

## John J. Sweeney, Former AFL-CIO President, Dies at 86

John J. Sweeney, a New York union researcher who climbed to the pinnacle of the American labor movement in the 1990s, leading the AFL-CIO for 14 years through an era of fading union membership but rising political influence, died on February 1, 2021.

As head of the AFL-CIO, he embraced immigrants, women, minority groups and low-wage workers in an effort to reverse organized labor's long decline. As president of the nation's largest labor federation from 1995 to 2009, which included 56 unions with 10 million members near the end of his tenure, Mr. Sweeney flexed labor's political muscle with thousands of volunteers and helped elect Barack Obama to the presidency in 2008. Over the years, he also helped elect Democrats to seats in Congress, to governorships and to state legislatures across the country.

For decades in the 20th century, labor had not welcomed women, African-Americans, Latinos or Asian-Americans, often engaging in blatantly discriminatory tactics to preserve the dominance of white men in the workplace. Substantial but uneven gains had been achieved since the civil rights era of the 1960s, when unions began removing "whites only" clauses from their constitutions and bylaws. But Mr. Sweeney, still facing lopsided demographics, plotted a sea change. He crusaded to bring women and minorities into the fold, often in leadership posts; made alliances with civil rights groups, students, college professors and the clergy; and championed low-wage workers, shifting away from the AFL-CIO's traditional emphasis on protecting the best-paid union jobs.

Mr. Sweeney rose through the ranks, and in 1976 was elected president of Local 32B of the renamed Service Employees International Union. Soon his 45,000 members struck thousands of buildings for 17 days and won major wage and benefit increases. He later merged Local 32B with Local 32J, representing janitors, and in 1979 struck again for contract improvements.

In 1980, he was elected president of the 625,000-member national S.E.I.U. and, moving his base to Washington, began merging with unions of public employees and workers in office jobs, health care and food services. He pushed for stronger federal laws for health and safety, and spent heavily to organize new members. By 1995, he represented 1.1 million union members and was a national power in the labor movement.

In Mr. Sweeney's campaign for the federation presidency, his running mate, for the newly created post of executive vice president, was Linda Chavez-Thompson, a Texas sharecropper's daughter. She was the first minority group member ever elected to organized labor's top executive ranks.

The 1995 election pitted Mr. Sweeney against Mr. Donahue, his old friend from Local 32B, who had risen to secretary-treasurer of the federation and was Mr. Kirkland's heir apparent. But Mr. Donahue's ties to Mr. Kirkland forced him to defend the status quo, and Mr. Sweeney's progressive calls for growth and change won the presidency with 57 percent of the delegates, representing 7.2 million members.

He was re-elected to four more terms of two to four years each, the last time in 2005, when he broke a pledge not to remain in office beyond age 70. He retired in 2009, at 75, and was succeeded by Richard L.

Trumka, his longtime secretary-treasurer and a former president of the United Mine Workers.

In a statement posted on the AFL-CIO's website, Mr. Trumka said of Mr. Sweeney: "He was guided into unionism by his Catholic faith, and not a single day passed by when he didn't put the needs of working people first. John viewed his leadership as a spiritual calling, a divine act of solidarity in a world plagued by distance and division."

In 2010, President Obama awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. "He revitalized the American labor movement," Mr. Obama said at a White House ceremony, "emphasizing union organizing and social justice, and was a powerful advocate for America's workers."



### CWA & Verizon Extend Covid-19 Agreements

CWA and Verizon have reached an agreement to extend an earlier COVID-19 agreement which will protect our members, while at the same time maintaining our network and providing service to our customers. The following agreements have been extended:

**COVID-19 Home Garaging - Renewal** - This agreement has been extended through March 31, 2021 for all eligible employees who are home garaging.

### CWA & Verizon Negotiate New ISP Provision

Last month, CWA and Verizon agreed to amend the Verizon Income Security Plan for Mid-Atlantic Associates (ISP) effective November 1, 2020 with respect to associates who volunteer for an ISP, Enhanced ISP (EISP), or Special EISP offer and are either accepted by the Company or who would have been accepted by the Company, but who die prior to their Company designated off-payroll date. For such associates, Verizon will consider the associate as accepted for the offer and apply the applicable terms of the offer (ISP, EISP, or Special EISP). With respect to the separation payment, the Company would pay the estate of the deceased associate. The separation payment would be made in a lump sum to the estate (net of any ISP, EISP or Special EISP Benefit amount already paid) as soon as reasonably possible following receipt of appropriate legal authorization from the representative of the estate. The payment of any applicable pension benefits of a deceased associate would be subject to the terms of the pension plan, including the pension enhancements in the July 19, 2018 Common Issues Memorandum of Understanding.

# President Biden Ushers in Union Friendly Changes in First Month

Nearly a month into his Presidency, President Joe Biden has already taken some big actions to help working people. Some of them have gotten a lot of attention while others have been done quietly.

## Firings and Appointments

**Fired Peter Robb-** Robb was Trump's General Counsel for the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Back in the 1980's, Robb was a key player in busting the PATCO union and brought that same anti-union spirit to the NLRB. In his time in office, Robb tried to end neutrality agreements and make inflatable rats, like Scabby, illegal. Robb was fired just hours after Biden took the oath of office. After firing Robb, he also fired Robb's deputy who had become the acting General Counsel.

**Appointed Peter Ohr Acting NLRB General Counsel-** Ohr was a regional director for the NLRB before being promoted to Acting Counsel, and has a long history of pro-worker decisions. He took immediate action to overturn some of Robb's decisions, many of which will show up later on this list.

**Appointed Marty Walsh to lead the Department of Labor-** Walsh, the Mayor of Boston, was previously a union leader with Laborers Local 223 and the head of the Boston Metropolitan District building Trades Council. His selection was praised for putting a union leader in charge of the Department of Labor.

**Appointed Julie Su Deputy Secretary of Labor-** Su, the current California Labor Secretary, was appointed to be Walsh's second in command. Su was being pushed by many Asian American legislators for her work with low wage and immigrant workers. One of her biggest cases involved helping 72 enslaved Thai garment workers win a multi-million-dollar lawsuit against clothing companies.

**Biden Fires More Trumpers in US DOL-** Biden's quest to rid the government of Trump's anti-union appointees continued with his decision to get rid of the ten members of the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP). This panel decides contract disputes between federal unions and the government. It was stacked with anti-union picks that included people from ALEC, the Heritage Foundation, and someone from a union-busting law firm. Biden gave the 10 appointees the chance to resign, which eight did, before the other two were fired. With these appointees on the board, the government won 90% of the cases that came before the FSIP.

**Made a union attorney Chairman of the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA)-** Biden promoted Ernest Dubster to be the chairman of the FLRA which oversees disputes between the federal government and federal unions. Dubster previously worked as a union attorney, legislative counsel for the AFL-CIO, and a law professor teaching collective bargaining and arbitration.

**Selected a Steelworker to lead OSHA-** Biden's pick to lead the safety department is James Fredrick who worked for 25 years in the United Steelworkers' health, safety, and environment department. After leaving the Steelworkers in 2019 he became a part-time safety consultant who advised companies on safety compliance.

**Picked Jessica Looman to lead the Wage and Hour Division-** Looman was the Executive Director of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council before she was selected. She also previously worked as general counsel for the Laborers District Council of Minnesota and North Dakota. In between, she served as the deputy commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.

**Biden picks a teacher to run the Education Department-** After four years of Betsy DeVos, Biden promised that he would put a teacher in charge of the Education Department, and he fulfilled that promise with the selection of Miguel Cardona. The former education commissioner for Connecticut, Cardona worked as an elementary school teacher before becoming a principal, a position he held for 10 years. Cardona would go on to become a district administrator and deputy superintendent before becoming state education Commissioner. His pick was praised by teachers' unions.

## Executive Orders

**Repealed Union-Busting Executive Orders-** These Executive Orders, signed by Trump in 2018, kicked unions out of their collectively bargained offices in federal buildings, limited union release time, and instituted one sided contracts onto a number of agencies. Repealing these

orders was a top priority of federal unions and President Biden repealed them on his second day in office.

**Ordered OSHA to create a COVID safety standard-** Unions fought for a COVID safety standard for nearly a year, with the AFL-CIO even suing Trump to create one. On Day 1, Biden signed an Executive Order that directed OSHA to put a standard in place. This will not only create a uniform standard for safety during COVID, but it will also allow workers a new avenue to protect themselves from bosses who refuse to put proper safety procedures in place.

**Biden Strengthens Buy American Provisions-** Five days into office, Biden signed an Executive Order that directed the federal government to strengthen their Buy American standards. This required more of the product to be made in the USA, cut red tape for buying these items, and made it easier for new small and medium sized manufacturers to get federal contracts. The government spends about \$600 billion a year on American made products and is expected to add another \$400 billion as part of Biden's Build Back Better program.

**A \$15 Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors-** Biden signed an Executive Order that ordered the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to establish a \$15 minimum wage for all federal contractors.

**Allow Federal Unions to Bargain Again-** Biden signed an Executive Order telling agencies to

"bargain over permissible, non-mandatory subjects of bargaining when contracts are up for negotiation." This gives federal unions the ability to have a voice on more issues than just the basic work rules and pay. It is especially important with COVID, since many federal unions were shut out of any process to protect their members at work.

**Ordered an end to federal private prisons-** Biden issued an order that the government stop contracting with private prisons, a for profit venture that reduces wages and takes jobs from union corrections officers. According to AFGE, which represents prison employees with the Federal Bureau of Prisons, federal workers housing prisoners are "more cost effective, more efficient and much safer than their for-profit counterparts."

**Signed an Executive Order allowing workers to refuse dangerous work-** In an executive order, Biden ordered the Department of Labor to issue a guidance that clarifies that workers have a federally guaranteed right to refuse employment that puts their health in danger, like COVID-19, and still qualify for unemployment insurance.

**Announced his support for the PRO Act-** This was actually done during the campaign, but with the PRO Act being reintroduced in the Congress early last month, Biden's support is a powerful tool in helping to ensure that all of the Democratic Senators support the bill.

A statement from **CWA President Chris Shelton** on the reintroduction of the **Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act**, historic, bipartisan legislation to make it easier for workers to join a union and bargain with their employers, and to crack down on employers who use unfair union-busting tactics against their employees when they exercise their freedom to join together to improve their workplace.

"This is the moment that working people have been waiting for. With the new pro-worker administration, and with public support for labor unions at the highest it's has been in decades, CWA members are ready to raise their voices, flood congressional offices with phone calls, and do every single thing within our power to make the the **PRO Act** – a sweeping labor law reform bill that would usher in a new era for workers – the law of the land."



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# 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 \$250,000 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 our scholarship hotline at 888-224-5021 or by visiting our website [www.nettworth.net](http://www.nettworth.net).

Scholarship applications must be submitted by May 31, 2021.

## Thinking About Retirement?

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!!

### Medicare Basics Webinar

**Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 6:30 PM** - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

To join by phone - Dial In: **(267) 831-0333 or (301) 715-8592**  
**Webinar ID - 972 9903 3709 Password: 134679**

### Timing Social Security Benefits Webinar

**Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 6:30 PM** - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

To join by phone - Dial In: **(267) 831-0333 or (301) 715-8592**  
**Webinar ID - 926 5697 1518 Password: 134679**

Reservations are required and to RSVP you may call Nettworth at (800)-859-2212, or register online at [Nettworth.net](http://Nettworth.net).



## Verizon CPS Award For 2020 - \$700.00

The Verizon Corporate Profit Sharing Award for plan year 2020 is \$700.00. 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 work week for a full-time employee in the same title.

The Corporate Profit Sharing Award will be paid on **March 5, 2021**.

## March Membership Meeting Cancelled Due to Pandemic

Due to the ongoing pandemic, a motion was adopted at the December, 2020 membership meeting to cancel the January, February and March, 2021 membership meetings. The RMC meetings will continue to be conducted via Zoom.

We look forward to seeing everyone at our next regularly scheduled membership meeting on April 14, 2021 at 6pm.

### Personals

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

**Ralph Hockaday**, father of **Kevin Hockaday** who passed away on October 12, 2020.

**Raymond H. Glock**, father of **Stephen Glock** who passed away on November 23, 2020.

**Neville Plummer**, a retired member who passed away on January 6, 2021.

**Julia Austin**, mother of **Kim Austin** who passed away on January 23, 2021.

**Emmett Tydings, Jr.**, a retired member who passed away on January 23, 2021.

**Hank Allred**, a retired member who passed away on January 29, 2021.

### Welcome to Local 2108

#### New Members

##### Kendra Whitaker Hughes

Ta'Niece Goins	Clarence Berger
Francis Ndoh	Andrea Edwards
Ellyn Beatty-Mock	Kevin Ho
Barry Curran Jr.	Jacob Stephens
Jeffrey Doeppe	Thyais Allard
Yohhanes Goodwin	Quiristen Brooks
Dana Gill	Anthony Frazier
Breya Hudgens	Charles Lynch Jr.
Deborah Obaita	



### Congratulations to Recent Retirees:



Edward S Jackson  
Kathleen Caldwell



## RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

I often think about when we will be able to return to the days of social gathering and visiting family and friends, or is this the new normal? I think that just about everyone has these thoughts as well. While we ponder this and many other issues, 2021 has started out on a positive note with a new political environment and promising new vaccines. Perhaps the new normal won't be so bad after all.

Regardless, what happens this year will depend on all of us remaining healthy and informed about legislation that could affect retirees. Changes in health care will continue to be an issue that we need to stay on top of. To keep informed of all that is going on, please plan on attending the next RMC meeting on March 10, 2021 at 11:00am. This will be a virtual meeting on the Zoom website. Notifications will be sent out by email with access information the day before. If you have any questions about login issues, please call Janice Crowe on 410-533-5370.

Stay safe!!

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



# Verizon to Provide Paid Time Off for Covid Vaccinations

## CORONAVIRUS



While vaccine distributions have varied and many specifics remain unknown, CWA represented employees are starting to see the first wave of doses offered to mostly healthcare workers, long-term care facility residents and older adults. Following the initial wave of vaccinations, jurisdictions will expand access to broader distribution. At the moment, it's difficult to get an appointment to be vaccinated, but it is expected that appointments will become more available to Verizon employees in the coming weeks and months.

As COVID-19 vaccination appointments become available, members should attempt to plan vaccination appointments outside of their work schedule. However, given the limited access to COVID-19 vaccines at the current time, it is recognized that some Verizon employees may receive an appointment that conflicts with their work schedule.

With that in mind, **Verizon employees who need time off from work to attend their COVID-19 vaccination appointments will be able to request the time they need (up to 4 hours paid) to get the first dose and then again request the time they need (up to 4 hours paid) for vaccines requiring a second dose.**

In advance of their scheduled vaccination appointment, Verizon employees will work with their supervisors, or resource management teams where applicable, who will make every effort to allow employees to take the time they reasonably request (up to 4 hours) to attend their own vaccination appointments, consistent with the needs of the business. **Employees who use this time may be asked to provide documentation of their vaccination appointment.**

Please note, this only applies to employees who have appointments to be vaccinated that conflict with their work schedules. If an employee wants to take time away from work to assist a family member with a COVID-19 vaccination, they can follow the normal process in their workgroup to request time off.

It is anticipated that later in 2021, COVID-19 vaccines will be more readily available and vaccination sites will be more prevalent, so employees generally will not need time away from work to get vaccinated. As that occurs in different areas, Verizon will discontinue paid COVID-19 vaccination time and encourage everyone who has not already been vaccinated to do so outside of their work schedule or use other available paid time off, such as personal days.

# Local 2108 Calendar

### MARCH 2021

- 2-5 CWA New Officer's Training - **Via Zoom**
- 10 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am - **Via Zoom**
- 10 Membership Meeting - **Cancelled**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 14 Daylight Saving's Time Begins  
Set Clocks Forward 1 Hour
- 17 St. Patrick's Day



### APRIL 2021

- 4 Easter Sunday
- 7 Chief Stewards Meeting - **Cancelled**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 14 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am - **Via Zoom**
- 14 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD



### 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, March 10, 2021 - 6:00pm - Cancelled  
RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, March 10, 2021 - 11:00am - Via Zoom



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