB General Counsel. As NLRB General Counsel, she held billionaire CEOs accountable for their attempts to silence workers and made sure that workers who were unjustly disciplined or fired received full compensation for their lost wages. She made union certification automatic when workers' unions show majority support and employers interfere in the union election process. She also advocated for increased payouts to workers who were fired for union organizing.

As a member of the NLRB, Wilcox stood on the side of workers whenever CEOs threatened our freedom to join unions and collectively bargain. Her illegal firing leaves the NLRB without a quorum and unable to enforce labor law. This unprecedented action is a favor to Trump's wealthy backers and advisors, who want to boost their profits by preventing us from joining together to fight for good wages, safety on the job, and fair work schedules.

Working people rely on the NLRB to uphold the law. Trump's actions send a strong message that under his administration, workers will be left unprotected by the federal government as corporate executives attempt to take even more control over our lives.

During his first term, Trump appointed union-busting lawyer Peter Robb to the position. Robb used his time at the NLRB to make it harder for workers to organize and to give companies more power at the bargaining table. Instead of holding CEOs accountable, he gave them a green light to take advantage of their employees.

National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)

The NLRB is an independent federal agency that enforces the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).

This law safeguards private sector employees' collective bargaining rights and prevents unfair labor practices by employers and unions.

RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

Ready or not, welcome to 2025!! Up to this point, the weather has been a challenge, but the world of national politics has been a bigger test. As a united group, CWA members and retirees have always weathered the storm and fought back in the face of adversity when politics threaten to lower our standard of living or harm us as individuals.

In order for us to confront unwanted changes brought on by anti-worker legislation or Executive Orders, we need to stay informed and involved. The fight never ends. Join us on February 12, 2025 at 11:00 am for our first meeting of the year. I am looking forward to discussing all the changes that have taken place at our February luncheon.

Please feel free to bring a dessert to share!!



Calvin C Foster Jr
President- RMC 2108

Personals

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

Alan Thomas, father of member **Jewell Frazier**, who passed away on January 6, 2025.


The NettWorth Financial Group
Donna Castleberry Scholarship Fund

The NettWorth Financial Group Donna Castleberry Scholarship Fund awards college scholarships to children of union members across the country. Since 2001, more than \$320,000 has been given to fund the education of dozens of promising young men and women.

The Donna Castleberry Scholarship Fund was created in remembrance of a very special Nettworth employee who passed away.

Scholarship applications can be requested by calling their scholarship hotline at 888-224-5021 or by visiting their website www.nettworth.net

Scholarship applications must be submitted by May 31, 2025.



District 2-13 Human Rights - Catholic Charities Toiletry Kits Project

CWA Local 2108, in conjunction with other locals from CWA District 2-13, are currently collecting toiletries to assemble and donate to local charities across the region.

We are collecting masks, hand sanitizer (travel-sized), travel-sized deodorant, travel toothbrushes, mini toothpaste, 2-in-1 shampoo and body wash (travel-sized), Q-tips (small pack) and bars of soap (travel size or individually wrapped).

In order to make this project a success, we are asking members to send in their donations to the local by February 21st so they can be packaged and distributed by March 1, 2025. Please contact the Local on 301-595-2108 if you have any questions.

Thinking About Retirement?

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

CWA District 2-13 Health, Insurance & Medicare
Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 6:30 PM
Ruth's Chris Steak House, 301 Severn Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403

CWA District 2-13 Health, Insurance & Medicare
Thursday, February 20, 2025 @ 6:30PM
Ruth's Chris Steak House 1777 Reisterstown Road, Pikesville, MD 21208

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

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



CWA District 9 - Wildfires Assistance Fund

Last month, reports about the devastating impact the wildfires that ravaged California, particularly in the Los Angeles County, area dominated the airwaves. An official state of emergency had been declared as the flames blazed, tragically claiming the lives of at least 27 individuals, destroying over 12,000 structures, and consuming more than 60 square miles of land.

Our Union Brothers and Sisters are facing unprecedented challenges, with many of our own CWA members losing everything they have. Air quality throughout the area is still hazardous. During times like these, we must come together as a family, extending our support to those in need.

CWA District 9 has established the CWA District 9 Disaster Relief Fund specifically to assist our members impacted by these catastrophic fires. Every dollar contributed to the CWA District 9 Disaster Relief Fund will go directly to helping our CWA and affiliate members with shelter, clothing, and essential household items.

You can donate to the wildfire relief fund here: www.cwa-union.org/ca-wildfires

Please note that donations are not tax-deductible.

The path to recovery and rebuilding for many CWA families will be long and arduous. Your generous contributions can make a significant difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters facing these challenges.



Local 2108 Calendar

FEBRUARY 2025

- 12 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 12 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 14 Valentine's Day

- 17 President's Day
Local Office Closed

MARCH 2025

- 12 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 12 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 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 12, 2025 - 6:00pm
RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, February 12, 2025 - 11:00am




Communications Workers of America Local 2108

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