

# The Contactor

## The Union for the Information Age

Published monthly by



**CWA Local 6310  
AFL-CIO, CLC**

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## A New Year

By Debbie Williams, Secretary

Welcome to 2008! A new year; a time for resolutions, new commitments, or re-found dedication. This is the perfect time to say CWA is “my” Union not “the” Union. We as union members will be facing several difficult opportunities and challenges in 2008.

Of course we will have the presidential elections, the outcome of which could not only affect us but our children and grandchildren for generations.

We will start rounds of bargaining in several work entities, CenturyTel being the first. Where the outcome looks grim, healthcare and benefits will be on the chopping block along with an attack against seniority rights.

Perhaps it is time for another history lesson, it has been said that to prevent the mistakes of our future we must first know the mistakes of our past. In 1883 the Harford Courant observed “There are too many millionaires and too many Paupers.” By 1890 the richest 1 percent of America had a combined annual income larger than the poorest 50 percent. The poet Walt Whitman saw in the increase in capitalist wealth

“...a sort of anti-democratic disease and monstrosity.” In the mid to late 1800’s capitalists didn’t have to rely on natural law alone: they could buy favors from legislators and judges. State lawmakers passed a raft of anti-labor status. Anything an employer did to discourage unions (short of mayhem and murder) was a perfectly legal defense of his property rights. Does any of this sound familiar?

So let’s continue our history lesson. In September 1880, a labor newspaper in Detroit predicted that the quiet of the past three years would prove to be the calm before a storm: “Labor is waking from its long slumber. The rising giant is just now stretching and .....will make [its] strength felt in every phase of American life.” These were prophetic words. The 1880s and 1890s saw

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### Membership Meeting:

**Wednesday, January 9, 2008**

**Stewards: 6:15PM, Members: 7:00PM**

**Machinists Hall on St. Charles Rock Road**

unprecedented levels of labor organizing, strike militancy and political action by working people—initiative aimed first and foremost at curbing the power of capitalist monopoly.

What does all this say? Do we have to lose everything before we realize that by standing together we have power? How much healthcare, benefits and wages do we have to lose before it’s enough to cause each and

every one of us to participate in taking action? When will we say an action against one is an action against all?

Action and unity is how we achieved the healthcare, benefits and wages we enjoy today. Apathy is how we will lose it. CenturyTel members will start their bargaining in March 2008. Will members from other entities participate in mobilization and actions to help? Or will we say ‘I don’t work for CenturyTel so it doesn’t affect me’. The next bargaining could be yours, will you want help keeping what you have?

What can you and I do now to help? Wear red on Thursdays, attended monthly Local membership meetings. Check our website [www.cwalocal6310.org](http://www.cwalocal6310.org) for information on mobilization activities and participate.

Failure is a guarantee if we choose apathy or think what I alone do doesn’t matter. Don’t expect that someone else will take care of it, get involved.



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

-BY TONY ELLEBRACHT

### The CWA 'Stewards Army' – What Is It?

One of the key initiatives in CWA's Ready for the Future program is the creation of a volunteer "Stewards Army" of rank-and-file activists to mobilize for positive change, both within our industries and in American society.

The initial goal is to recruit 25,000 activists into the Stewards Army by July 2007, and then build our ranks to 50,000 by 2009. CWA is developing a special education and training program for members who sign up.

Those who join won't all be shop stewards in the traditional sense of handling grievances and enforcing contracts at the job site — a critically important job that is done by thousands of CWA stewards in countless locations.

The Stewards Army is really about "stewardship" in a broader sense: stewardship to strengthen workers' bargaining and organizing rights and advocate for our other major goals — jobs, health care, and retirement security.

The goal is to join CWA's 50,000 with another 500,000 or more activists from other major unions to create a powerful force to change the priorities of the country and refocus on an agenda for working families.

The Stewards Army will include both active union members and

retirees. Its action program will sometimes be directed at a CWA employer or workplace, and other times will be more broadly focused on a CWA industry goal or even a national issue such as health care. Actions can range from sending an e-mail message to participating in rallies, meeting with elected officials and mobilizing thousands for mass action.

We need to reorient America's priorities — and to do that we need to ignite a movement. Join us!

Local 6310 now has our own website dedicated to the Stewards Army. You can click the banner at the top of our site, or go directly to <http://www.cwalocal6310.org/stewardsarmy>.

Please enlist & complete the online training program. As always, information you submit is kept only for the Communications Workers of America records and never shared with 3rd parties or spammers.



Tony Ellebracht—President

## Retirees' Corner

Greater St. Louis Retirees' Chapter Meeting

Monday, January 14, 2008

Graphic Communications Hall

105 Progress Parkway, Maryland Heights, MO

**Meeting Time:**

**11:30 AM**

**Cost Is:**

**\$12/person (guest welcome)**

**Reservations are required!** Please call Tony Hill (618) 541-9119, Bill Konecnik (636) 225-3174 or Mary Ostertag (618) 632-5456 by **Noon Thursday, before the meeting.**



## CWA Local 6310 Needs Your Help!

Local 6310 is looking for members interested in assisting with the Local's communications and media. We need people interested in helping with the production of the Local newsletter, The Contactor. We also need people interested in helping to develop and maintain the Local's website, <http://www.cwalocal6310.org>. Knowledge or willingness to learn software tools such as Microsoft Publisher and Adobe Dreamweaver and languages such as HTML, CSS, ASP, and JavaScript is helpful. If you're interested and would like more information, please contact:

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## Verizon Business Must Pledge to Stop Violating Workers' Rights

In agreeing to settle CWA charges of illegal union-busting by Verizon Business in Pennsylvania, the company was ordered by the NLRB to post notices affirming the workers' rights to organize and declaring that it will no longer engage in coercive threats to prevent workers from unionizing. CWA filed charges on behalf of Verizon Business techs in both New York and Pennsylvania, and in early October NLRB regional directors issued complaints against the company and ordered hearings over the charges. A similar settlement is expected in the New York case.

Several hundred technicians at the former MCI unit, which Verizon set up as a separate non-union business, have been organizing with CWA and IBEW throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic and have petitioned for representation based on majority union support, as validated by congressional and community leaders in Boston and New York. In the Pennsylvania settlement, the notice Verizon Business is required to post at work-sites for 60 days clearly describes the nature of the illegal abuses that CWA and the work-

ers charged. Verizon must pledge:

- "We will not engage in surveillance or actions intended to create the impression that employees' union activities are under surveillance."
- "We will not threaten employees with layoff for supporting the union or ask them to inform us if they requested return of union authorization cards they had signed."
- "We will not enforce our... no solicitation/no distribution policy against employees because they have engaged in concerted or union activities or to discourage employees from engaging in such activities."
- "We will not in any like or related manner interfere with, restrain or coerce our employees in the

exercise of the rights guaranteed by" (federal labor laws).

- "We will cancel the written warning issued to (a key union supporter), expunge reference to said warning from our files and inform (the worker) that this has been done."

Among other rights, Verizon Business must let workers know that "Federal law gives you the right to form, join or assist a union."

Given the pro-business and anti-union record of this labor board in recent years, the settlement shows just how blatant and egregious Verizon Business's anti-worker behavior has been, said CWA President Larry Cohen.

## Telecom Techs: Get CWA's New Electrical Safety Brochure

A new 16-page booklet packed with safety information for telecom technicians who work near electrical power is now available from CWA's Safety and Health Department.

"Reducing Electrical Hazards" describes the full array of safety procedures and proper equipment for inside and outside technicians as they test for and work near power lines and other electrical sources.

The brochure is part of a top-priority effort by CWA to work with members and telecom companies on electrical safety issues and ensure that all technicians are properly trained and equipped.

Members and locals can order copies of the brochure as well as download it from CWA's website at [cwa-union.org/electricalsafety](http://cwa-union.org/electricalsafety). Electrocutation accidents have killed five Verizon technicians—two CWA members and three from IBEW—since 2006 and many others have been injured in recent years. In the wake of fatalities in Maryland and in Indiana, CWA pushed for mandatory training for technicians as part of the settlement between Verizon and each state's Occupational Safety and Health division.

Verizon has now agreed to expand the training nationally, with a program already underway in District 2 and beginning soon in District 4. CWA Safety and Health Director Dave LeGrande said plans are underway to develop similar training at AT&T.

CWA leaders want every telecom technician at risk of contact with electrical power to have a copy of the new safety brochure. The handy 6x9 booklet can easily be stored in a truck's glove box.

## Senate Races in 2008 Key to Winning Employee Free Choice Act

With a number of strong pro-worker candidates running for the U.S. Senate next year, a breakthrough in labor's efforts to make the Employee Free Choice Act the law of the land is in reach. "We passed the Employee Free Choice Act in the House of Representatives and won 51 votes in the Senate, but we fell short because a majority vote in the Senate isn't enough in our democracy," said CWA President Larry Cohen. "In the 2006 elections, CWA and other unions laid the groundwork to gain a pro-working family majority in both houses of Congress. In Election 2008, the stakes are higher than ever. We know that our work can make a real difference, it's up to us to make it happen," Cohen said. There currently are 52 votes in the Senate of the 60 votes that are needed to cut off extended debate and move to a final vote on the measure. There is a good chance that Democrats who support the Employee Free Choice Act can be elected in seven or more states. In New Hampshire, former Gov. Jeanne Shaheen is considered a strong candidate to beat Republican Sen. John Sununu, who won the seat in 2002. Shaheen has

pledged her support for the Employee Free Choice Act, which would help rebuild America's middle class by restoring workers' badly eroded rights to organize unions and bargain contracts. The work that CWAers did this year to help elect Kentucky

Governor Steve Beshear has put the Senate seat of Minority Leader Mitch McConnell in reach as well. Other states where labor can make a real difference are Alaska, Maine, Colorado, Minnesota, Oregon, Alaska and Virginia.

Cohen said any congressional candidate who wants support from CWA members must pledge to support the Employee Free Choice Act. "We want legislators to make the connection between what's happening to workers' bargaining rights and the need to rebuild the

middle class," he said. The Democratic National Committee, at the urging of Cohen and CWA Secretary-Treasurer Barbara J. Easterling, passed a resolution calling on Congress and any new Democratic administration to make the Employee Free Choice Act a top priority in 2009. With 60 votes in the Senate, a continuing pro-worker majority in the U.S. House—where the bill passed by a wide margin last spring— and a Democratic president, the Employee Free Choice Act could become law as early as 2009, Cohen said.

# Legal Advice

By Mike Goldberg, Attorney at Law

The Missouri Supreme Court finally heard oral argument on our attempt to overturn the new Missouri Workers' Compensation Act. While it is difficult to determine what will happen, I can let you know that at least the Judges seemed interested in reviewing certain sections of the law. The Judges asked 55 questions in the short time allowed for presentation of the case. That is a significant amount for this Court. We are facing a huge uphill battle to challenge the Governor and legislators that put this terrible law into effect. However, we may be able to at least remove some of the most harmful provisions if we are successful. Any change to the law would be a victory for the working men and women in this State.

The numbers for the year are in and it turns out that there is about a 20% reduction of workers' compensation claims that were filed in 2007 versus 2006. The average payments are substantially lower to unrepresented individuals. There are a number of reasons that this has happened. The drop in claims seems to be based on the wrong assumption that certain injuries are no longer covered under the Workers' Compensation system. I know that the managers are being told that repetitive injuries like carpal tunnel or tennis elbow

were eliminated under the new laws. This is not true and is misleading to the injured employee. I can personally tell you that repetitive motion diseases like those mentioned can and are often still found to be work related. I am handling many of these and still being paid on them. This is simply misleading information. The other type of repetitive bending, kneeling and lifting injuries can also still be claimed as work related. The fact that your employer tells you that they are not is not always true. However, so many people believe the employers' statements that they are not seeking their benefits.

The reason the benefit payouts are lower is simply because the Judges can no longer provide guidance on the value of a case. The legal advisors who were part of the system were fired and they were the ones that might help you if you tried to settle your case on your own. Without this kind of help, the employee is at the mercy of the employers' attorney and insurance company. Do you really think that they are going to be fair? No way, as this saves them money. That is what is happening and the statistics bear this out. My advice is to not believe at face value the employer's denial of your case. Do not accept offers on cases simply because you are



Mike C. Goldberg

told to do so by the employer. I encourage people to fight back and make sure that you get what you are entitled to receive. I am hoping that our lawsuit will help in that regard.

If you have any questions you are welcome to call me or find me at the Union meetings. I will try and provide whatever answers I can in this never ending battle for fairness.

Michael C. Goldberg, Esq.  
314-621-8363  
1-800-489-2891

# Good & Welfare

## Births

Mr. & Mrs. Scott Gregg - Baby Boy

## Deaths

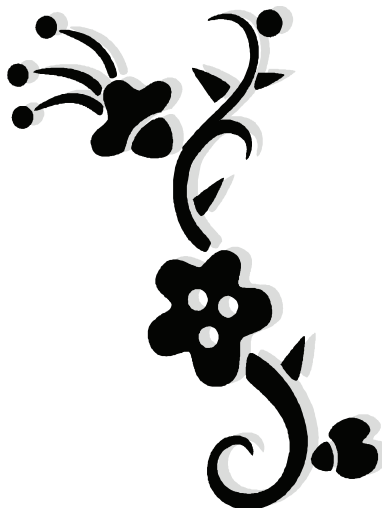
Karen Biggs - Father-In-Law  
Albert Epsy - Wife  
Terry Koons - Father

## Retirements

Gary Ferguson - 38 years  
Robert Jones - 39 years  
Floyd Williams - 34 years

## Letters

Hello CWA LOCAL 6310,  
First off let me say "Thank You" "Thank You" "Thank You", not only from me but from the men and women that serve with me. Let me share with you the journey that the things you have sent to us go through. First off it comes from your heart to the box, which is then sent to me (yeah!!!!!!), then once I receive it of course it warms my heart, I then put together smaller packages of things and send them out to fellow Seabee's who are out in the middle of who knows



where, the only thing they generally receive is a re-supply of water and food once every two weeks, so to get something different other than what the military gives them is a real treat. The candy and other food items sent along will be passed out to children along the way as we travel through different villages, by giving them food and candy we as in the military build a trust with the local population, which in return benefits us because the locals will communicate with us and give us more details as in what is going on in their community and what the insurgents are doing.

The people of Iraq have taken a stand against the insurgents and are working hard to rebuild a life free from the violence and hardships that they have endured. We see the homes being repaired, neighborhood markets reopening and the schools filled with children anxious to get about the business of just being kids. The prospects for the future are looking brighter with each passing day. Although much progress has been made there are still many needs.

I look forward to the day when I come back and thank everyone personally for what you have done to help support me and my fellow Seabee's and the people in this country that need help as well.

--VS. EO1(SCW) Phillips, William



William "Bill" Phillips, Local 6310 Member serving in Iraq.

## A Letter From Barbara Easterling, CWA Secretary-Treasurer

As we celebrated World Aids Day last Saturday, we couldn't help but think about your efforts over the last 10+ years in making a difference in the lives of women and children not only here in the United States but around the world.

When Elizabeth Glaser came to CWA in 1990 to address our Legislative/Political Conference and the CWA Convention, she was received with an overwhelming sense of love and support. Those were the years when HIV/AIDS discrimination was rampant in schools and neighborhoods but CWA stood tall with Elizabeth and pledged to raise funds for her charity, Pediatric Aids Foundation (PAF). The foundation was started because Elizabeth had contracted HIV/AIDS through a blood transfusion she received when she delivered her daughter Ariel. Later, she learned that while there were a few drugs available for adults ... none were even being researched for children. CWA was the first union to make PAF our charity of choice.

Today, we continue to be a major contributor to the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) and although we have lost both Elizabeth and Ariel, the work that is being done at the Foundation is saving the lives of thousands of children and women.

Typical of CWA, we didn't stop there. Instead, we created the CWA Union-to-Union: International Solidarity Fund (UTU), which was designed to provide funding for projects beyond our shores, with

contract enforcement, pay equity, etc., it always includes a segment on HIV/AIDS. In some instances, the entire workshop/conference is on HIV/AIDS ... most particularly in educating the women on what they can do to prevent the disease, what drugs are available to them and their children, etc. So once again, we are a major player in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Recently, at a EGPAF Board of Directors meeting, I met the EGPAF country directors from Africa. Since that is where most of our UTU funds are being spent on HIV/AIDS education, we decided to provide the African union women with the name and address of the director in their country so that they could work together to eradicate the disease.

I know I sent you the memo from Pam Barnes, CEO - EGPAF, regarding "Five Ways You Can Help on World AIDS Day," but I really wanted you to know the success your contributions to both EGPAF and UTU are in saving lives and educating women in Africa.

Please take a bow ... and then continue your hard work!

Sincerely,  
Barbara Easterling  
Secretary-Treasurer

priority given to women's requests. For several years now, that fund has under-written conferences and workshops conducted by union women around the world. While it provides training in organizing,

## DNC Takes Strong Stand for Employee Free Choice Act

The Democratic National Committee has unanimously passed a resolution calling for Congress and any new Democratic administration to make the Employee Free Choice Act a top priority in 2009.

The resolution further urges candidates and office-holders at all levels to actively and visibly support the legislation, and it calls on state and local Democratic committees to pass their own resolutions and fight for similar state laws and local ordinances.

"The most effective strategy for working men and women to get ahead economically is by uniting with co-workers to bargain with their employers for better wages and benefits," the resolution states.

"Collective bargaining is essential to democracy in the workplace and economic justice in the wider society."

The Employee Free Choice Act, which would restore workers' badly eroded bargaining and organizing rights, was passed by a wide margin in the U.S. House in March. It also has majority support in the Senate, but fell short

of the 60 votes needed to overcome a Republican filibuster in June.

"We are extremely pleased that the DNC shares our view that the Employee Free

Choice Act is vital to rebuilding America's middle class," CWA President Larry Cohen said.

"Workers' rights have been slipping away for three decades but for the past seven years, especially, employers have willfully and fearlessly broken the law to stop organizing drives and stall contract talks."

Cohen stressed that, "Any candidate CWA supports in

the coming elections must be committed to passing -- and in the case of the president, signing -- the Employee Free Choice Act." The detailed resolution notes the illegal tactics and legal loopholes employers exploit to threaten, coerce and even fire union supporters, and states that "penalties for employer violations of workers' rights are so insignificant they do not deter even the most flagrant violations and are considered by most employers a minor cost of doing business."

*"The most effective strategy for working men and women to get ahead economically is by uniting with co-workers to bargain with their employers for better wages and benefits,"*

The national resolution is just the latest in strong and growing support for the Employee Free Choice Act among Democrats across the country. In Minnesota, for instance, all four Democrats running for the U.S. Senate -- Mike Ciresi, Jim Cohen, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer and comedian and talk radio host Al Franken -- said they not only back the bill but would go even further.

The Minnesota candidates are running to replace Republican incumbent Norm Coleman, who was a key player in stopping the Employee Free Choice Act from getting a Senate vote.



"The starting salary? Nine-hundred dollars per week -- less fifty percent, of course."

# CENTURYTEL CONTRACT DISCUSSION MEETING NOTES

12/11/2007

Holiday Inn Wentzville, Missouri

## Attendees:

Jimmy Gurganus – CWA VP - Telecommunications

Andy Milburn – CWA VP - District 6

Bill Wildoner – District 6 Staff

Tom Newport – District 6 Staff

Mike Neumann – District 6 Staff

Mark Franken – District 6 Staff

Tony Ellebracht – CWA Local 6310, President

Kevin Kujawa – CWA Local 6320, President

Mike Mehringer – CWA Local 6310, EVP

Gene Whitfield – CWA Local 6310, VP CenturyTel

Shawn Bland – Organizer

Sonja Gholston-Byrd - Organizer/ Note Taker

**NOTE: In addition to the names listed above, CWA CenturyTel members were present.**

This is a brief summary of the discussions that occurred during this meeting.

Tony Ellebracht – Welcome and thanked everyone for coming out in the inclement weather. Tony also acknowledged all officers present for the meeting.

Andy Milburn - Provided a brief introduction of himself and his area of responsibility. The meeting was turned over to Jimmy Gurganus.

Jimmy Gurganus – Provided the history of bargaining for CenturyTel in this year's contract negotiations for Wisconsin and Arkansas. He stated that at this time Wisconsin had ratified their contract for a group of 50 members while Arkansas which represents a larger group had not agreed to the terms as of yet. The bargaining in both states has been tough and hard pressed.

The issues facing all contracts are:

**A.** CenturyTel use of nonunion workers doing union work. CWA has filed labor charges with the NLRB for this action.

**B.** Pension plan changes. GATT Rate versus Corporate Bond Rate and how it reduces pension amounts for members. This does not affect current workers.

**C.** Layoffs and Transfers – Company layoffs will be based on skills sets versus traditional reverse seniority practices. The company

criteria for layoff have not been disclosed at this but they will provide additional information 90 days after ratification of the contract. The company would also like to apply this procedure to company transfers. CWA has not accepted these terms due to unanswered questions such as the criteria for changes the company may make in future layoffs or transfer. CWA wants the company justification for making this request. CWA has in turn made the demand for additional training for the development of all workers.

Although, the bargaining has been tough CWA has had some wins in bargaining, for example the neutrality agreement for Wind Stream workers in Texas. It was emphasized that we are at battle with the company. He stated that seven percent of the private sector workers are organized while ninety-three percent are not. Unorganized workers are growing and we face difficult issues when it comes to workers benefits. Employers have a great interest in going after benefits because it affects their pockets. Shrinking benefits and the elimination of unions is what companies want to do away with. A top-ranking officer of CenturyTel believes that workers are not hurting enough to do anything about it. He mentioned the fact that every time CWA bargains, healthcare is discussed. Union are the only organization that stand in the way of freeing up all the companies from the responsibility. That is why it is so important that dedicate and mobilize members engages others workers, members and customers to what is going on. Having conversations with customers and coworkers to let them know what the issues are. The most effective way to inform all workers and customers to what the issues are is to hand bill and have informational pickets. We have to affect the company's money and then they will listen.

## Q&A's

**In the Arkansas bargaining are the stalls due to raise increases?**

There are issues with the facilities techs wage assignments.

**Is the Plant Tech included in the freeze?**

A lump sum payment has been offered.

**Was the Facilities Tech included?**

Yes, they were included.

**Has the union look at the possibility of providing healthcare?**

Yes, we have. Humana is one we looked at and they are located in Saint Louis. We

have talked to the employer about this as well and they do not want to give it to us. CenturyTel has merged everyone into one group plan, they want out of healthcare all together. Fewer and fewer employees will soon have any healthcare. Only 17% of employers provide coverage today for their workers.

**I received a letter from the doctor that stated that they would no longer participate in our coverage plan. Is that something to worry about?**

That is the choice of the individual doctor. What should be happening is the company should provided options for its employees to have choices as well.

**What is the percentage of union members in Arkansas?**

70%

**Has that number increased or changed since bargaining started?**

No, it has not changed.

**Does CWA plan on dragging Missouri into Arkansas bargaining?**

Anything is possible. We want to make sure everything is the same for everyone.

**With the 90 days qualifications issue in the other states, will that happen here in Missouri?**

You have not yet begun to bargain in Missouri, I suppose they will try.

**In the last contract we had an attorney, when will you contact them?**

The only time an attorney will be present is for legal guidance and advisement. You don't want the attorney around they don't know the issues, they know the law.

**Why wasn't a ULP filed for the last agreement?**

Under the NLRA, with a financial strike you cannot be fired but you can be replaced. The company can disclose this information, if that is their intent.

**Does the Public Service Commission have any involvement in DSL regulations?**

Sure, this is about money.

**At the national level of CWA, do we track state legislation that affects us?**

Yes, we track everything. There are items that benefit our members and we will support with the company, such as USF and special access legislature.

*Continued on Page 7...*

## World Unions Meet to Develop Global Fight for Bargaining Rights

An unprecedented global forum brought 200 union leaders from around the world to Washington, D.C., for strategy sessions on how to strengthen global bargaining and organizing rights. Over the two-day conference, union leaders shared information on the status of labor in their countries and agreed to chart improved and declining collective bargaining density, especially as it is linked to political action.

CWA President Larry Cohen was the driving force behind the forum, stressing the need to focus worldwide attention on the loss of collective bargaining rights in the U.S. Union leaders from 63 countries and 10 international labor federations joined the event.

The meeting was held to coincide with International Human Rights Day, December 10, when 59 years ago, the United Nations and Eleanor Roosevelt declared that workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively are human rights.

At the news briefing, Cohen pointed out that in 1948, the United States led the world in democratic rights – both political and workplace – and 35 percent of U.S. workers in the private sector were covered by collective bargaining, the highest rate in the world at that time.

"Today, with less than 8 percent of private sector workers organized, the United States is nearly at the bottom of the nations of the

world," he said. This drop to the bottom has resulted from "a concentrated and lengthy attack on workers' rights by corporate and political interests that want to consolidate their own power at the expense of U.S. working and middle class families," he said. See charts at [www.cwa-union.org/source](http://www.cwa-union.org/source).

The gathering made clear that the rate of collective bargaining coverage in every industrial nation is substantially higher than that in the U.S., from 35 percent in Britain to more than 95 percent in France. But even developing nations are leaving the United States behind, said John Logan, who teaches at the London School of Economics. He cited collective bargaining coverage in such countries as Brazil, with 30 percent, South Africa with 40 percent, and even Indonesia, where 20 percent of workers now have collective bargaining, as evidence that the United States is going in the wrong direction.

Sharan Burrow, head of the International Trade Union Confederation and president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, said working people can successfully take back their rights and their government, as Australian workers did in the recent national elections there. "Respect, dignity, economic rights, these are the issues that resonate with working people," she said.

John Lindner, a Verizon Business technician in New York, told lawmakers and labor lead-

ers about the on-going struggle of his colleagues to gain their union. "In most other democracies around the world, majority support for the union would be enough. We'd have our union. But not in the United States and not at Verizon," he said. Lindner served two tours of duty -- in Iraq and Afghanistan – answering his country's call to protect our freedom, he said. "But when I returned home, I found that my freedom to join a union is being denied."

At the forum, CWA announced the formation of the T-Workers Union, a joint organization with Ver.di, which represents workers at Deutsche Telekom, to fight for bargaining and organizing rights for workers at T-Mobile on both sides of the Atlantic.

T-Mobile, a Deutsche Telekom subsidiary in the United States, has repeatedly fought workers' efforts to gain a union voice. CWA will help T-Mobile employees join the T-Workers Union; they will become members of both CWA and Ver.di which will bargain on their behalf with the parent company. On Capitol Hill, House Speaker Pelosi; Senators Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.); Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio); Paul Sarbanes (D-Maryland); Representatives George Miller (D-Calif.); Rob Andrews (D-N.J.); Lynn Woolsey, (D-Calif.) and others joined the congressional forum and talked about efforts to make the Employee Free Choice Act the law of the land. The measure passed the House by a strong margin and won majority support in the Senate, though not enough to cut off the debate and move to final passage.

### CenturyTel Q&A Continued

#### Does the Public Service Commission have any involvement in DSL regulations?

Sure, this is about money.

#### At the national level of CWA, do we track state legislation that affects us?

Yes, we track everything. There are items that benefit our members and we will support the company such as USF and special access legislature.

#### If Wisconsin has signed their agreement, why hasn't Arkansas? Are they waiting on us because we are not a Right to Work state?

There is always power in numbers but because Missouri is not a RTW state this has no connection to Arkansas bargaining.

#### Because we are not a Right to Work state, does this create pressure on the company?

However, because Missouri is a RTW state it does create pressure on the company.

#### When Missouri contract expires does this included everyone in Missouri?

Yes, all except the Columbia area.

#### Why did last year the negotiations go so smoothly with IBEW?

The company changes their strategy every year. They are known to chip away at benefits.

#### Since Arkansas did not take the contract and Wisconsin did what

#### good does it do us in Missouri?

Because this is about power. The size of the bargaining unit makes a difference. In Arkansas the unit is stronger with different dynamics than that of Wisconsin.

#### How long can we use an expired contract?

Months, we try to tie up the employer and that can go on a while with request for explanations. However, at the same time the company is attempting to reach an impasse.

#### Lump Sum Retirement Pension Protection Act how does that work?

That is when the GATT rate is removed and replaced by Corporate Bond rate, which is a lower amount for pension payout. However based on factors from collective bargaining, five years from now and the fact people are living longer the corporate bond rate will increase but it will still be a slightly lower pension than GATT.

#### Does the company have to do this?

No.

#### Does anyone know of any of the former CenturyTel Workers of Wind Stream?

Open-ended question.

#### When will bargaining begin in Missouri?

We don't know yet but the request to bargain letter has been sent to the company.

Meeting adjourned.



# What to Expect In Bargaining With AT&T in 2009

By: Jason Vellmer, VP-ASI

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I recently attended the AT&T National Bargaining Caucus December 9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup>. The early signs of what to expect during bargaining are quite simple if you step back and look at the current negotiations going on with AT&T Internet Services and AT&T Video Services. They are at a dead stop in bargaining, mainly on the issue of healthcare. The company is proposing a Healthcare Plan far worse of anything we have ever seen. The basics of it are simple: \$133 per pay period and a \$1500 per year deductible. What that means is that you could potentially never reach the \$1500 mark within a year and it is almost like having no healthcare insurance at all unless, unfortunately you are sick. This action mainly will affect people with young families and people closer to retirement due to the need for healthcare. We have a contract coming up with AT&T Mobility soon and we are all going to face the same fight. Some things we are doing to mobilize along side of them is picketing AT&T Agent Stores and trying to gain support of the public because if we cannot have the public behind us it will be hard to make a dent into AT&T's check book. The only thing we have is unity from on

another and the upcoming fight is going to be rough. Another issue we will be facing is Two-tiering and that is what it sounds like. For example, and this is only an example, you take the NCT title and being that they have TKT and 160/260 qualifications they are in the higher tier. You now have the company proposing a CT title and anyone who does not have 160/260 is considered a lower craft and would receive a pay cut or no raises. That is why the miniture picket signs that were passed out say Two-tiering on them. Another issue we face is Job Security and anyone at ASI knows that the newer technology work is performed by IT level managers or contractors and that is not good for us. The direction the company is moving towards no Union Workers is currently performing that work except the Premise Technicians which is a joke if you would take a look at their pay scale and benefits.

***“The unfortunate truth of the matter is that we face the toughest round of bargaining since 1983 and if we are not ready we might as well prepare for the worst.”***

**The unfortunate truth of the matter is that we face the toughest round of bargaining since 1983 and if we are not ready we might as well prepare for the worst. The key issues are; Healthcare, Job Security, and Two-Tiering. We were lucky last time to only have a four day strike but with all honesty if we walk it will look more like four months in 2009.**

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