

Verizon Implements Changes To Covid-19 Leaves of Absence

Last month Verizon advised CWA that they were implementing changes to some of the provisions regarding Leaves of Absences for Covid-19. Because infection rates are decreasing and vaccinations are readily available, the following administrative changes took place July 1, 2021.



Covid-19 Leave of Absence for an Underlying Condition:

If you are either currently on a leave of absence due to an underlying condition or have recently been on such a leave of absence, effective July 1, 2021, new leave requests or leave extension requests will only be approved if you can satisfactorily demonstrate that the individual with the underlying condition:

- Is unable to be vaccinated (for example, is currently under the age of 12); or
- Qualifies for an exception due to a sincerely held religious belief. You will be required to satisfy one of these exceptions by submitting required documentation and information.

Prior approvals that extend beyond July 1, 2021 will be honored, and the terms of this policy will apply for any extension requests beyond your latest approval.

Covid-19 Leave of Absence for Caregivers:

If you are either currently on a leave of absence due to caregiving needs or have recently been on such a leave of absence, effective July 1, 2021, all leave requests and leave extension requests will be reviewed with the presumption that alternative caregiving arrangements now exist in your area. In order to qualify for future leave or leave extensions, you must demonstrate that no alternative caregiving options exist by submitting required documentation and information.

As a reminder, Bright Horizons offers back-up childcare for children aged 6 weeks through 12 years old. For more information regarding this program, please call 1-877 BH CARES (242-2737). For additional resources on finding caregiving support, contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP),

Prior approvals that extend beyond July 1, 2021 will be honored, and the terms of this policy will apply for any extension requests beyond your latest approval.

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



Building Broadband For All with CWA

The CWA Defense Fund Oversight Committee recently approved a Strategic Industry Fund (SIF) project entitled "Building Broadband for All with CWA." This SIF project will allow CWA to focus on ensuring any federal broadband funding provided through infrastructure legislation is used to bring broadband access to underserved and unserved communities across the country, and that the work is done with Union labor and goes to employers with high road labor standards. In addition, we want to ensure that broadband service is affordable to all by providing federal programs and ensuring adequate, long term and stable funding.

Recognizing that members who do this work are the best advocates and spokespeople for our policy proposals, a Broadband Brigade has been established consisting of a CWA member from each District. Thomas Cox, a Verizon Service Technician and CWA Local 13101 Steward, will serve as District 2-13's Broadband Brigade advocate.

CWA & Verizon Extend Covid-19 Agreements

CWA and Verizon have reached an agreement to extend an earlier COVID-19 agreement which will protect our members, while at the same time maintaining our network and providing service to our customers. The following agreements have been extended:

COVID-19 Home Garaging - Renewal - This agreement has been extended through July 31, 2021 for all eligible employees who are home garaging.

Verizon has announced that this will be the final extension of the Home Garaging agreement. All technicians will be required to report to their company assigned location starting August 1, 2021. This extension does not preclude Verizon from requiring technicians from reporting back to the garages prior to August 1, 2021.

COVID-19 Work at Home Agreement: This agreement has been extended through September 30, 2021 for all eligible employees working from home. In addition, an associate may withdraw from work-at-home. If an associate does so, he/she will only be eligible to subsequently re-elect work-from-home at the Company's discretion. The Company will honor an associate's notice to withdraw from work at-home as soon as practical (generally within 14 days but no more than 30 days). The Union and the company also agreed to specify that in the event that "face to face" feedback is required, such feedback will take place electronically.

As with the "Home Garaging" extension, The "Work at Home" extension only provides an agreement for those organizations that wish to continue working from home. Certain organizations have already indicated that they will be returning folks back into their work centers as soon as all preparations have been completed.

CWA Local 2108 is urging all members to take advantage of readily available vaccinations to help ensure everyone's safety as we return to a new sense of normalcy.

You've probably heard the expression that "It pays to belong" to a union. That proved to be very true in June when CWA District 2-13 reached a settlement to the Executive Level Grievance (ELG) they had filed against Verizon in 2017.



As part of the Absence from Duty Letter of Understanding that was negotiated in 2012 and effective January 1, 2013, our members who used four or less incidental absence days per calendar year were paid a "Lump Sum Payment" the following March of between one and five days of pay (depending on the number of incidental absence days they had used).

For the Lump Sum Payments paid out in March of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 Verizon decreased our members' Lump Sum Payments because of Exempt Days they had used due to "other reasons". These other reasons were for things like car trouble, bad weather or flooded basements....Circumstances that prevented members from being able to get to work, but had nothing to do with the member's own personal illness or off-duty accident, or FMLA-covered absences to care for an ill family member. This resulted in our members losing two days of pay for a one-day absence---one day of pay for the unpaid Exempt Day when they couldn't come to work, and one day of the Lump Sum Payment that was due them.

CWA District 2-13 filed an ELG over this issue. Our position was that the Lump Sum Payment was only to be decreased due to "Paid or Unpaid Incidental Absence Days Used in the Calendar Year". (Please refer to the chart shown in the Absence from Duty LOU in the back of your contract.) You may recall that we have won previous arbitrations against Verizon over the definition of "Incidental Absence". Arbitrators agreed with CWA that an "Incidental Absence" was an absence due to the employee's own personal illness or off-duty accident.

When Verizon finally conceded and agreed to settle the ELG, members were paid for the Lump Sum Payment days that Verizon had shorted them in 2017 through 2020. The grand total paid to our members (including many who have since retired) in MD/VA/DC/PA/DE? **Over \$293,000.00!!!!** Our members who were entitled to the Lump Sum Payment backpay had it direct deposited in their accounts on/about June 11th. "It pays to belong" is more than just a slogan. Not only does union representation result in you receiving higher than average pay and benefits, it provides you with a watchdog to monitor the contract and hold the company accountable if they violate it.

Our Union also won an Arbitration case recently. It was our contention that Verizon had not conducted a thorough investigation prior to terminating an employee represented by Local 2108, therefore terminating the employee "without just cause". ("Just cause" is the negotiated standard in our contract that Verizon must meet to justify discipline.) The Arbitrator agreed with us completely, ordering Verizon to return the employee to work with full back pay and all make whole relief.

It's human nature to take something for granted that you've always had. I hope this article serves as a reminder of why "It pays to belong to CWA"!

In solidarity,

Marilyn

2022 Union Plus Scholarship Program Accepting Applications Now

Since 1991, the Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$5 million to students of working families who want to begin or continue their post-secondary education. Over 3,500 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, 2022.

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, 2022**. 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 2022. Students may re-apply each year.

Award date:

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

To apply, go to:

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

Verizon Benefits Update

Telehealth

Last month, CWA and Verizon negotiated a change to the benefit plan that effective August 1, 2021 and until August 5, 2023, the Verizon Managed Care Network and Medical Expense Plan for Mid-Atlantic Associates will cover telehealth services at a \$10 copay for active and Pre-Medicare retirees.

Telemedicine office visits coded in conjunction with COVID-19 testing will continue to have no cost sharing for as long as that is required by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Care.com

Verizon notified CWA last month that they plan to provide a premium membership with **Care.com** to all active employees effective July 1, 2021 at no cost. Enrollment in the Care.com premium membership is voluntary, and employees will be required to log into the Care.com site to activate their premium membership. These benefits are additive to those already provided by Bright Horizons.

Some of the additional benefits provided through Care.com are:

- Unlimited access to the world's largest network of caregivers.
- Long term care through full-time nanny, tutor,
- Part-time babysitter,
- Pod teacher (learner pods),
- Pet sitter,
- Adult or senior care provider,
- Special needs caregiver,
- Errand runner,
- Housekeeper, etc.



The CWA Maryland and D.C. State Council has endorsed Tom Perez in his bid for Governor of Maryland. When he was Labor Secretary in the Obama administration, Tom Perez was instrumental in helping CWA achieve a labor agreement during our nearly 2 month-long strike at Verizon. Without his efforts, there is no doubt our time on the picket lines would have dragged out considerably longer.

Tom Perez is the candidate who has dedicated his life to "making government work and helping people," and

vowed to do the same if elected to lead the state.

In the course of his career, Perez has held positions in Maryland at the local and state level, as the first Latino to serve on the Montgomery County Council and as the state's Secretary of Labor. At the federal level, Perez led the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division under former President Barack Obama and went on to serve as his Labor Secretary in Mr. Obama's second term. Perez was elected as chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 2017 and held that role until January.

Perez's video launching his campaign featured footage of Mr. Obama calling him "one of the best Secretaries of Labor in our history" and praising him as "wicked smart" and "tireless."

"I want to build a Maryland where everyone has access to quality education and quality, affordable health care, where a zip code never determines destiny. A Maryland where everyone has access to a good job, where unions thrive and small businesses succeed. A Maryland where we take on climate change and put people to work doing it. A Maryland where people feel safe in their communities and justice is indeed equal for all," Perez said.

RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

The RMC Executive Board hopes all is well with all of our members . We encourage everyone to continue safe practices and get vaccinated as soon as possible if you haven't already done so.

I am sure that we all would like to have normal in person meeting soon and that is will be our goal by the end of the year.

Regardless, what happens this year will depend on all of us remaining healthy and informed about legislation that could affect retirees. Changes in health care will continue to be an issue that we need to stay on top of. To keep informed of all that is going on, please plan on attending the next RMC meeting on July 14, 2021 at 11:00am. This will be a virtual meeting on the Zoom website. Notifications will be sent out by email with access information the day before. If you have any questions about login issues, please call Janice Crowe on 410-533-5370.

Stay safe!!

Calvin C Foster Jr
President- RMC 2108



Are you "WEARING RED" on Thursdays?

Personals

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

Daniel Eichner, husband of **Jennifer Eichner** who passed away on February 23, 2021

Joe Cooke, a retired Chief Steward and Retired Members Club Vice President who passed away on May 18, 2021.

Welcome to Local 2108

New Members

Natambu Hall

Jason Estes
Davone Conway

Tamera Nelson

Keith Wolfolk

Tony Meeks

Jeremy Conway
Christopher Lindsey

Transferred Members

Tony Meeks

Jeremiah Munson

Congratulations to Recent Retirees:



J.D. Hobbs
Sandra Baker



Thinking About Retirement?

You may want to check out this important workshop presented by **Networth Financial** Group to see if the reality of retirement is on your horizon!!

Retirement Benefits Webinar

Thursday, July 8, 2021 at 6:30 PM - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

To join by phone - Dial In: **(267) 831-0333 or (301) 715-8592**
Webinar ID - 959 4365 1763 Password: 649870

Retirement - What to Expect Webinar

Thursday, July 29, 2021 at 6:30 PM - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

To join by phone - Dial In: **(267) 831-0333 or (301) 715-8592.**
Webinar ID - 914 0006 6367 Password: 525138

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

Tax Changes Affects Some Avaya Pension Payments

The CWA T&T office has notified all locals that they had received several inquiries regarding changes to tax withholdings on pension checks from AVAYA retirees residing in various states around the country. Upon investigating the issue, there were some states that changed tax withholding this year. The states involved are California, Colorado, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island and Vermont.

As a side note, tax withholding shouldn't really change each month, more of a one-time change when the state changes their withholding rules. If participants want to make a change to their state tax withholding, they can do so by calling the Avaya Pension Service Center at (844) 868-6236 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (EDT), Monday through Friday, or on line at www.upointhr.com/avaya

Supreme Court Decision Threatens Right to Organize

On June 23, 2021, the Supreme Court’s decision equating allowing union organizers access to speak to agricultural workers at their workplaces with the taking of private property without just compensation demonstrates just how extremist the current Supreme Court majority is when it comes to promoting corporate interests over the rights of working people.

The radical decision in *Cedar Point Nursery v. Hassid* endangers a wide range of laws that protect the public, potentially preventing health and safety inspectors, utility workers and others from entering business to perform their duties.



In a statement, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said he was deeply disappointed that the court reversed a decades-old rule that allowed farm workers to exercise their fundamental right to organize at the location where they work, instead calling it an unconstitutional “taking” of their employers’ property. As the state of California recognized more than 45 years ago, meeting with the union during off-hours at their workplace is the only practical way for workers to organize when they must regularly move from farm to farm throughout the growing season. The AFL-CIO will do everything in our power to help California farm workers find other pathways to exercise their right to form a union to gain a voice at work and ensure safe and healthy working conditions. I am pleased that all members of the court

did reject the agricultural employers’ most radical arguments, which would have severely undermined crucial health and safety protections as well as long-established access rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

However, the grudging manner in which the court’s majority accepted important regulatory systems that protect the basic rights of working people and, by extension, the public at large underlines what we repeatedly have said about workers’ right to organize—that in order to ensure all workers have a fair shot in exercising our rights, Congress needs to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize Act.

Over the past five years, Mitch McConnell and Donald Trump conspired to manipulate the Supreme Court appointment process and pack the court with justices committed to advancing an ideological agenda that benefits the rich and powerful, rather than following the rule of law. The current Supreme Court is broken, and the majority is dangerously out of step with the needs of everyday Americans.

Local 2108 Calendar

JULY 2021

- 4 Independence Day
- 5 Independence Day Holiday Observed
Local Office Closed



- 14 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am - Via Zoom
- 14 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

AUGUST 2021

- 4 Chief Stewards Meeting - 9:30am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 11 RMC 2108 Meeting - Cancelled
- 11 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, July 14, 2021 - 6:00pm
RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, July 14, 2021 - 11:00am - Via Zoom



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