

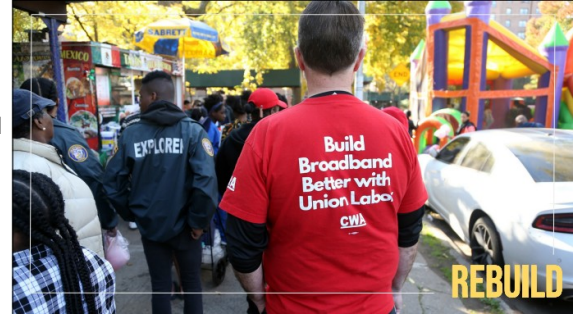
## President Biden's Infrastructure Law is Building Better Broadband

Congress passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), a once-in-a-generation investment in our nation's infrastructure and competitiveness back in 2021. For far too long, Washington policymakers had celebrated "infrastructure week" without ever agreeing to build infrastructure. The President promised to work across the aisle to deliver results and rebuild our crumbling infrastructure. The President then put forward his plan to do exactly that and negotiated a deal with Members of Congress from both parties.

This Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will rebuild America's roads, bridges and rails, expand access to clean drinking water, ensure every American has access to high-speed internet, tackle the climate crisis, advance environmental justice, and invest in communities that have too often been left behind. The legislation will help ease inflationary pressures and strengthen supply chains by making long overdue improvements for our nation's ports, airports, rail, and roads. It will drive the creation of good-paying union jobs and grow the economy sustainably and equitably so that everyone gets ahead for decades to come. Combined with the President's Build Back Framework, it will add on average 1.5 million jobs per year for the next 10 years.

Particularly important to all CWA members in this legislation was ensuring every American has access to reliable high-speed internet. Broadband internet is necessary for Americans to do their jobs, to partici-

\$65 billion to help ensure that every American has access to reliable high-speed internet through a historic investment in broadband infrastructure deployment. The legislation will also help lower prices for internet service and help close the digital divide, so that more Americans can afford internet access.



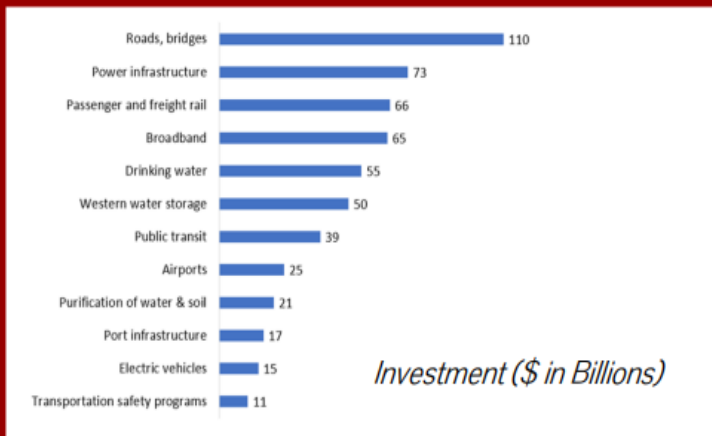
In early November, CWA announced a slate of new industry and employer partnerships to support technician training, as all fifty states prepare plans for subsidizing high-speed broadband buildouts under President Biden's "Internet for All" initiative. The announcement came as CWA headlined a White House event celebrating commitments made under the administration's Talent Pipeline Challenge, a call to action for employers, unions, education and training providers, philanthropic organizations, and state and local leaders to make tangible commitments that support equitable workforce development within the broadband, construction, and electric vehicle sectors. The effort aims to ensure highly skilled and trained workers are ready to meet the demands of implementing the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

As the country's largest union representing telecommunications workers, CWA will advance a number of new and expanded initiatives, including statewide expansion of fiber technician apprenticeship across California led by CWA District 9.

"CWA has a long history of labor-management training partnerships, and CWA-represented broadband technicians have been critical in training and mentoring technicians of the future," said CWA President Chris Shelton. "With significant investment from the Biden Administration and strong commitments in place from our industry partners, we can make these highly skilled and technical careers within reach for many more workers, including former technicians who are on the sidelines due to years of job cuts. It is critical not only to diversify our workforce and offer opportunities for economic mobility and job security, but to meet the nation's urgent need for high-speed fiber broadband in every home."

As a high-road employer, national provider AT&T also committed to collaborating with CWA to explore efforts to attract, train, and retain employees, with a focus on current AT&T employees and recruitment from populations who have not traditionally worked in technician positions. AT&T and CWA are working to create a pilot apprenticeship program for new employees to develop the skills required for technician positions, which would be compensated so employees can learn on the job.

### Bipartisan Infrastructure Law



pate equally in school learning, health care, and to stay connected. Yet, by one definition, more than 30 million Americans live in areas where there is no broadband infrastructure that provides minimally acceptable speeds – a particular problem in rural communities throughout the country. And, according to the latest OECD data, among 35 countries studied, the United States has the second highest broadband costs. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will deliver

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

**"If you're going through hell, keep going."...**

**Winston Churchill**

As I have never met the man, the suicide of forty year-old Stephen tWitch Boss on December 13<sup>th</sup> has bothered me more than I would have ever imagined.



A beloved dancer and DJ, tWitch was seen on the television shows So You Think You Can Dance, The Ellen DeGeneres Show and Ellen's Game of Games. He met his beautiful wife, Allison Holker Boss on SYTYCD, and the parents of three had just celebrated their ninth wedding anniversary and posted one of their adorable dancing videos days before his suicide.

Every tribute written by the celebrities who knew him talked about the light and joy that tWitch brought into every room he entered. I think Justin Timberlake said it best: "It's heartbreaking to hear that someone who brought so much joy to a room was hurting so much behind closed doors... You just never know what someone is really going through." On the outside, everyone saw tWitch's enormous smile and joyful dance moves. No one saw a man on the verge of suicide.

Mental health professionals say that suicide is a desperate attempt to escape suffering that has become unbearable. Blinded by feelings of self-loathing, hopelessness and isolation, a suicidal person can't see any way of finding relief except through death. Suicide is the leading cause of death in the U.S., resulting in one death every eleven minutes. In 2020, an estimated 12.2 million adults seriously thought about suicide, 3.2 million made a plan, and 1.2 million attempted suicide, with 46,000 being successful.

Being connected to family and community support and having easy access to health care can decrease suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Unfortunately, many who are experiencing suicidal thoughts worry about the stigma attached to needing mental health care, and don't reach out for it. "We would never tell someone with a broken leg that they should stop wallowing and get it together", said Michelle Obama. "We don't consider taking medication for an ear infection something to be ashamed of. We shouldn't treat mental health conditions any differently."

If you or someone you know is in a crisis, please call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.TALK** or just dial **988**, the new three digit Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. You can also chat with someone there at **988Lifeline.org**. They offer free and confidential support for people in distress, and prevention and crisis resources for you and your loved ones.

For those who are not suicidal, but are struggling with stress, anxiety, depression, or need help with how to handle problems with money, marriage, family, substance or alcohol abuse, etc. there is help available for you, too. For our Verizon members, you can call the **Behavioral Health** number on the back of your health insurance card, **800.453.8440** for help in finding a therapist or treatment facility that accepts your insurance. We also have access to 3-5 **EAP** visits (per issue) which can be scheduled by calling **888.441.8674**. EAP visits provide you with access to a counselor who can assess your needs and offer you help, or refer you to an in-network therapist to see (using your insurance) if more than 3-5 visits are deemed necessary. Time spent in EAP appointments and the time needed to travel to and from the appointments during your normal tour is paid for by the company, but you must advise your supervisor of the appointment in advance to be granted the excused time with pay. You don't need to explain why you are attending an EAP appointment, but you do need to advise that you have an EAP appointment scheduled.

We don't know what people who are struggling are going through. Hug your loved ones. Call your friends. Reach out to people in need. Ex-

tend a little grace and kindness in your words and actions towards others. And if you or someone you know is in need of help, reach out for it....ask for it....scream it from the rooftops if no one is listening, until you get that help. Don't smile and dance and light up the room for everyone else while you are hurting. There is hope. There is help.

In Solidarity,

*Marilyn*

## Check Out the New ACFC Website

The Advisory Council on Family Care (ACFC) has launched anew website at **ACFCcares.com**. Some of the new features of this updated site include easier access to services and programs available to you and your family and updated content.



The ACFC is a joint CWA and Verizon work/life committee serving the CWA-represented employees in the Mid-Atlantic region. They think diligently about how to help you with your work, life, and family responsibilities. We accomplish this by providing resources, securing programs, and offering toolkits with the bargained for funds the committee receives.

The ACFC includes members from both management and the union who work together to develop resources that will help you manage your day-to-day responsibilities.

Since 1986, the ACFC has been responsible for researching, developing, evaluating, funding, monitoring, deploying, and communicating programs and initiatives in the following areas:

- Child and elder care resource and referral services.
- Community development programs to increase and expand family care services and educational programs in the communities where employees reside or work.
- Family care education programs for employees and their families.
- Surveys, studies, and reports addressing the needs of employees and the changing scope of family care.

Programs are available to employees outside of work time to help them deal with stress.

## Holiday Spirit Shines at 5 N. Frederick Garage



**Holiday spirit abounded at Verizon's 5 North Frederick Avenue garage in Gaithersburg December 21st! Our members and the local managers joined together to celebrate the holidays with a scrumptious home-cooked dinner and fun-filled gift exchange. Christmas music, a decorated tree and Rob Willis' ugly Christmas sweater set the mood for an evening of laughter and comradery, and a great time was had by all! The officers of Local 2108 appreciate being invited to share your Holiday Party with you!**

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 Online Workshop

**Thursday, January 12, 2023 at 6:30 PM** - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

## Medicare Basics Online Workshop

**Tuesday, January 17, 2023 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](https://www.nettworth.net).

## AETOS Employees Join CWA 2108

CWA Local 2108 is pleased to announce that we have added seven new members to our local. Five Voice Technical Operator Leads and two Voice Technical Operator A, who work for government contractor AETOS, joined Local 2108 when their previous local, CWA Local 2300, was dissolved. Their employer was Honeywell prior to AETOS being awarded the contract.

These seven technicians handle the telecommunications systems at Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt 24/7/365.

The previous contract that these techs worked under was scheduled to expire on December 23, 2022. A new five-year Tentative Agreement was negotiated between AETOS and CWA, and it was ratified on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. A general wage increase of 15.08% over the life of the agreement was negotiated. CWA District 2-13 Staff Representative Lisa Fazzini and member Howard Morton worked together to negotiate the Tentative Agreement on behalf of all in the workgroup, and their hard work is appreciated.

While we still can't say that CWA Local 2108 members are rocket scientists, we can now say that it is because of our members that the rocket scientists can communicate with each other!

Welcome to Local 2108 **Robert Augustyniak, McKinley Brown, Michael Chamberlain, Gabriel Djinn, Howard Morton, George Powell and Lawrence Wild.**

## Get Your Unused Vacation on the Books!!

As you are aware, recent negotiations with Verizon have modified how unused vacation days from calendar year 2022 may be scheduled and utilized by March 31, 2023. Any and all requests for specific dates to be used in 2021 will be considered on a **first come, first served basis** and approval will be based on the contractual 18% and 12% ratios set forth in the "Vacation Scheduling Percentages" Letter of Understanding. **Any 2022 Vacation, paid or unpaid Excused Work Days not selected and not taken by March 31, 2023 shall be forfeited and not eligible for selection or "in lieu of" payment after March 31, 2023.**



CWA Local 2108 is advising all members who have unused vacation from 2022 to be aware of potential scheduling conflicts with vacation scheduling percentages. With a "use it or lose it" policy in effect, there may be a mad dash to get unused vacation scheduled as we move closer to March 31st.

## Personals

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

Retiree **Al Scully** who passed away on December 12, 2022.

## Welcome to Local 2108

### New Members

#### Tonja Jones

Erica Whitmire  
Yesenia Umana  
Noelle Swanson  
Nina Crites  
Rashanda Banks  
Annette Beverley



## 2023 Union Plus Scholarship Program Accepting Applications Now

Since 1991, the Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$5.2 million to students of working families who want to begin or continue their post-secondary education. Over 3,600 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 31st of the scholarship year..

### 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, 2023**. 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 2023. Students may re-apply each year.

### Award date:

The Scholarship Committee will determine recipients of scholarship awards by May 31 each year.

### Isaiah's Award

Isaiah's Award was created to honor the exceptional life of Isaiah C., a beloved child, fostered and adopted by a current, long-time employee of Union Plus. Isaiah was a smart, talented, spiritual, generous and kind young man. It is our wish that his gentle spirit live on, in part, through this namesake scholarship.

Applicants for Isaiah's Award must have a special connection to the foster care system, and will be asked in their application to describe their personal, employment, volunteer experiences, or career goals related to the foster care system.

### To apply, go to:

<https://www.unionplus.org/benefits/money/union-plus-scholarships>

**Are you "WEARING RED" on  
Thursdays?**



## Video Game Workers Launch Union Drive at ZeniMax

Workers at Microsoft-owned video game developer ZeniMax Studios are organizing and attempting to form the first U.S. union at the tech giant.

About 300 quality assurance (QA) workers are attempting to join the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the union announced last month. The workers are based at company sites in Hunt Valley and Rockville, Maryland and Austin and Dallas, Texas. Per CWA, Microsoft has agreed to voluntarily recognize the union if a majority of the ZeniMax Studios workers vote to join in a card count.

In June, Microsoft signaled an open stance toward labor unions when president and vice chair Brad Smith published a memo stating the company is "committed to creative and collaborative approaches with unions when employees wish to exercise their rights and Microsoft is presented with a specific unionization proposal." Later that month, the CWA — which has been actively organizing at video game holding company Activision Blizzard, which Microsoft purchased in a \$68.7 billion megadeal earlier in the year — inked a labor neutrality agreement with Microsoft. If the Microsoft-Activision Blizzard deal passes regulatory scrutiny and closes, the neutrality agreement will go into effect 60 days after.

"We applaud Microsoft for remaining neutral through this process and letting workers decide for themselves whether they want a union," CWA president Christopher Shelton said in a statement. "The company is fulfilling the commitments they laid out in their labor principals earlier this year, while sending a resounding message to the video game industry: the right to freely and fairly make a choice about union representation should be in the hands of the workers, not management."

A Microsoft spokesperson added, "The recent organizing efforts of ZeniMax employees, and Microsoft and ZeniMax's neutrality toward this, are an example of our labor principles in action. We remain committed to providing employees with an opportunity to freely and fairly make choices about their workplace representation."

If the ZeniMax workers vote to unionize, CWA Local 2108 will represent nearly 160 workers in Rockville.




## Local 2108 Calendar

### JANUARY 2023

- 1 **New Year's Day**  

- 2 **New Year's Day - Observed**  
Local Office Closed
- 11 **RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 11 **Membership Meeting - 6:00pm**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 16 **Martin Luther King Birthday**

### FEBRUARY 2023

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

- 20 **President's Day**  
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, January 11, 2023 - 6:00pm  
RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, January 11, 2023 - 11:00am



10782 Rhode Island Avenue, Beltsville, MD 20705

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Johnny Brown - Secretary-Treasurer

Amory Proctor - Executive Vice President

Marilyn Irwin - President

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