



## Cingular Resolves Overtime Claims

Cingular Wireless reached an agreement with the Labor Department to pay \$5.1 million in back pay to more than 25,000 customer service workers at 25 call centers.

A complaint filed by employees at the Springfield, Ill., facility in 2001 sparked the investigation. **Cingular was alleged not to have paid some workers for off-the-clock time worked prior to the start of their shift and after the end of their shift.**

Cingular then launched an internal audit of all its call centers and worked with the Labor Department to resolve the issue. Under the terms of the agreement, workers will receive back pay depending on length of service and full or part-time status, with a minimum payment of \$25, Cingular said.

CWA Executive Vice President Larry Cohen applauded Cingular's efforts to resolve the issue "in a constructive and fair manner" and called Cingular "a strong partner" for CWA.

We have addressed this issue in the local in the past. Federal law states—*All overtime work that is ordered or approved or "suffered or permitted" must be compensated.*

Suffered or permitted—if they know about it or should have known about it they have to pay you for it. If you're in the office early "doing your boss a favor", looking up jobs, spending 10 minutes logging in to all your systems or just grabbing your pack and hitting the street early you are supposed to be getting paid.

We ran an article in the past that explored the math a little and determined how much money the company was saving by tolerating this free labor in our local alone. The number was in the tens of thousands of dollars. We get plenty of complaints about unfair overtime distribution yet a lot of those same people are giving their labor away, not to mention violating the code of conduct by falsifying records.

As this settlement shows the members that are doing this and the managers that are allowing it could be setting Verizon up for a large payout of their own. If this describes what you are doing it's time to stop.

## Cingular Bargaining at a Standstill Will Only Be Settled With The Help of the Members

Bargaining has been in progress, in Atlanta since January 12 and so far, "Cingular management's response falls short of a fair contract for the workers who helped build this company. They have delayed this process in an effort to wear us down. We won't be worn down," the committee declared. The CWA team this week left Atlanta, where contract negotiations were taking place, but is available to meet and bargain with management at any time.

Bargaining has been underway for nearly five weeks, but CWA remains dissatisfied with management's responses, especially on workers' key concerns about employment security, compensation for retail sales workers, call center issues, job titles, an overall wage increase and more, the bargaining committee said.

Some progress has been made, but much more work remains to be done to reach agreement on members' key issues, the com-

mittee said.

In the meantime the locals are distributing information and ballots for members to vote on the authorization of legal job actions, mobilization activities and a possible strike if a fair contract cannot be reached with Cingular management. The results will be released on Feb. 25.

While a strike vote seems drastic to those who have never been involved with one it is a tool the Union has that they sometimes have to use. The current vote is not to go on strike but to authorize the National to call one if necessary. It is important to give our bargaining team this tool and if we don't it sends a strong signal to management that our members are not willing to "go to the wall" for a decent contract.

**Local 2107 Bargaining Hotline  
410 224-8003  
866 900-2107**

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## Absence

Verizon and CWA have a joint committee that was established under labor agreements in 2003, the Joint Committee on Absence Control (JCAC). The committee is focused on finding solutions for improving attendance in ways that benefit union members as well as the company.

This committee spent several months conducting joint management/associate focus groups at 11 company locations from across the Mid-Atlantic Region. The committee selected participants that had either excellent attendance or high rates of absence.

Co-chairs; Ron Collins, District 2 and Ty Stephenson, VP Mid-Atlantic Verizon, agreed that one key element they observed at locations with good attendance was a healthy working relationship between local management and union officials. The co-chairs strongly encourage local managers and the union to work together with the associates to create a productive and more positive workforce.

Our local officers and stewards have offered

to work with local management on the absence issue. Absence not only affects the company it affects your peers and co-workers. With the work force already diminished by downsizing absence plays a big role in the morale.

Each individual has a responsibility to the company and their co-workers to share in the work that they were hired to do. People that abuse FMLA or the companies '4 days every three month' absence policy are not doing anyone justice. There are people that have a real need to use FMLA. Because the absence rate is so high, now even the people that have legitimate illnesses and absences have an extremely hard time with the company.

When the company starts cracking down on fraudulent absences someone usually gets terminated. These cases are very hard to fight and most likely will not be overturned. It's time to take a look at your absence behavior and assess whether a few days every three months or so are worth your job. Let's get back to basics, come to work, be on time and do your job.

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**President's Point of View.....**

*Denise Burns*

This month I am going to cover several different issues in my column. The first one has to do with Corporate Telecommunications Support (CTS). This department is made up of System technicians and they handle Verizon's inside work along with some of the IT work. When something as simple as replacing a keyboard needs to happen it should be reported to CTS for them to come out and replace. If there is a defective cord or receiver on a phone, a terminal needs to be moved it needs to be reported. Don't take another cord or receiver or keyboard from another vacant or used position. Management and craft should not be doing CTS work. We have had several grievances because management continues to do "our" work. What we need to express now is that craft should not be doing this work either. Let CTS do their work. You should have enough of your own work to do. When we work out of title we are taking another persons job.

Next, I want to remind everyone that wearing red each Thursday has not gone away at Verizon. Just because we aren't at the bargaining table this minute shouldn't mean that we

let down our resolve. Per our contract in April we can open up talks. Wear red on Thursdays we need to show our solidarity all the time.

In 2008, which will be here before you know it, we will once again be back at the table. It should be tough negotiations. The company is still fighting us on issues that we bargained in past years contracts, such as the 18% vacation. We know that benefits will be a major subject of this bargaining. Even though none of us want to think about a strike it is never too early to put away something in case it comes to that.

Retirees you play a big role in what happens too. Your support is needed. You need to understand the issues that can affect you. Try joining the CWA Local Retired Members Club.

Cingular bargaining is turning out to be a tough one. Right now the bargaining team is home waiting to be called back to the table. Send back your action/strike authorization ballot.

*"You only make progress by fighting for progress"* George Meany

**Roberta B. Mervine Scholarship Fund-deadline to apply April 30, 2005.**

Eligibility-dependent children (defined in contract) of Local 2107 members, (active, retired or deceased), age 25 or under. Must attend a properly accredited school. Call or e-mail the office to get your application.

**Problems Getting Time Off?**

How difficult is it for you to get time off? What is the policy and who do you call? It seems that each department at Verizon is taking a hard stance against us using our vacation and excused days. Their rules are inconsistent.

We are waiting for a judge's decision on the 24 hour notice that the company claims is part of the vacation language. In the meantime that rule is spreading throughout all the departments. The contract language is very clear "...that at *least* 18% of the employees in each vacation administrative work group shall be permitted...". The language can be found on page 186 of the contract.

There is one thing that is very obvious, it is not up to a clerk or an MA, or any craft person, to approve or deny vacation/excused days. If they have been told they can approve it if it is less than 18% that is okay, but

once the 18% has been reached it is a supervisor that should be taking your request and deciding if it is feasible. Remember the language is at least 18%.

Short notice excused work days (SNEWD) are figured differently from vacation. You must request time off on short notice prior to the start of a scheduled tour or half-tour, but no more than 24 hours prior to the start of a scheduled tour or half-tour. There must be 80% of the scheduled work force available for duty or you can be denied. The company can designate up to 4 days per month as unavailable for SNEWD. These days must be posted on the work schedule when it is posted. SNEWD language is on page 172-173 of the contract.

If you experience problems getting any of your bargained for days please advise a Steward or your Vice President.

## Statement by CWA on Verizon's Proposed Purchase of MCI

CWA Press Release

President Morton Bahr of the Communications Workers of America issued the following statement on Verizon's proposal to buy MCI. CWA represents about 66,000 workers at Verizon.

Verizon's proposed purchase of MCI will give the company the ability to provide a greater diversity of services for customers and allow Verizon to compete more effectively with the emerging U.S. cable giants and the big global players in today's volatile communications industry.

MCI's Internet backbone network, the largest in the world, will bolster the communications services Verizon already offers to residential and business customers. The merger should greatly advance Verizon's rollout of high-speed broadband access, one of our nation's most urgent needs.

The Communications Workers of America believes that the merger must also provide

new opportunity for workers and a renewed commitment to customers. That means the creation of quality jobs to ensure that workers and American communities also will benefit from this merger, as well as continued support for universal service, as technology changes the tools we use to communicate.

When the SBC-AT&T combination was announced last month, CWA made clear our concern for the employment security and career opportunity of the 115,000 workers we represent at those companies.

Verizon and MCI now have the same opportunity to follow a business model built on dynamic growth, the creation of new services and technologies and the quality jobs that will meet customers' needs.

We'll be emphasizing these critical needs in our discussions with Verizon executives in the coming days and weeks.

## FCE Changes

In 2000 we bargained a process called the FCE (Functional Capacity Evaluation) which basically is a third party - independent doctor reviewing the decision of our members' doctors who have placed them on restriction.

The Company has instituted changes to the process which greatly expand the information provided to the FCE. Such as providing the FCE with more medical records than are relevant. The records given will be decided by the Company or their representative and could include records of the last 20-30 years and include performance and or disciplinary records. The immediate supervisor will be providing a report as to the working conditions at the work-site and if the employee/member who is being evaluated has just become disabled after a bad performance review or discipline.

This is mainly due to the number of people on restriction who can not talk with customers or be on the phone due to stress - but it is not limited to these types of restrictions alone.

The procedures for the FCE were first set up with the members of the ACHC (Advisory Committee on Health Care). The Company is taking the position that they are not required to bargain procedural changes with the Union.

The ACHC met with the Company to attempt to isolate the problems and the possible solutions needed to solve the so-called Company problems so they could format a recommendation to the bargaining team for action. This was not accomplished. On February 14th the Company instituted the changes.

The CWA & IBEW will be going into arbitration to correct these issues. We are waiting for the company's answer as to if we can combine both arbitrations.

The IBEW has also asked that we join with them in actions that would protect our members rights and not reveal private medical, or other types of information to the FCE, which is not relevant to the information used by the doctor who placed our member on restriction.

Jim Byrne, the chair of the ACHC, will be working with representatives of the IBEW so we can fight this issue from all sides. He will be in contact with Pat Niven, District 1, and Ron Collins, District 2, to provide as much information as possible as these issues go forward.

### **CWA Joe Beirne Foundation Scholarship Program**

**Final deadline is March 31, 2005.**

Thirty partial college scholarships of \$3,000 each are being offered for the 2005-2006 school year. Winners, selected in a lottery drawing, also will receive second-year scholarships of the same amount contingent upon satisfactory academic accomplishment. Eligible for the awards are CWA members and their spouses, children and grandchildren, including those of retired or deceased members.

Go to [www.cwa-union.org](http://www.cwa-union.org) and click on Beirne Scholarship link.

### **Retirees Corner**

The next meeting for CWA 2107 RMC is on March 7 at 10 AM at the Local Office. We will have a speaker from District 2 to talk about pension issues and contract 2008.

RMC meetings are held on the second Monday in January, February, March, April, May, September, October, November and December. Unless otherwise noted all meetings are held at the Local 2107 office at 2441 Holly Ave, Annapolis and begin at 10AM.

## Organize Your Photo's and Raise Money for the Roberta Mervine Scholarship Fund

Cynthia L. Simmons – Creative Memories Unit Leader (retired Verizon employee and union member) will be available to teach you how you can very quickly and simply get your photos organized and get them into a photo-safe album. This is not just one more thing to add to your to-do list!! Truth is..... getting your pictures organized has probably been on your to-do list forever! Come and learn how to do Power Layouts, which is a systematic way to get this job done quickly. I believe you'll be very impressed with how simple I will make this for you.

50% of profits will go to Local 2107's Roberta B. Mervine scholarship fund. If you

already work on your albums, come by and see the new products. Products will be available for cash and carry.

Date: Monday, March, 21, 2005

Time: 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Location: Union Hall

If you plan to attend call the office so we can plan accordingly.

PS-If you've been to a show and know how to do Power Layouts, bring a couple packs of pictures so you can use your time to work on your project. I'll show you new products and give you some new ideas!

### Verizon Dental Needs

Call MetLife for the Preferred Dental Program (PDP) to receive a list of dentists in your zip code area on 800 988-8331 or access MetLife at [www.metlife.com/dental](http://www.metlife.com/dental).

### Vision Needs

Call Davis Vision for participating providers on 800 999-5431 or [www.davisvision.com](http://www.davisvision.com). For Laser Vision Correction visit the web or call 877 999-7006.

### Benefits

We now have a Single Point Of Contact for benefits excluding the 401k. (To view beneficiary info for basic life and pension you must use the toll free number.) Using the internet you can log on to : <http://resources.hewitt.com/verizon>, use the eweb at; <http://eweb.verizon.com>, select "get hr benefit info" or call toll free 877 275-8947.

### 401k

For your 401k go to [www.401k.com](http://www.401k.com) or call 1-888-457-9333.

### Dates to Remember

#### Membership meetings

03-09 Combined Meeting 630 PM

#### Other Meetings

02-23 Executive Bd Mtg 1PM

02-23 Steward Mtg 6PM

03-11 Presidents Mtg 1030 AM

03-29 Executive Bd Mtg 1PM

#### Other

03-06 thru 03-09 Legislative-Political Conference

03-15 Newsletter deadline

03-17 Family Care Fair (Riva) 10-2

### Verizon

Medical, Prescriptions, Dental & Vision issues relating to payment of bills, providers, directories, medical necessity of services, forms, plan questions, retirees:

**John Petrini 800 627-0200 Fax: 610 566-3123**

FMLA, SADP, CORE issues:

**Bill Sonnik 888 571-7218 Fax: 304 264-4189**

Retirees Over 65 Years old:

**Sue Anderson 888 324-4969 Fax: 973 691-0865**

### Community Services

The Blood Drive is at Riva Rd Feb 24<sup>th</sup>. Sign up sheets are on every floor or contact Donna Blanchard at the hall.

The American Cancer Society Daffodil days raised \$475.

### Sympathies to:

Ron Pusloskie's on the death of his father  
Dutchin Webster on the death of her cousin

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