

## CWA Delegates Elect Claude Cummings Jr. as New President



In an historic election, Claude Cummings Jr. was elected as president of the Communications Workers of America by delegates to the union's 79th convention and Ameenah Salaam was elected Secretary-Treasurer. Cummings is the first Black man elected as CWA President. Salaam, who was elected by acclamation, is the first Black woman to serve as Secretary-Treasurer.

Cummings succeeds Chris Shelton who stepped down after serving as president for eight years and spending 55 years mobilizing, representing, and organizing with CWA.

Since 2011, Cummings has served as vice president of CWA District 6, representing more than 45,000 members in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas.

A Houston, Tex., native, Cummings started his union career when he went to work for Southwestern Bell Telephone Company (now AT&T) in 1973 and worked as a Frame Attendant and Communications Technician, maintaining systems for NASA, among other corporate customers. Prior to his election to District 6 Vice President, he was President of CWA Local 6222 representing more than 8,000 members, having served previously in other leadership positions in the local, including Vice President. Cummings was the first Black man elected to all these positions.

During a lengthy career as a "leading voice" in local and state politics, Cummings worked to pass a law that enabling AT&T to provide video service, which meant thousands of jobs for unionized technicians installing the new plant.

Cummings is first vice president of the Houston chapter of the NAACP, second VP of the Texas State NAACP Conference, and an executive board member of the National NAACP Labor Committee.

A native of Wilmington, Delaware, Salaam started her union career when she went to work for Diamond State Telephone in 1991 as a customer service representative. She



was elected as a CWA Local 13100 steward and served as Vice President of the local until September 1997 when she joined the CWA national staff. As an assistant to outgoing CWA President Chris Shelton, she has played critical leading roles in organizing, bargaining and mobilization campaigns, supporting staff and pushing CWA's core mission forward with effective strategic planning and fiscal responsibility.

In her new role, Salaam is responsible for overseeing the union's operating budget, investments and membership funds, facilities, and other operations. She also is charged with ensuring full fiscal and legal compliance by the International CWA and locals with all government, financial and regulatory requirements.

## 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.

# CWA Local 2108's Executive Board Proposes Changes to Local Bylaws

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

## Former Chief Steward Carl Brogden Passes Away

Retiree and former CWA Local 2108 Chief Steward Carl Brogden passed away on August 24, 2023 surrounded by family after a long battle with cancer.

Carl began his career in 1983 at C&P Telephone as a Directory Assistance Operator until he was promoted to Services Technician in 1985. He became a Cable Splitter in 1986 where he spent the remainder of his career.

Carl was an strong advocate for workers and became a Chief Steward in 2005 at the Wilkins Ave. Garage in Rockville where he represented countless numbers of CWA members. He also served on the Locals' Safety, Equity and Finance Committees throughout his career.



## Moving Our Union Forward!!

### Resolutions Passed at the CWA Convention

CWA delegates approved the following resolutions at the 2023 CWA Convention:

**Resolution #79A-23-01 - Honoring the Leadership and Determination of Christopher M. Shelton to Fight and Win for CWA Members and All Working People** – CWA delegates voted to express their deep appreciation to Chris Shelton and bestow upon him the title of President Emeritus for his lifelong dedication to fighting and winning for CWA members and all working people. We recognize the legacy of strategic and thoughtful preparation to ensure that our union is able to win every fight we undertake on behalf of our members.

**Resolution #79A-23-02 - Building Worker Power by Fighting for Pro-Worker and Pro-Union Laws in the States** – CWA delegates voted to commit to prioritizing state level advocacy and legislative efforts to enact laws which would strengthen organizing and collective bargaining protections and build worker power. They also voted to elect pro-labor candidates for state and local office as well as to continue CWA's efforts to advocate for passage of the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act and the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act.

**Resolution #79A-23-03 - Resolution: Reforming Our Federal Tax Code to Support Worker Organizing and Collective Bargaining** – CWA delegates voted to demand changes to our tax code so that it protects union members and the right to organize, bargain, and strike, by ending deductions for companies engaged in union busting or shipping jobs overseas, and by ensuring that all workers have the right to deduct union dues and work related expenses from their taxes.

**Resolution #79A-23-04 - Fighting for the News Our Communities and Members Deserve** – CWA delegates voted to recognize that the decimation and consolidation of local journalism has had a negative impact on our democracy and must be reversed. They also voted to support several pieces of legislation, including the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act, the Local Journalism Sustainability Act, and the Stop Wall Street Looting Act, and to support efforts by the Securities and Exchange Commission to strengthen the regulation of private equity companies.

**Resolution #79A-23-05 - Mobilizing for Good Jobs and Safety in the Aviation Industry** – CWA delegates voted to mobilize and work to ensure timely passage of FAA Reauthorization legislation that protects and builds on our members' rights and protections on the job and a national air transportation system that supports good union jobs. They also voted to continue to fight for fair compensation, decent working conditions, and dignity, and safety on the job for our members and all workers in the aviation industry.

**Resolution #79A-23-06 - Committee on Membership and Office-Holding Eligibility** – CWA delegates voted to allow the CWA President, in consultation with the CWA Executive Board, to appoint a committee to discuss and report on questions raised about whether Local or International Union staff should be permitted to join the Union by virtue of their employment by the Union.

**Resolution #79A-23-07 - Retired Member Council Eligibility for CWA Disaster Relief Fund** – CWA delegates voted to include retired CWA members who have paid their dues to the CWA Retired Member Council in eligibility for support through the Disaster Relief Fund.

**Resolution #79A-23-08 - Ensuring Accessibility at CWA Meetings for All** – CWA delegates voted to establish a committee of members and staff who will work to develop suggestions for policies and practices to enable future meetings to be as accessible as possible for all of our members.

**Resolution #79A-23-09 - CWA Resolution on Mutual Respect** – CWA delegates voted to recommit to ensuring mutual respect in CWA and affirm that mutual respect must be a foundation and guiding principle of our union.





# CWA Issues Statement on Lead Exposure for Telecom Workers

A Wall Street Journal investigation uncovering miles of abandoned toxic lead cables across the country has shocked experts and lawmakers alike, prompting scrutiny of the telecom companies who first laid the cables decades ago and concerns regarding the hidden health hazards to unsuspecting Americans. "This is corporate irresponsibility of the worst kind," Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) wrote in a letter to industry group USTelecom. The companies "that are responsible for these lead-sheathed cables have a duty, both civic and legal to ensure that they do not put Americans in harm's way."

## What did the Journal find in its investigation?

Journalists uncovered a "sprawling network" of more than 2,000 now-defunct lead-sheathed cables that runs "under the water, in the soil and on poles overhead," leaching lead into the areas where Americans "live, work and play." For years, telecom companies like AT&T and Verizon were aware that degrading lead from the abandoned cables could harm both workers and the environment, yet they did nothing to fix the problem, the Journal alleged,

according to documents and interviews with ex-employees. Approximately 330 of the identified underwater cables are located in an area that feeds into the drinking-water supply, per the Environmental Protection Agency, and "roughly 80% of sediment samples taken next to underwater cables showed elevated levels of lead." Meanwhile, toxic cabling runs through the air "alongside more than 100 schools with about 48,000 students in total," and more than 1,000 schools and child-care businesses are situated within half a mile of an underwater cable, the Journal reported. In New Jersey alone, "more than 350 bus stops are next to or beneath" aerial lines.

## What are the side effects of lead exposure?

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, even low levels of lead in the blood can negatively affect a child's "intelligence, ability to pay attention and academic achievement." In adults, risks include "kidney, heart and reproductive problems," per the Journal. No safe level of lead exposure has been identified.

## Where else is lead a problem?

The U.S. has spent "billions of dollars to reduce lead in the environment," particularly as it relates to "well-known sources," like lead paint, gas and piping, the Journal said. But the outlet's findings may explain why many American children continue to show lead in their blood, despite conflicting claims from regulators, said Jack Caravanos, a professor at New York University who assisted the Journal in its investigation. "We never knew about it so we never acted on it, unlike lead in paint and pipes," he said of the phone cables.

Last month, CWA announced that AT&T, after consultation with union leadership, announced a policy that will allow employees who may have been exposed to lead as part of their work to receive paid time off in order to be tested for lead levels.

While this is a voluntary program, CWA is strongly encouraging members to participate in this testing and have worked with the company to ensure that no employee will be penalized in any way as a result of undergoing testing.

CWA will be closely monitoring this program. AT&T's commitment to addressing our members' exposure to lead must go beyond point-in-time testing of blood lead levels and incorporate proper follow up including treatment, addressing past exposures and long term effects, and implementing precautions and training to reduce the health im-

pacts of working with lead clad cable.

CWA also advised that they are in discussions with Verizon on these issues and will be engaging with our other telecommunications employers.



**FACT: LEAD IS TOXIC**

It is harmful to everyone and

**DAMAGES:** BRAIN, KIDNEYS, LIVER, BLOOD, REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

**Young children** are most vulnerable. Their nervous systems are still developing and they absorb 4-5 times more than adults, which can cause:

- Intellectual disability
- underperforming at school
- behavioural issues

**In adults** lead exposure increases the risk of:

- ischaemic heart disease
- stroke

**In pregnant women** lead exposure damages many organs but also affects: the developing foetus

**Personals**

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

Member **Margaret Tolliver**, who passed away July 27, 2023.

Member & Steward **Michael Wilcox**, who passed away August 1, 2023.

Former Chief Steward & retiree **Carl Brogden**, who passed away August 4, 2023.

Member **Barbara Jean Martin**, who passed away August 8, 2023.

# 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!!

### Retirement Benefits District 2-13

Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 6:30 PM - Via Zoom

### Timing Social Security Benefits

Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 6:30 PM - Via Zoom

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

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



# 2108News is Moving Online



With the rise of technology, CWA Local 2108 has decided to make a change to keep up with the times and cut some of the cost associated with mailing the monthly newsletter.

Starting next month, 2108News will make the switch to digital and will only be available online. Notifications that the newsletter is available will be posted on our Facebook page (CWA Local 2108) and will be available to read or download from our website ([www.cwalocal2108.org](http://www.cwalocal2108.org)).

If any member would still like a paper copy, they can easily call the office on 301-595-2108 to request one be mailed.

## Have You Scheduled Your Floating Holiday?

It seems that almost every year CWA Local 2108 hears from members who haven't scheduled their Floating Holiday prior to October 1st of the calendar year and then Verizon denies that employee the ability to schedule after that date, causing them to lose it altogether. It is the Union's position that if an employee has not scheduled it by October 1st, it is the company's responsibility to notify the employee to schedule it at that time.

With that being said, CWA Local 2108 strongly suggests that all of our members working under the Verizon agreement schedule their Floating Holiday prior to October 1, 2023. This way you cannot be denied the ability to schedule your holiday. Keep in mind that you can still be required to work on your Floating Holiday. In that case you will receive holiday pay treatment just as if you worked any other negotiated holiday.



# Local 2108 Calendar

### SEPTEMBER 2023

4 **Labor Day**  
Local Office Closed



#### LABOR DAY

2 **Chief Stewards Meeting - 12:30pm**  
Via Zoom

11 **911 Remembrance Day**  
13 **RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

13 **Membership Meeting - 6:00pm**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

### 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

10 **Veteran's Day - Observed**  
Local Office Closed

17 **Ballots Mailed for Officer Election**

23-24 **Thanksgiving Holiday**  
Local Office Closed



### 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**



### DECEMBER 2023

6 **Chief Stewards Meeting - 9:30am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

13 **RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

13 **Membership Meeting - 6:00pm**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

27 **Ballots Counted For Officer Elections**

25 **Christmas Day**  
Local Office Closed



31 **New Year's Eve**

Are you "WEARING RED" on Thursdays?

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR:** Membership Meeting - Wednesday, September 13, 2023 - 6:00pm  
RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, September 13, 2023 - 11:00am



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Marilyn Irwin - President

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