



CWA Rolls Out Campaign for Real Health Care Reform

from The National

An army of CWA health care activists is about to fan out across the country to build an even bigger movement of union members, local executive boards and congressional candidates in at least 121 targeted districts who will fight for guaranteed, affordable health care for all.

About 140 local activists and staff members took part in four days of training [last] week in Maryland to better understand the nation's health care crisis and learn how to motivate others to join the battle.

"It's not just about being right about health care," CWA President Larry Cohen told the gathering. "We have to build a political movement to bring about real health care reform in this country."

Cohen, speaking to the group at a conference center near Baltimore this week, stressed that the health care campaign and the fight for the Employee Free Choice Act go hand in hand and, "we're going to link these issues like never before." Declining collective bargaining density and union power in the United States is a primary reason for the growing number of employers who no longer provide health care and contribute to the mounting crisis.

Both the health care and Employee Free Choice Act campaigns are among the union's Strategic Industry Fund projects.

The CWA health care campaign is not focused on details of a specific plan, but rather it lays out a policy framework for universal coverage, with the goal of enacting health care legislation by 2010 and a new system to be in place by 2012.

CWA District 7 Vice President Annie Hill and Research Director Louise Novotny explained that the union hasn't adopted a single approach other than to aggressively champion those ideas that will lead to health care for all.

Part of the process, said Hill, will be to gather ideas and input from members and other unions and organizations as CWA develops a more specific recommendation for

(see Healthcare on page 2)

How to Keep Your Job

by Ray Pomeroy

The first thing you absolutely have to do to hold on to your job is be there. You have to show up for your shift, on time every day with some limited exceptions.

You also need to perform your job duties to the best of your ability. Verizon and at&t almost never make it easy but you still have to do the job within the constraints that are placed on you.

For the most part if you do these things you won't have any problems.

That's not to say that everyone won't have problems, some will. Some of our members will (and do) get themselves in trouble and some will just fall into it through no real fault of their own.

How do you fall into trouble through no fault of your own? There are numerous ways for this to happen.

For example at at&t our RSC's (Retail Sales Consultants) biggest problem, which they don't always cause themselves, is failing to hit quotas. The company sets unrealistic quotas, doesn't pro rate the quota for less than 40 hours of vacation, doesn't pro rate for union time, putting an additional burden on the few Stewards we have that are RSC's and sometimes puts too many reps in a store.

There are other things that happen to members at Verizon and at&t. Family emergency's that cause you to be late to work or miss time can be a problem if management is inflexible, motor vehicle accidents that truly were "no fault" but were deemed chargeable by the company and a dozen other things including, on occasion, personality conflicts with management. Sometimes they are out to get you but it's nearly impossible to prove.

Verizon members are pretty good about exercising their Weingarten Rights when they are called in to talk to management but they aren't always good about filing grievances when they should.

Our at&t members, with some exceptions, need to do a lot better on both counts.

If you are called in to talk to management and you THINK that the meeting could result in discipline you need to stop the meeting and get a union rep. This is called your

Weingarten Rights, see page 3.

The company knows this and they are under no obligation to tell you. We have a pretty good relationship with some managers and they will give us a heads up but they are the exception not the rule.

The next piece of the puzzle is to understand that you need to contact the union about filing a grievance whenever you are disciplined. It's important to grieve ANY discipline and anything else that doesn't seem right should be run by a union rep.

It's important to file grievances for several reasons. For instance if you were to get a counseling notice for not hitting quota and blow it off because "it's only a counseling notice" you are setting yourself up for a "written warning" if you don't hit quota again in a certain amount of time. Followed by a "final written" and possibly termination.

It's the same thing at Verizon. You can't let an ECM go because they lead to suspensions and eventually termination.

Another thing you must do to keep your job is **DON'T GIVE AWAY YOUR WORK!** Don't let anyone else give it away either. That means when work is clearly ours or if we think it should be ours, we don't let the company or uninformed co-workers get away with giving it away. The company is going to try and they are going to succeed to a point. They are doing it right now. If you've been reading this newsletter you know that there are executive level grievances on contracting and sending our work to VCSI among other things and it's going to take time to sort out.

In the meantime we control what we can and we apply pressure where it's needed.

We recently had an incident where Verizon employees were feeding fiber slack to contractors (fiber is ours and ours alone) and one of our members took pictures so that we would have proof for a grievance. This was not the first time this contractor and the Verizon compliance employee they work with had been photographed doing our work and, as we learned later, they were very upset. They have since claimed that they are tired

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E-mail Addresses

President: Denise Burns
 dburns@cwa-2107.org
EVP: Ray Pomeroy
 rpomeroy@cwa-2107.org
Sec-Treas: Dutchin Webster
 dwebster@cwa-2107.org
Northern VP: Jeff Savin
 jsavin@cwa-2107.org
Southern VP: James Padgett
 jpadgett@cwa-2107.org
Cingular VP: Vacant
 at&t@cwa-2107.org
Asst Sec-Treas: Sandi Burch
 sburch@cwa-2107.org
Editor: Ray Pomeroy
 newsletter@cwa-2107.org
General Mailbox
 2107@cwa-2107.org



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**Communications Workers
 Of America
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Officers:

President-Denise Burns
Secretary/Treasurer-Dutchin Webster
Executive Vice President-Ray Pomeroy
Vice President South-James Padgett
Vice President North-Jeff Savin
Cingular VP-Vacant
Asst Secretary-Treas-Sandi Burch
Editor-Ray Pomeroy
Assistant Editor-Matt Dement

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President's Point of View.....

Denise Burns

YOU want to file a grievance. Make sure you remember the time limits. Both at&t mobility and Verizon have 30 days from the date of occurrence to present a grievance. If you have a question on what the occurrence date is, ask a steward or an officer. Don't wait until the last day. It doesn't give the steward a fair chance at investigating before having to present the grievance.

When you fill out the statement of occurrence (can download from our website under forms) make sure you put the facts as it happened, who, what, where, when and why apply. Also, state what remedy you would like. The company doesn't see this statement. Your statement must be completely filled out. It has spaces for both your home and work address, we need both, as well as your contact numbers. These are very important because we may not have the most updated information and may need to contact you about the grievance.

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 reform.

Hill headed an Executive Board committee that began work about a year ago to craft the campaign and determine which 100 congressional districts should be targeted, a list that grew to 121. They took into account the House committees each representative belongs to, how many CWA members and retirees were in their districts and whether their states would be political battlegrounds, then got feedback on the list from CWA district and sector leaders.

Participants in [last] week's training will be meeting with local executive boards and retired members' chapters to explain the campaign and help them enlist rank-and-file ac-

Both contracts have a section on grievance procedures, Article 7 in the Cingular (at&t) contract and Article 12 in the Verizon contract. If you have questions about the procedure those articles should answer them.

For issues affecting the bargaining unit, usually an Executive Level grievance is filed by the District.

You are the eyes and ears in the work place for the stewards, officers and the District. If you hear of something happening that you think is wrong-you should let the Local know. When you give us information we need specific data and as much as you can give us.

It takes all of us to police the contract and to hold these companies accountable. Together, we do make a difference.

"Alone we're nothing, together we're everything-it's the whole philosophy of Labor"
 Leon Davis

tivists. Among other activities, CWA members will be asked to send postcards and signatures for the Employee Free Choice Act and health care reform to members of Congress.

The CWA campaign will also join with other unions and organizations and work with willing employers.

Hill stressed that the health care campaign will in no way affect the determination CWA brings to contract negotiations. "When we sit down at the bargaining table, we're going to do everything we can to maintain quality health care for our members," Hill said. "It's just getting harder and harder to do. We know ultimately that we need a national solution."

**Vet Fights for His Country –
 and Now for His Rights at Verizon Business**

from the National

The American flag has become a casualty of Verizon Business' war on workers' rights.

Verizon Business technician and Air National Guardsman Terry Skiest has an American flag and a Massachusetts state flag that have flown in battle zones with him in Afghanistan and Iraq, and he proudly displayed them outside his work cubicle in Acton, Mass. But to enforce a new "anti-solicitation policy" aimed at blocking the posting of pro-

union organizing materials, management pulled down the flags when Skiest, a union supporter, returned to his third tour of duty in Afghanistan last fall.

Skiest is fighting the company's action and is joined by hundreds of coworkers who are hanging flags in their own cubicles up and down the East Coast. Supporters have also

(see Flag on page 3)

Michigan Labor Quashes Right to Work Ploy

from Union Communications Services

A little-reported story played out during Michigan Primary Election Day in January—a story that showcased the strength working people have when they band together.

It started when national “Right-to-Work” promoters made it clear they hoped to use election day to gather signatures for a potential ballot initiative leading to establishment of right-to-work laws in Michigan.

The labor movement long ago renamed such laws “right-to-work-for-less,” since they give a foothold to low-wage, race-to-the-bottom employers by weakening organizing rights for workers. The 23 states with these laws have higher rates of infant mortality, a lower percentage of residents with healthcare and more dangerous work-sites—and middle-class workers earn much less, according to the AFL-CIO.

By bringing their campaign to Michigan, perhaps the right-to-work forces thought they could capitalize on the brutal toll globalization has already taken on the state, where hundreds of thousands of auto workers and others in manufacturing have lost their jobs in recent years. But they were wrong.

The Michigan labor movement mobilized in the run-up to the election, and some 3,500 union members were deployed, prepared to distribute leaflets against right-to-work at Primary Day polling places.

In the end, the right-to-work forces, mostly hailing from out of state, were no-shows—likely seeing the handwriting on the wall before they even arrived at the polls. Instead, the union volunteers were able to distribute leaflets educating the public about a labor-sponsored health care initiative proposal.

Steelworkers union member Ed Leary said he was proud to play a part in protecting workers around the state. “‘Right to Work’ would be a disaster in Michigan,” Leary said. “I was really inspired by the fact that thousands of us fanned out across the state. The power of the labor movement is strength in numbers. We won’t allow any special interest group to attack the economy of our state.”

CPS Award (Verizon)

The CPS Award for plan year 2007 is \$777.00.

The award will be paid on March 6 or 7.

Retirees Corner

The next regular meeting is March 10. RMC meetings are held on the second Monday of every month. Unless otherwise noted all meetings are held at the Local 2107 office at 2441 Holly Ave, Annapolis and begin at 10AM.

Weingarten Rights

Employees have *Weingarten* rights only during investigatory interviews. An investigatory interview occurs when a supervisor questions an employee to obtain information which could be used as a basis for discipline or asks an employee to defend his or her conduct. If an employee has a *reasonable belief* that discipline or other adverse consequences may result from what he or she says, the employee has the right to request union representation.

Management is not required to inform the employee of his/her *Weingarten* rights; it is the employee’s responsibility to know and request.

When the employee makes the request for a union representative to be present management has three options:

- 1) it can stop questioning until the representative arrives.
- 2) it can call off the interview or,
- 3) it can tell the employee that it will call off the interview unless the employee voluntarily gives up his/her rights to a union representative (*an option the employee should always refuse.*)

Employers will often assert that the only role of a union representative in an investigatory interview is to observe the discussion. The Supreme Court, however, clearly acknowledges a representative’s right to assist and counsel workers during the interview.

The Supreme Court has also ruled that during an investigatory interview management must inform the union representative of the subject of the interrogation. The representative must also be allowed to speak privately with the employee before the interview. During the questioning, the representative can interrupt to clarify a question or to object to confusing or intimidating tactics.

While the interview is in progress the representative can not tell the employee what to say but he may advise them on how to answer a question. At the end of the interview the union representative can add information to support the employee’s case.

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of having their picture taken and they aren’t fooling with the fiber anymore. That’s great if it holds up, the object is to stop it.

We don’t know why some members, mostly in another local, don’t understand that we cannot afford to give away our work. Not now, not ever. They are concerned that it’s “stupid to send out a second crew to do the fiber work”. I agree completely, the company should let our crews do the whole job.

You can apply pressure without being nasty and you should. Educate your co-workers about why it’s important to keep the work and hold the line on contracting.

(Flag from page 2)

set up a website, www.puttheflagup.org, and produced a video – which is available via the site – to help Skiest get his message out. Visitors to the website can send a message of protest to Verizon.

"Those flags flew with me in Iraq and flew outside my tent in Afghanistan," Skiest said. "Now I'm back at my post at Verizon Business and I want to know why I can't display my flags outside my cubicle."

Managers told Skiest's co-worker, Mike Wheeler, that the flags "could be considered to be propaganda" and "might be offensive to some workers," Wheeler said.

Skiest and fellow VZB technicians in New York and New England signed cards showing majority union support last year, seeking representation through CWA and the IBEW. Verizon has refused to grant union recognition even though local, state and national political leaders verified the card majority and have put pressure on the company to respect the workers' decision.

Skiest exhausted every internal avenue of redress with VZB's management and human resources department to reconsider their decision. He and his co-workers say they are determined to continue their fight for justice until management puts the flags back up where they belong.

VZB, formerly MCI, has several government contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan, including installing the wireless communications system in Baghdad. "If this company is on the side of men and women fighting for our country, why does it deny me the right to fly the American flag?" Skiest asks. "That seems un-American."

Check out this website:
www.votechooser.com

Get Well to:

Carlene Hannon
 Phil Slye
 Kimecia Tompkins-Brown

Sympathies to:

Kathy McIntire on the death of her mother.
 Rosetta Wright on the death of her father.

Delegate/Alternate Election info:

Nominations were held at the January 2008 Membership meetings
 Ballots were mailed out 2/12/08
 2/22/08 is the last day for a duplicate ballot request
 Duplicate ballots will be mailed on 2/25/08
 Ballots will be counted on 3/10/08

Dates to Remember

Membership meetings

None Scheduled

Other Meetings

02/27	Executive Board	03:00 pm
02/26	MD State & DC AFL-CIO ex bd	10:00 am
03/03	CWA MD State Council	03:00 pm
03/05	Community Service Committee	
03/10	Retired Members Club	10:00 am
03/18	Stewards	06:30 pm
03/19	ACFC	
03/20	Balt Metro Council Ex Bd & general	
03/27	Executive Board	tba
04/02	CWA MD State Council	10:30 am
04/10	Community Service Committee	

Other

03/10	Count election ballots
03/14 - 03/15	Safety Conference
03/18	Newsletter deadline
04/06- 04/09	Legislative Conference

08/02/08 Verizon Contract Expires

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