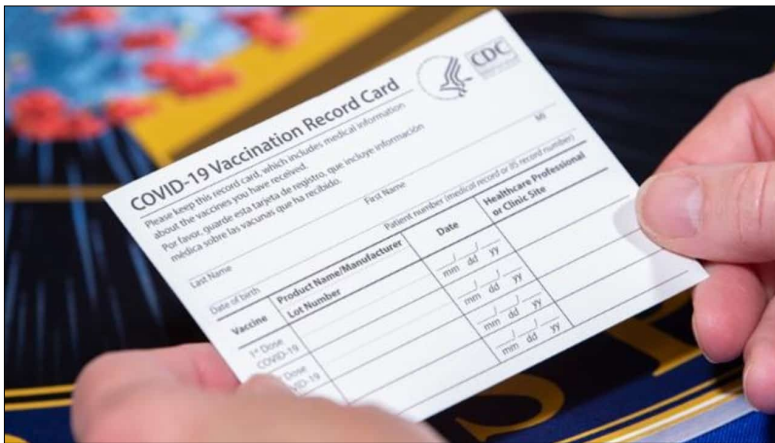


CWA & Verizon Reach Impasse Over Vaccine Mandate

On October 14, 2021, Verizon notified CWA and IBEW of its intent to mandate the COVID-19 vaccine for the unionized workforce unless an individual has an approved exemption. The Company cited safety of employees and customers and the need to comply with federal, state, local and customer requirements as its reason.

CWA and IBEW requested to bargain over the effects that a mandate may have on our members. The Unions and Verizon began negotiations on October 28th. CWA requested information to determine if it was necessary under the federal mandate applicable to federal contractors, to apply a vaccine mandate to all employees.

Throughout the course of negotiations, the Unions' position remained firm that employees who do not perform work in connection with a federal contract or do not work in a location with others who perform work in connection with a federal contract, should not fall under the federal contractor mandate and therefore they should not be mandated to be vaccinated. In lieu of mandating vaccinations for employees not covered by President Biden's Executive Order regarding federal contractors, CWA and IBEW proposed applying the workplace safety protocols issued by OSHA – protocols that include testing and masking for unvaccinated employees. Verizon was insistent that it would not agree to any proposal that required them to have two policies. The Company's position, which is consistent with various other employers who have federal contracts and fall under the Biden Executive Order, is that creating two tiers of standards – one that applies to employees who are covered by the Executive Order and another standard for employees who are not covered – will be extremely difficult to administer, and could lead to the Company inadvertently violating the federal requirements for vendors, potentially risking the loss of federal government work.



The parties had several bargaining meetings and continued to exchange proposals over the terms of the proposed policy, its implementation and its effect on our members. CWA and IBEW consistently maintained that the Company could distinguish between employees covered by the Executive Order and those that are not. In addition, we advanced proposals designed to protect the jobs of our members who for medical, religious or personal reasons choose not to be vaccinated. We stressed the various options for such members, including accommodations that would permit employees who qualify for exemptions to comply with OSHA's safety protocols while continuing to perform their job duties.

On November 16, 2021, the Company presented a Last Best Final offer, which included modifications based on the Union's counter proposals to Verizon, including extending the deadline for Verizon's vaccine requirement for the unionized workforce to February 1, 2022.

The Unions made a counter proposal to the Company's Last Best Final offer which was rejected, with the Company continuing to insist on one policy that covers all of its employees.

The following are some of the key aspects of the Company's last offer:

- Employees who do not get at least one dose of the vaccine prior to February 1, 2022 may be placed on unpaid leave for at least 60 days.
- If at any point during that unpaid leave the employee submits proof of partial vaccination, the leave will be suspended and the employee will be permitted to return to work abiding by applicable safety protocols.
- An employee who does not get at least a first dose of a vaccine prior to the expiration of the 60 day unpaid leave may be separated at the end of the leave.
- Employees will have the opportunity to apply for medical and religious exemptions.
- Employees who are unable to get vaccinated during non-work hours will continue to have up to 4 hours of paid leave to get a first dose and up to another 4 hours of paid leave to get a second dose of a two dose vaccine.

During negotiations, CWA was constantly monitoring several challenges to the federal contractor mandate. There were numerous lawsuits filed by a host of states (Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah, Texas, and West Virginia), and litigation is pending in federal district courts in Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, and Washington DC. At least one court (U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona) has denied injunctive relief. Requests for injunctive relief are pending in other courts. The litigation filed to date is comprehensive and will, in due course, resolve the legality of the contractor mandate. Additionally, some states (Florida and Texas, to name two) have set up a states right contest, by banning (through legislation or executive order) vaccine mandates, or the enforcement of vaccine mandates.

With that being said, the contractor mandate is still in effect and federal contractors are being directed to amend over 17,000 federal contracts. In general, the federal government has the right to set the rules that govern federal contracts. While any of the above lawsuits could result in the contractor mandate being enjoined or overturned, most legal commentators do not expect these lawsuits to succeed given the government's broad authority to set contract conditions and qualifications.

The contractor vaccine mandate is broad, and applies to every employee of a federal contractor. By its plain language, the Executive Order is very broad. Per the November 10, 2021 guidance issued by the White House, the mandate applies to all "parties who contract with the Federal Government." Covered contractors include "a prime contractor or subcontractor **at any tier**" and covered employees include "**any full time or part time employee** of a covered contractor working on or in connection with a covered contract . . ." including "employees of covered contractors **who are not themselves** working on or in con-

Vaccine Mandate (continued on page 2)

"It's the most wonderful time of the year....."



Prior to 2020 and the coronavirus, I would be spending my spare time right now shopping, decorating our meeting room and planning to cook hundreds of pancakes for our members, retirees and their children at Local 2108's annual Breakfast with Santa. When we cancelled the event last December due to the pandemic, I couldn't imagine that COVID-19 would still affect our lives today, causing us to cancel the event again this year, but unfortunately it does. I miss seeing the giddy faces of all the children, and the smiles of all the adults as we watched them climb up on Santa's lap and whisper into his ear. While I've never been a fan of mall crowds, I also miss feeling comfortable heading to the mall once or twice before Christmas to finish my shopping. It saddens me to realize that my oldest grandson probably won't believe when the time comes that my daughter feels safe taking him to sit on Santa's lap again.....

But instead of buying Bisquick and stuffing goody bags right now, I'm fielding calls from members who are concerned that the federal vaccine mandate could mean that they will lose their jobs. As reported on page one of the 2108News, Verizon has announced to their union-represented employees that they will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence February 1, 2022 unless they provide proof they have received the COVID-19 vaccine, or are **approved** for a medical or religious exemption. If employees remain un-vaxxed after the LOA, they could be terminated. Like many other employers, VZ is also updating its hiring rules effective January 1, 2022, requiring potential candidates to be vaccinated before they will even be considered for employment. Please consider that before you make the decision to leave your job at Verizon.... It's possible that any job you apply for in the future could require that you be vaccinated to get hired there.

Negotiating our members off the payroll is not something CWA will be a part of. We tried to negotiate other options for those who choose not to get vaccinated, such as weekly testing and/or mask wearing, but VZ would not agree to that. The company believes that the federal mandates require them to prove that all of their employees are vaccinated. There are many cases in many courts, claiming that the federal vax mandate is not legal. We will all watch closely to see what happens in the courts. IF the courts stay (stop) the federal vax mandate, we will then have to watch to see if Verizon rescinds their vaccine requirement policy.

I have already spoken with many of our members about the vax mandate, as have Local 2108's other officers, chief stewards and stewards. Some of our members are adamant that they will not take the vaccine, and don't feel that Verizon nor the federal government should be permitted to require it. On the flip side, I've heard from members who are concerned that they will have to work near unvaccinated coworkers, fearing they will be exposed to COVID-19 and could possibly take it home to vulnerable family or friends.

For our members who are still unwilling to get the COVID-19 vaccine, I'm going to ask two things of you: First (and yes, I have suggested this before), I'm asking you to do lots of research on the vaccines before you make a final decision. Don't just read the research that supports your position. Second, if you still do not want to get the vaccine, before you let Verizon put you on an unpaid leave of absence and ultimately take away your job, please call me. I will speak with each and

every one of our members who are in danger of losing their job. I will discuss the pension and/or 401(k) plan with a company match that you will be walking away from. I will discuss the great medical benefits with a modest premium (compared to what most Americans pay) that you will lose. We can talk about other job opportunities you might have and compare rates of pay and whether those employers require their employees to be vaccinated now or if they might in the future. While I don't have a crystal ball to know what future contracts will include, I can explain the retiree benefits our current retirees enjoy.

Bottom line: I don't want a single one of our members to walk away from their good, union job (note: I didn't say it was a perfect or wonderful job) **because they didn't think their decision through thoroughly, and then regret it later.**

In the meantime, no matter what you celebrate, I wish every one of you and yours a beautiful holiday season full of love and togetherness, and a healthy and happy new year!

In Solidarity,

Marilyn

Vaccine Mandate (from page 1)

nection with a covered contract." In other words, the Order explicitly includes employees who are not directly engaged in performing specific work under contract, such as those in clerical work, sales and inside service, so long as they perform such duties for the contractor. Since impasse has been reached in negotiations, Verizon has issued guidelines for all union represented employees for vaccine requirements.

Union-represented employees, including those currently working from home, will be required to be fully vaccinated or apply for a legally-recognized accommodation no later than **January 4, 2022**. Between January 4 and February 1, Verizon will follow up on the information that individuals submitted.

Action required: Verify your vaccination status by January 4, 2022.

Verizon will be providing all employees with a Vaccine Verification Form where you will be asked to verify your vaccination status and provide proof of vaccination.

- If you need to apply for a legally-recognized accommodation based on medical or religious reasons, you can do so through the same form.
- Additionally, if you indicate that you are partially vaccinated as of January 4, Verizon may contact you to discuss your timing to be fully vaccinated.

For purposes of this collection, individuals are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after they receive the final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine currently approved or authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or a COVID-19 vaccine that has been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (e.g., AstraZeneca/Oxford).

Acceptable documentation for proof of vaccination includes the following with the required information such as your name, vaccine administered, date(s) of administration, and the healthcare professional(s) or clinic(s) administering the vaccine (s):

- A digital copy of the COVID-19 vaccination card
- Record of immunization from a healthcare provider or pharmacy
- Public or state immunization information system



House Democrats pass the “Build Back Better” Act

After many months of negotiations, House Democrats with nearly every vote in the caucus have passed the Build Back Better Act. The Build Back Better Act is the biggest, most progressive piece of legislation in a lifetime (or more) for working families!

This historic milestone was made possible by the 81 million voters who turned out to the polls last November to usher Democrats into the White House and both majorities in Congress. Now, less than one year into the Biden administration, we have a robust economic package with essential investments in jobs, child care, health care, and climate action, exactly what our country needs to thrive.

More than 75 years after President Truman first proposed universal coverage, Democrats are still chasing his dream. If President Biden’s social policy bill becomes law, they will make major strides toward fulfilling it.

An estimated 3.4 million Americans would gain health insurance as a result of the legislation, which passed the House last month but faces a tough road in the 50-50 Senate. Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the majority leader, said Tuesday that his goal is to have it pass before Christmas.

The bill would expand health care access for children, make insurance more affordable for working-age adults and improve Medicare benefits for the disabled and older Americans. Separately, its health provisions are a “piecemeal of incremental changes,” said Caroline Pearson, a senior vice president for health care at NORC at the University of Chicago, a nonpartisan research organization.

But taken together, these policies represent the biggest step toward universal coverage since the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010.

We’re not done yet, as the Build Back Better Act will still need to pass the Senate before becoming law. CWA Local 2108 is urging every member to contact their U.S. Senator and demand that they support this legislation.

HOUSE DEMOCRATS JUST PASSED

- Biggest reduction in child poverty in 50 years
- Biggest investment in clean energy in U.S. history
- Biggest expansion of affordable health care since Obamacare

...and more historic investments!

AND ZERO REPUBLICANS VOTED FOR IT

RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

The holiday season is upon us!! This will be a well-deserved break from all the distractions, hardships and inconveniences we’ve had to endure this year. But we still need to keep our guard up. Safe health practices should still be maintained. Let’s all have a safe and enjoyable holiday season for us and our families. There is a light at the end of the tunnel!!

The RMC will continue to have our meetings on zoom. Our December meeting will be on the 8th at 11:00am. Notifications will be sent by e-mail with access information prior to the meeting. If there are login problems, please call Janice Crowe on 410-533- 5370 or Jenny Sylvester on 301-873-9645.

Happy Holidays and stay safe!!

Calvin C Foster Jr
President- RMC 2108



Personals

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

Jacqueline Marie Pierce, mother of **Trickel Pierce** and **La-Chelle Pierce Fogle**, who passed away October 30, 2021.

Paul Brashears, a retired member and father of retiree **Mark Brashears**, who passed away November 15, 2021.

Julius Gordon, a retired member who passed away on October 15, 2021.

Welcome to Local 2108

New Members

Ken Singleton

Carlos Alcantara	Kyle Kotler
Oman Bolt	David Murray
Jason Cheeks	Julio Perez Galisteo
Calvin Hawkins	Ayrus Smith
Donald Jacques	Chauncy Tibbs

Tammy Nelson

Robert Clary

Congratulations to Recent Retiree:

Cesar Gerena



The Maisano Labor Scholarship Program

This scholarship award is being presented as a tribute to Vince and Patricia Maisano, the second CWA District 13 International Vice President and the former Secretary-Treasurer of CWA Local 13000. Both of these individuals retired in April of 2005. Vince and Pat both placed a high priority on education.



All CWA District 2-13 members, their spouses, children and grandchildren (including dependents of laid-off, retired or deceased CWA District 2-13 members) who are or were members in good standing at the time of separation from the Union may apply. Applicants must be high school graduates or at least high school students who will graduate during the year in which they apply. Undergraduate and graduate students returning to schooling may also apply. Prior winners may not apply.

One (1) scholarship, to be paid at the rate of \$1,000.00, will be awarded to an eligible applicant from the District 2-13 Potomac Region.

Applications will be accepted during the months of December through March. Final deadline is March 31st of the year in which the scholarship will be awarded.

The winners will be chosen by lottery drawing, To apply for the scholarship, follow the link below:

<https://cwad2-13.org/vincent-and-patricia-maisano-labor-scholarship>

Verizon to Install Enhanced Security at Many Company Locations

Last month Verizon notified CWA about plans to upgrade security protocols at numerous locations within our district and all central offices in Washington DC.

Wilkins Avenue Garage and the Edgeworth Rd. Garage have been identified as locations which will be upgraded within Local 2108's jurisdiction. These upgrades will include adding card access, automated property gates and additional cameras.

Verizon has indicated that video footage will be kept for 90 days and that video will be made available by requests to the Emergency Management Center, Police/Local Law Enforcement, and Verizon HR, LR and Security for official investigations as needed. The union has requested that the company provide advance written notice to employees advising the estimated start date of use of cameras and other security devices, and if the company plans to use the cameras to monitor employee arrival and departure times.

The CWA Joseph A. Beirne Foundation Scholarship Program

The CWA Joe Beirne Foundation was established in October 1974 by the Communications Workers of America Executive Board to honor the name and memory of the founding President of CWA, who served for more than 30 years. In his capacity as the first CWA President, Joe Beirne took great pride in the roles he played in the fields of education and learning and other areas of social concern. Sixteen partial college scholarships of \$4,000 each are being offered for the 2022-2023 school year. Winners, selected in a lottery drawing, also will receive second-year scholarships of the same amount contingent upon satisfactory academic accomplishment. Part-time students, less than 12 credits, will receive half of the scholarship monies.

Eligible for the awards are CWA members and their spouses, children and grandchildren, including those of retired or deceased members. Applicants must be high school graduates or at least high school students who will graduate during the year in which they apply. Undergraduate and graduate students returning to schooling may also apply.

Applications are accepted during the months of November through April. **Final deadline for the 2022-2023 school year is April 30, 2022.**

To apply online, go to:

<http://www.cwa-union.org/pages/beirne>

Local 2108 Calendar

DECEMBER 2021

- 8 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am - Via Zoom
- 8 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 24 Christmas Holiday
Local Office Closed
- 25 Christmas

- 31 New Year's Holiday
Local Office Closed

JANUARY 2022



- 1 New Year's Day

- 12 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am - Via Zoom
- 12 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 18 Martin Luther King's Birthday

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, December 8, 2021 - 6:00pm RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, December 8, 2021 - 11:00am - Via Zoom

2108News
Published Monthly
Printing Done In-House

Communications Workers of America Local 2108

Marilyn Irwin - President
Amory Proctor - Executive Vice President
Johnny Brown - Secretary-Treasurer
LaTasha Carpenter - Vice President
Tamera Nelson - Vice President

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COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA
LOCAL 2108
10782 Rhode Island Avenue
Beltsville, MD 20705-2513
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
ISSN: 0162-248X