

## In Building Out Broadband, Let's Work to do it Right

By **Lisa Fazzini and Jimmy Tarlau**

In June, Gov. Wes Moore (D) announced that Maryland will be receiving \$268 million from the federal government to build out broadband to the unserved and underserved communities in our state. This would bridge the digital divide that makes it very difficult for many of our marginalized communities to connect to the internet at the necessary speeds. These funds are part of the \$40 billion that was included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) that was passed in 2022.

This historic investment offers a once in a generation commitment from the federal government to make sure that all Marylanders have access to the fastest broadband speeds that are so critical for our children's education, for our ability to work from remote locations and to keep in contact with our families and friends wherever they may be. But receiving these funds is just the first step. Now we have to make sure that this program is done right. We should all want a guarantee that it is built right the first time. We may not ever get another chance.

Right now, Maryland's Office of Statewide Broadband is establishing a process it will use to solicit and evaluate proposals from the providers who will be receiving funds to connect Maryland residents to the internet. It is imperative that the Broadband Office prioritize proposals that will ensure Marylanders get high quality, reliable high speed internet service and that create good jobs for workers in our state. With hundreds of millions of dollars at stake, many companies that have little to no experience deploying high speed internet service in Maryland are looking to get a piece of the pie.

We, in the Communications Workers of America, know a great deal about broadband and quality internet service. Our technicians throughout the country install and maintain the fastest internet service in the world. We install high speed fiber glass cables that enable residents and businesses to download and upload tens of millions of megabytes every second. We have seen the impact of the digital divide firsthand and have been advocating for funding to address the problem for decades.

Here are the priority items we believe that are needed in a plan to deliver the best possible broadband service to the underserved communities of Maryland.

- Providers have to install fiber to connect Maryland households and have a plan for supporting customers and maintaining the network. Wireless connections, coaxial cable and DSL just won't do. They do not provide the speeds and reliability we need for our connections today and in the future.

- We need providers to create quality jobs for Marylanders not to contractors who come in from out of state and take their money elsewhere. They must also pay family supporting wages and provide good benefits to help sustain the Maryland economy.

- We need providers with a record of fair labor practices. Our public dollars should not support companies that violate their workers' rights through illegal labor practices.

- We need highly qualified, certified and trained employees on the job. This is complex work that poses risks for the workers and for customers if it is done improperly or without regard to health and safety regulations. In Missouri, homes were destroyed after contractors work-

ing on broadband installation hit a gas line. In Texas, an employee of a broadband contractor died of heatstroke after being denied proper protections. We need the best broadband build-out for Maryland and that will only be done with a skilled workforce that is certified to do the work.

- We need workers who are trained in the latest health and safety regulations. We do not need accidents on our roads caused by slipshod practices for setting up traffic controls that endanger Maryland drivers.

We strongly urge the Moore Administration to include these priorities as part of its plan to distribute funds to providers to buildout broadband in our state. These priorities align with the criteria laid out in the federal implementation guidelines for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and will establish Maryland as a leader in the responsible use of these funds.

Let's connect all of Maryland and let's do it so everybody in our state can reap the rewards of the best technology available for ourselves and our children.

**Lisa Fazzini is CWA Local 2108's International Representative and Jimmy Tarlau was a former Maryland State Delegate and former Assistant to the Vice President of CWA.**

### 2024 Union Plus Scholarship Program Accepting Applications

Since 1991, the Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$5.4 million to students of working families who want to begin or continue their post-secondary education. Over 3,800 families have benefited from our commitment to higher education.

#### Eligibility

Current and retired members of participating unions, their spouses and their dependent children (as defined by IRS regulations). At least one year of continuous union membership by the applicant, applicant's spouse or parent (if applicant is a dependent). The one year membership minimum must be satisfied by May 31, 2024.

#### Application Timeline:

Applications are available starting in mid-June, and a complete application must be received on or before 12:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on **January 31, 2024**. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

#### Scholarship Award Amounts:

Amounts range from \$500 to \$4,000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the Fall of 2024. Students may re-apply each year.

#### Award date:

The Scholarship Committee will determine recipients of scholarship awards by May 31st each year. During the first week of June 2024 award recipients will be notified by postal mail, and all applicants will be sent email notification.

#### To apply, go to:

[www.unionplus.org/benefits/education/union-plus-scholarships](http://www.unionplus.org/benefits/education/union-plus-scholarships)

You may not have noticed, but September 26, 2023 was a monumental day for union members. On that date, the twelfth day of the 20,000 member UAW strike against the Big Three automakers, President Joe Biden joined the strikers on their picket line near Detroit. **He was the first sitting president to ever do so.**



Speaking to the striking union members, Biden noted the sacrifices and give-backs they had made in 2008 when their employers were in trouble. He went on to declare, "But now your employers are doing incredibly well. And guess what? You should be doing incredibly well, too! Companies should go further in bargaining to ensure that record corporate profits mean record contracts!" Biden encouraged the union members to remain strong on their picket lines, because "Workers deserve a fair share of the benefits they help create for an enterprise." While WE know these things, how amazing and refreshing is it to hear those words said by the President of the United States? In public!

Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su and top White House adviser Gener Sperling have also been charged with helping with negotiations, and have been in regular touch with all parties for the past several weeks. Of course this reminded me of how Tom Perez, Obama's Labor Secretary at the time, reached out to CWA and Verizon to offer his help to mediate a settlement to our grueling forty-nine day strike, after driving by our picket lines at the Chesapeake Complex every day as he drove his kid to school.

While many like to make fun of Biden's age or the stutter he has struggled with his entire life, I think too few recognize and credit him for what he has done to help workers in his first thirty-two months in office. Hours after taking office, Biden fired Peter Robb, the anti-union general counsel that Trump appointed to lead the NLRB, and replaced him with Jennifer Abruzzo, Special Counsel for CWA. Marty Walsh, former business manager of Laborers Local 223 and head of the Boston Metropolitan District Building Trades Council, was appointed Labor Secretary, the first union leader to lead the department in more than half a century.



Ten anti-union members of the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP) were replaced in Biden's first weeks in office, once again allowing federal unions to get a fair shake in front of the FSIP. His new appointments to the EEOC, which is tasked with ensuring

that all workers get a fair shake regardless of race, gender, religion, etc., were longtime activists for civil rights and equality for sexual and gender minorities. A Steelworker was tapped to lead OSHA, and an educator to run the Education Department. The list of union-supporter appointments goes on and on.

Many bills have also been passed that help working-class Americans since Biden took office, but especially important to CWA members is the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. It invests one trillion dollars in our nation's infrastructure to upgrade the electric grid, repave roads, repair bridges and expand affordable high-speed broadband to every American (see article on page one).

President Biden's visit to the UAW picket line was unprecedented and symbolic, but when you compare it to his total body of work since taking office, it was one more example of how he truly is the most pro-union president ever.

*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 and Medicare

**Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at 6:30 PM - In Person**  
The Charles

417 Charles St., LaPlata, MD 20646

### CWA District 2-13 Health, Insurance and Medicare

**Thursday, October 12, 2023 at 6:30 PM - In Person**  
Ruth's Chris Steakhouse

1110 Town Center Blvd., Odenton, MD 21113

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

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



## Verizon Open Enrollment Begins October

Annual Enrollment for Verizon employees and retirees will take place from October 3-12 this year, and elections made will be effective January 1, 2024. As in the past, if you are happy with your current benefits elections there is no action for you to take, and your current elections will carry over for 2024. Once again active employees will receive a \$8.33/month credit toward their healthcare premiums if they complete a Wellness Activity and if they (and their dependents) qualify for the non-tobacco user credit.

To enroll, go to Benefits Connection at [www.verizon.com/benefitsconnection](http://www.verizon.com/benefitsconnection). From the home page, go to Annual Enrollment>Enroll Now. From there you can add or drop dependents, review your plan options and update your elections. If you have questions or need assistance, call the Verizon Benefits Center on 855.489.2367 M-F, 8a-6p. This is also an excellent time to review your beneficiary information to ensure it is accurate and up-to-date.

We have already heard from many pre-Medicare retirees (who retired 01-01-2013 or after) who are shocked at the increase in their monthly healthcare premium for next year. That increase is because the 2024 cost of the premiums in the Mid-Atlantic exceeds the negotiated amount VZ must contribute toward retiree healthcare. If your premiums are increasing, please examine your options to determine if a change to the pre-Medicare MCN or MEP PPO would be a better choice for you in 2024. More than 90% of our active members and pre-Medicare retirees are enrolled in the MCN plan, and are quite happy with it.

### Pre-Medicare Retiree (Who retired on/after 01/01/2013)

#### Anthem MCN

Retiree Only --- \$110.42/month

Retiree +1 ---220.83/month

Retiree + Family --- \$276.08/month

#### Anthem MEP/PPO (Who retired on/after 01/01/2013)

Retiree Only --- \$103.25/month

Retiree +1 --- \$206.50/month

Retiree + Family --- \$258.17/month

Retirees who have any questions about changes to this year's annual enrollment can contact:

#### **Thomas Ballek**

CWA Retiree Health Care Benefits Coordinator

Ph: 866-248-4449 / 610-432-2040

thomas.l.ballek@verizon.com

# CWA Local 2108 Officer Nominations and Election

Nominations will be conducted at the **November 8, 2023** membership meeting for the positions of President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and Vice President(s). If the November membership meeting is cancelled, nominations will be held at the December membership meeting.

Any member in good standing of Local 2108 may run for office if they wish.

Candidates should be present in order to be nominated. If a candidate cannot be present due to extenuating circumstances a letter of acceptance, written and signed by the candidate, must be presented to **Christopher Smith**, Election Committee Chairperson, prior to the nominations.

Ballots will be mailed on **Friday, November 17, 2023**, and will be picked up from the Post Office and counted on **Friday, December 15, 2023**, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Nominees may observe the process of assembling and mailing of ballots and the counting of ballots, or may appoint an observer to represent them, provided that individual is a member in good standing of the Local and has a letter from the candidate appointing them as observer. This may not be done on union-paid time.

Any candidate wishing to mail campaign literature should contact Christopher Smith at the Local on 301.595.2108. The candidate should forward their stuffed envelopes or flyers to the Local. Within four business days the names and addresses of all members in good standing will be added to the envelopes, and they will be mailed. None of this may be done on union-paid time. Expenses for campaign literature and postage will be borne by the candidates.

Any members needing a duplicate ballot should contact the Local no later than noon on **Friday, December 8th** to request it.

The election will be handled in accordance with Local 2108 Bylaws, the CWA Constitution and federal regulations. A copy of our Election Committee Rules is available on the Local website ([cwalocal2108.org](http://cwalocal2108.org)) and will be printed and made available at the October and November membership meetings. Any questions regarding the election should be directed to Election Committee Chairperson Christopher Smith at the Local.

## RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

I for one, would like to welcome Fall. I am sure that we will all appreciate the change. Life seems a lot less stressful as the cooler weather rolls in. But turn on the tv set and we hear the national news, the stress seems to reappear due to the chaos in the U.S. government over next years budget. There seems to be a small minority holding up normal government processes unless they can get their agenda addressed, regardless of the will of a majority of legislators .

It is an attempt to rule by force instead of democratic process. This should make us aware of the importance of the national elections coming up and the importance of us all voting to continue our democratic philosophy. Stay United!!!

The next luncheon meeting will be on October 11, 2023 at 11:00am. See you there!!

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



### Personals

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

Retiree **Robert (Bob) Lee Anderson** who passed away on August 30, 2023.

Retiree **Barry Fuller** who passed away on September 6, 2023.

Retiree and former Steward **Richard "Cupcake" Johnson** who passed away on September 8, 2023.

### Congratulations to Recent Retiree:



**Arthur Higgins**



## CWA & Verizon Negotiate Extension For "Reserve Time" Agreement

A few years ago, CWA and Verizon negotiated language that dealt with the administration of "Reserve Time" vacation. Under that agreement, employees were able to schedule all remaining carryover days as Reserve Time. As long as vacation scheduling percentages hadn't been exceeded, the employee could use them on any day available up to March 31st of the following calendar year. This agreement has now been extended into 2025.

For Calendar Year 2023, Vacation and Excused Work Days, which may currently be scheduled as "Reserved Time", "Not Scheduled" or are currently scheduled during 2023, can be requested and scheduled between the effective date of the Agreement and March 31, 2024. Any and all requests for specific dates to be used between the effective date of the Agreement and March 31, 2024 will be considered on a first come, first serve basis and approval will be based on the contractual 18% and 12% ratios set forth in the "Vacation Scheduling Percentages" Letter of Understanding. Any 2023 Vacation, paid or unpaid Excused Work Days not selected and not taken by March 31, 2024 shall be forfeited and not eligible for selection or "in lieu of" payment after March 31, 2024.

Pursuant to Article 31, Section 10(c) of the CBA, scheduling of 2024 Day-at-a-Time Vacation and Excused Work Days will take place during the second and final round of selections. During this round, days shall be selected from those available during the current calendar year (2024). However, pursuant to this Agreement, the Company will also allow days to be selected from those available in the first quarter of the following calendar year (January 1, 2025-March 31, 2025). At the completion of 2024 Day-at-a-Time Selection, any subsequent requests for days between January 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025 will be approved on a first come, first serve basis on the contractual 18% and 12% ratios set forth on the "Vacation Scheduling Percentages" Letter of Understanding.

If an employee chooses not to schedule allotted 2024 Vacation, paid or unpaid Excused Work Days, the remaining number of days will be set aside as "Reserve Time". "Reserve Time" for purposes of this Agreement shall be defined as days not currently scheduled but available for request during calendar year 2024 through March 31, 2025. Any 2024 Vacation, paid or unpaid Excused Work Days not selected and not taken by March 31, 2025, shall be forfeited and not eligible for selection or "in lieu of" payment after March 31, 2025.



# Bylaws Change to be Voted on at October Membership Meeting

For the better part of the last twenty years membership has been declining in CWA. Our Union has embraced the ideology of expanding membership outside the traditional realm of Telecommunications to effectively maintain our high standards of representation, collective bargaining and a strong voice in the world of politics. CWA now represents members in the airline industry, printing and publishing sectors and industrial workers, just to name a few.



The same can be said for our Local. Twenty years ago we experienced an unprecedented level of membership ushered in by the development of DSL. Our Local membership was approaching nearly 4000 members. But through attrition and as technology evolved, those numbers have decreased significantly. Currently, our Local now has approximately 1200 members.

While the Local has tried to cut costs over the years to keep up with declining membership, we are now reaching a point where it could effect the way we do business. With that being said, The CWA Local 2108 Executive Board has proposed changes to the Local's Bylaws which will help keep the Local solvent at our current membership levels.

Currently, the Local's Executive Board consists of 5 officers; President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and (2) Vice Presidents. In order to maintain an effective presence, the Executive Board is proposing that if the Local's membership ranges from 1000 - 1600 members, the next election would reduce the number of Vice Presidents to (1). If the Local's membership drops below 1000 members then the Local would not elect any Vice Presidents. Membership strength would be based on a monthly average look-back from August 1st of the prior year through July 31st of the current year prior to an election to determine how many officers positions would be eligible for the current election cycle.

This change was proposed at the September 13, 2023 Membership meeting and will be voted on by those in attendance at the October 11, 2023 membership meeting.

# Local 2108 Calendar

## OCTOBER 2023

- 11 **RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 11 **Membership Meeting - 6:00pm**  
Referendum Vote on By-Laws,  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 31 **Halloween**



## NOVEMBER 2023

- 5 **Daylight Savings Time Ends**  
Turn Clocks Back 1 Hour
- 8 **RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 8 **Membership Meeting - 6:00pm**  
Officer Nominations  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 10 **Veteran's Day- Observed**  
Local Office Closed
- 17 **Ballots Mailed for Officer Election**
- 23-24 **Thanksgiving Holiday**  
Local Office Closed



### 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, October 11, 2023 - 6:00pm  
RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, October 11, 2023 - 11:00am



10782 Rhode Island Avenue, Beltsville, MD 20705

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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