

## Early Bargaining With Verizon Hits Many Roadblocks - Talks to Resume in 2026

In late May, CWA, IBEW, and Verizon began negotiations to determine whether an agreement could be reached to extend the current collective bargaining agreements.

By late June, significant differences remained between the parties' proposals, and the Unions informed the Company of our intention to conclude negotiations. At the Company's request, a high-level meeting was held, during which the Unions agreed to continue discussions, with the understanding that the Company was prepared to more fully address the Unions' concerns.

Despite these continued efforts, the Company did not adequately respond to the needs and priorities of our members. Instead, the Company chose to end the bargaining process.

While the scope of bargaining was limited in an attempt to achieve a contract extension that the membership would ratify, CWA attempted to address issues that needed resolution immediately, issues that couldn't be kicked down the road for another 5 years.

A pressing concern CWA could not leave negotiations without a resolution were Pre-Medicare retiree health care costs. The price tag has sky-rocketed over that past few years and those who are retired and not Medicare eligible, have seen exorbitant increases of monthly premiums. Verizon maintained that they were not willing to move off the \$12,580 cap negotiated many years ago.

CWA attempted to restore cost-of-living adjustments, defined pensions to those not eligible and to protect defined-benefit accruals. Verizon made minimal movement over these issues but fell way short of anything CWA could agree to or to try and get ratified by the membership.

CWA pressed for stricter "no-layoff" and "no-outsourcing" language, especially to overseas call centers. Verizon aimed to maintain broader management discretion on subcontracting and third-party staffing. Verizon also indicated they wanted to start sharing calls, under the terms of the 5G Sales and Service and Tech Support Letter of Agreement, utilizing Verizon Wireless employees.

These core disagreements over wages, benefits, work flexibility, retirement security, and outsourcing controls proved too wide to bridge in the short "extension" talks.

Full-blown bargaining with Verizon will take place in 2026, CWA Local 2108 will be preparing bargaining surveys to roll out to the membership early next year. CWA Local 2108 also wants to advise all members, because of the complexity of next years negotiations, that now is the time to start preparing for protracted bargaining and the potential for a work stoppage.



## ZeniMax Workers Mobilize as Microsoft Carries Out Mass Lay-offs

Just two weeks after the ratification of their first collective bargaining agreement, ZeniMax Media, Inc. - a subsidiary in Microsoft's Gaming Division, laid off a significant number of unionized Quality Assurance workers at the company. This comes after two years of negotiating with the company for improvements on working conditions including better wages, AI protections, outsourcing protections, and more.

The impacted members include Quality Assurance workers from CWA local 2108, 2100, and 6215.

As a response, the union is rallying and picketing outside of their offices during their lunch hour every week. Signs and chants include phrases like, "SOS - Save Our Studios", "Microsoft Runs On Layoffs", and "We Deserve Better"

Currently, CWA and select members of the ZeniMax Bargaining Committee are fighting to place some people back into jobs and for improvements on some of the severance terms that were offered.

"We are deeply disappointed in Microsoft's decision to lay off thousands more workers, including union-represented CWA members, at a time when the company is prospering," said Communications Workers of America President Claude Cummings Jr. "We will be bargaining with the company over these layoffs, and CWA District Vice Presidents Mike Davis and Derrick Osobase will remain directly involved in ensuring that our members are supported and treated with dignity throughout this process."

Workers in the video game industry have been under constant threat of layoffs, with Electronic Arts, Sony Interactive Entertainment, Unity Technologies, and countless others scaling back their workforces in recent months. These layoffs are often announced without warning, leaving workers who create the products responsible for the companies' successes scrambling to survive while executives and investors reap the benefits of record-breaking profits.



## August Membership Meeting Cancelled

Due to the Executive Board attending the CWA Bi-Annual Convention on August 11-13, 2025 in Pittsburgh, PA, a motion was adopted at the July 2025 membership meeting to cancel the August membership meeting. The RMC meeting for August has been cancelled as well.



We look forward to seeing everyone at our next regularly scheduled membership meeting on September 10, 2025 at 6pm.

# CWA UNBREAKABLE - Today, Tomorrow, and in the Future

Since the founding of our union nearly 80 years ago, CWA members have united to dedicate our time, our energy, and our financial resources to build a better future for ourselves and our families.

The Members' Relief Fund (MRF), the Strategic Industry Fund (SIF), and the Growth Fund strengthen our union and provide a critical foundation for our work. The Members' Relief Fund supports members and their families when it is necessary to strike to win a fair contract while the SIF and Growth Funds enable us to build our bargaining power and our union through innovative programs.

These funds have evolved over time in response to our union's changing needs and challenges. In the 1950s, Convention delegates established a special \$0.50 assessment to finance a strike fund and pay strike benefits. During the 17-week NYNEX strike in 1989 those strike resources were insufficient to meet the needs of the striking members. A loan of \$15 million from the Japanese telecommunications union enabled us to hold the line and win a fair contract.



In order to ensure that CWA did not find itself in such a position in the future, delegates to the 1990 Convention voted to increase dues ¼ hour to create the Members Relief Fund.

By 2006, even after numerous strikes resulting in payment of benefits to members, the MRF balance had grown to \$377 million. Convention delegates recognized that amount was more than enough to support any future strike activity and created the Strategic Industry Fund, reallocating the ¼ hour dues to better serve our members by funding projects designed to increase our bargaining power and carry out proactive campaigns.

In 2013 Convention delegates created the Growth Fund as a complement to the SIF, for projects designed to build our union through education, organizing, activism, and political action. The Growth Fund was funded through half of the MRF's annual investment earnings. As was famously said at the time, keeping funds locked in the MRF would turn it into a fur-lined golden casket in which CWA would be buried.

Convention delegates enhanced the funding stream for the SIF and Growth Fund in 2019 by combining the ¼ hour dues income and all of the investment earnings into a single funding flow that was then used to affiliate CWA annually with the AFL-CIO and the Canadian Labour Congress. Remaining funds were evenly divided between the SIF and Growth Fund. Further adjustments were made by Convention delegates in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, allocating part of the SIF balance to hire regular, full-time staff representatives and organizing coordinators to better directly serve members.

When the SIF was created, Convention delegates set a floor for the MRF. If the MRF balance falls below this floor due to an extended strike, all contributions revert back to the MRF until it reaches the floor once again. The floor established in 2006 was not based on an analysis of the amount of funds that would be needed to sustain potential strikes; rather it was equal to the balance of the MRF as of July 11, 2006: \$377 million.

When delegates balanced the SIF and Growth Fund funding streams in 2019, they established a "soft" floor. If the MRF falls below \$400 million, half of all investment earnings are retained in the MRF and the other half are used to cover the annual AFL-CIO and Canadian Labour Con-

gress affiliations. Any remaining funds are equally split between the SIF and Growth Fund.

The number of CWA members eligible for MRF benefits has fallen from 396,900 in 2006 when the floor was established to 211,000 today. At the same time the size of our largest striking units has declined precipitously. Our largest strike since the SIF and Growth Funds were established was in 2016 when 36,500 members at Verizon received \$42 million in benefits. Today, those Verizon units are 55% of their previous size.

This year, following a \$25 million payout to 17,000 AT&T Southeast members who were on strike for a month, the MRF dipped below the "soft" floor of \$400 million. This means that SIF and Growth Funds will not be receiving any investment income from the MRF. This will have a direct negative impact on our programs and our employees working to build our union, even though the MRF's strike support capacity stands strong.

Over the past twelve years, our SIF and Growth Fund projects have allowed our union to engage in robust mobilization for bargaining, expand into new industries, and pass legislation that increases job opportunities for our members, while maintaining our ability to strike. However, because the funding for those projects relies partially on the MRF's investment earnings, it is highly variable, ranging from a high of \$52 million to \$0 in years where there was a net loss. This variability makes long-term strategic planning difficult. The high bar arbitrarily set by the hard and soft floors adds additional uncertainty.

To address this situation the CWA Executive Board analyzed our MRF resources and potential strike activity and voted to propose two adjustments to the MRF rules.

The first adjustment will provide more consistent funding for the SIF and Growth Funds by lowering the MRF floor and adding predictability to the investment allocation. Based on the number of members currently eligible for strike benefits, we can safely lower the soft floor to \$350 million and the hard floor to \$325 million. Instead of a variable annual investment allocation, SIF and Growth Funds will receive a combined allocation of \$14 million from the MRF's accumulated investment earnings each year. The average annual earnings have been slightly above \$15 million over the last ten years.

**This does not mean we will move \$75 million from the MRF to the SIF and Growth Funds. We are adjusting the floor so that during challenging periods we will continue to be able to use investment income from the MRF to fund critical SIF and Growth Fund programs.**

The second adjustment addresses strike benefits, which were last set in 2019 at \$300 per week beginning on the fifteenth day of a strike and \$400 per week beginning on the twenty-ninth day of a strike. The Executive Board proposes raising strike benefits to \$400 a week beginning on the fifteenth day of a strike and \$500 per week beginning on the twenty-ninth day of a strike.

Our outside financial consultants confirmed our internal analysis that the MRF is financially strong enough to incorporate these changes even in financial downturns, and their stress test confirms that we have sufficient resources to make these changes. Further, the Secretary-Treasurer has worked with the financial consultants to implement an investment approach designed to reliably generate the target investment income of \$14 million annually.

The Defense Fund Oversight Committee reviews and reports on the Members Relief Fund, SIF, and Growth Funds annually. The Executive Board will conduct a special review of the impact of these changes in four years.

These changes maintain a strong Members Relief Fund while better meeting striking members' financial needs. They also ensure a more consistent flow of resources to the Strategic Industry Fund and Growth Fund programs which allow us to grow and strengthen our union to be prepared for all the challenges that we will face in the future.

# Maryland's New Heat Stress Regulations



Heat-related illness has been acknowledged as a workplace hazard for many years. Understanding heat stress can help maintain safety when working in hot conditions. Workers exposed to extreme heat or hot environments face risks of heat stress, leading to various occupational illnesses and injuries such as heat stroke, exhaustion, cramps, and rashes. Heat also heightens the risk of accidents due to sweaty palms, fogged safety glasses, and dizziness, while burns can result from contact with hot surfaces or steam. Those particularly vulnerable to heat stress include outdoor laborers and workers in occupations like fire-fighting, baking, farming, construction, mining, boiler operation, and manufacturing. Workers over 65, overweight individuals, those with heart disease or high blood pressure, and those on medications sensitive to heat are at greater risk. Preventing heat stress is vital. Employers should train workers on recognizing, preventing, and managing heat stress to safeguard their health and safety.

Maryland's heat stress standard, **COMAR 09.12.32** went into effect September 30, 2024. The standard applies to all workplaces where the heat index is 80° F or higher.

### Heat Stress Standard: Summary of Key Maryland Requirements

Maryland Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH) Heat Stress Standards apply to both indoor and outdoor workplaces where there is employee exposure to a heat index at or above 80 degrees Fahrenheit. This document is intended to provide guidance on the Maryland Heat Stress Standards. Employers should refer to COMAR 09.12.32 for full requirements of the standards.

### Heat Index Monitoring:

The heat index is to be monitored through direct measurements, local weather data, or the NIOSH Heat Safety Tool application.

### Heat-Related Illness Prevention and Management Plan:

A written plan must be developed, implemented, and maintained. The plan should be available and accessible to employees and MOSH upon request.

### Acclimatization:

Employees who are newly exposed to heat or are returning from 7 or more days of absence are to be provided with acclimatization for a period of up to 14 days. During the acclimatization period, employees are to be closely monitored through regular observation and/or communication. An acclimatization schedule is to be put in writing.

### Shade:

Shaded areas are to be provided for employee rest periods. If a shaded area is demonstrably infeasible or unsafe alternative cooling and control methods must be implemented. Cooling with an indoor mechanical ventilation system may be used as an alternative.

### Drinking Water:

Suitably cool drinking water must be provided to employees at no cost and located as close to the work area as practicable. Each employee should have at least 32 ounces of water per hour available to them.

### High Heat Procedures:

When the heat index reaches or exceeds 90°F high heat procedures shall be implemented. This includes employee rest periods or alternative cooling and control measures, and mandatory employee monitoring. Rest periods should follow the table below or NIOSH recommendations.

### Heat Index

Above 90 Degrees  
Above 100 Degrees

### Rest Period

Minimum of 10 minutes every 2 hours  
Minimum of 15 minutes every hour

Employers shall implement an emergency response plan. This plan shall include procedures for communication, response, monitoring and care, emergency contact, and transport.

### Training:

Employees and supervisors shall be provided prior to initial heat expo-

sure. Retraining is to be conducted annually, and immediately following an incident at the worksite involving a suspected or confirmed heat-related illness. The training must be presented in a manner employees can understand. Training records shall be maintained for one year and provided to MOSH upon request.

### Symptoms and Causes of Heat Illness

As indicated by its name, heat illness conditions arise due to heat exposure, where excessive heat raises the body's core temperature. Prolonged exposure to abnormal levels of heat and humidity, without sufficient relief or fluid intake, can trigger a range of heat-related illnesses. Sweating becomes ineffective in cooling the body. Heat illness can range from mild to life-threatening, including several different conditions. Heat-related illnesses can impact employees' job performance and elevate their likelihood of experiencing accidents.

### The most common heat illness is categorized as either mild or severe.

**Heat Rash** - Occurs when excessive perspiration becomes trapped beneath the skin, obstructing sweat glands.

**Heat Cramps** - Muscle cramps can develop when intense sweating causes the loss of electrolytes and fluids, typically during exercise in hot conditions.

**Heat Exhaustion** - This condition can occur following prolonged exposure to high temperatures without adequate fluid intake.

**Heat Stroke** - Results from a rapid rise in core body temperature due to elevated heat and humidity. Most serious heat-related illness.



### Personals

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

**Frances Elizabeth Wiggins**, Grandmother of member **Marcus Chambers**, who passed away on July 23, 2025.

### Congratulations to Recent Retirees:

**David Nau**  
**Thomas Cunningham**

## 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!!

### Markets in Motion

**Tuesday, August 12, 2025 at 6:30 PM - Via Zoom**

On-line workshop for all CWA locals

This workshop will cover historical market returns, asset accumulation studies without retirement distributions and with retirement distributions, impact of declines, interest rates and treasury yield curves, an update on major capital markets over the last 2 years, risk based models, and help establish reasonable expectations with market returns.

### Retirement - What to Expect

**Thursday, August 28, 2025 @ 6:30PM - Via Zoom**

On-line workshop for all CWA locals

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

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

# Content, Technology & Operations Workers From ZeniMax Join 2108

A majority of video game workers across two different departments at Microsoft subsidiary ZeniMax Media, represented by CWA, have indicated that they wish to join CWA either by signing a union authorization card or voting via an online portal.

CWA Local 2108 will represent workers in the Content, Technology & Operations (CTO) department. And CWA Local 2100 will represent ZeniMax workers in the Customer Service/User Research (CS/UR) department, and CWA In accordance with its stated labor principles, Microsoft has recognized both unions.

The formation of these two unions came just weeks after over 300 quality assurance workers at Microsoft overwhelmingly voted to ratify their first contract with the tech giant, after two years of negotiations. The collective bargaining agreement sets new standards for the video game industry, including a crediting policy that acknowledges QA workers' contributions to the games they help create, and also incorporates a previously announced agreement on how artificial intelligence is introduced and implemented into the workplace.

"Video game workers at ZeniMax are joining a growing movement that's rewriting the rules of what it means to work on video games," said CWA Local 2108 President Johnny Brown. "We're thrilled to stand with them as they bring more momentum to fight for better working conditions and a seat at the table here in Maryland and across the industry."

Workers are now in the process of establishing a Bargaining Committee and a Mobilization Committee and will begin negotiating their first contract soon.

The Campaign to Organize Digital Employees (CODE-CWA) is a network of worker-organizers and their staff working every single day to build the voice and power necessary to ensure the future of the tech, game, and digital industries in the United States and Canada. CODE-CWA is a project of the Communications Workers of America, which represents hundreds of thousands of workers throughout tech, media, telecom, and other industries who stand together to fight for justice on the job and in our communities.



# Local 2108 Calendar

## AUGUST 2025

- 10 CWA District 2-13 Annual Meeting  
Pittsburgh, PA
- 11-13 CWA 80th Convention  
Pittsburgh, PA
- 13 RMC 2108 Meeting - Cancelled  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 13 Membership Meeting - Cancelled  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

## SEPTEMBER 2025

- 1 Labor Day  
Local Office Closed



- 10 RMC 2108 Meeting - Cancelled  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 10 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, August 13, 2025 - 6:00pm—CANCELLED  
RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, August 13, 2025 - 11:00am - CANCELLED

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