



The Community Minded Union

# Locally Speaking

The People Minded Local

Representing: Verizon-NJ Commercial & Marketing, Occupational Center of Union County, North Haledon Police Dispatchers, Data-Tele, Cingular Wireless and American Labor Museum Botto House.

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 2

COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA

LOCAL 1023, CRANFORD, NJ

JUNE 2007

## ***NEW CONTRACT BRINGS MORE BENEFITS TO CWA LOCAL 1023 MEMBERS AT THE OCCUPATIONAL CENTER OF UNION COUNTY***

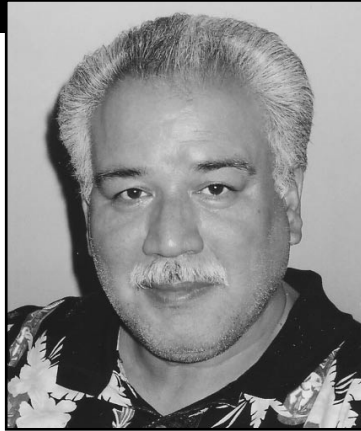


CWA President Rey Massa and Vice President Trish Kessell have announced the successful completion of bargaining negotiations with the Occupational Center of Union County. The new contract will include better wages (8% over three years), the addition of Martin Luther King Day as a designated paid holiday, 2 more vacation days for those with over 15 years service, an additional 2 days for those with 20 years service, stronger layoff language, and an increased Vision Plan

benefit. In addition, there will be no cost shifting of healthcare and no change in the employer's 6% contribution of base salary to the employees' retirement fund for the life of the contract.

Massa and Kessell hailed the new agreement, which was overwhelmingly approved by the membership in May, 2007, as a gratifying victory for OCUC's employees, and as a sign of the continuing strength of CWA Local 1023 in winning a fair contract for its members.

## IN SOLIDARITY



### ***The Employee Free Choice Act***

In the United States today, 31,000 workers are fired from their jobs every year for encouraging their fellow workers to consider membership in a labor union. This means that every 24 minutes, an American worker is dismissed for talking about the pros and cons of being unionized.

Since the late 1940's, union membership among workers in this country has declined steadily from a high of over 30% until the present day, when a mere 7% of employees in the private sector are members of a labor union.

Yet, 65% of Americans support the right of employees to organize if they want to join a union. Ten years ago, only about half of the American people polled thought that joining a union was an okay thing to do.

So, on the one hand, people are becoming more and more receptive to the idea of joining a union, while on the other hand, only 7 workers out of 100 actually belong to one. How can two such contradictory trends co-exist at the same time? What is it that stops folks from getting their union cards?

Declining union membership in the United States is easy to understand once you realize how hostile corporate America is to the idea of organizing workers, and what it is willing to do to block what should be a very simple process.

Under the present system for conducting union campaigns in the workplace, employers are free to engage in threats and intimidation, make false promises, hold mandatory anti-union propaganda meetings, and fire organizers.

Even in cases where a union has overcome all the obstacles management has put in place to obstruct free elections, and has fairly won the right to represent a company's workers, the company proceeds to bargain in bad faith. In one case among many similar cases, hospital administrators in Dubuque, Iowa dodged agreeing to a contract for 18-months, grudgingly granted

a one-year agreement (only after the hospital workers threatened to strike), and then refused to renew it once it expired.

Clearly, a new method for recognizing all workers' right to representation is needed.

In March of this year, the Congress of the United States passed a new piece of legislation called the Employee Free Choice Act. This Act remedies the abuses which US employers have used freely to deny their workers the wages, benefits and working conditions that would bring many of them out of poverty and into the middle class.

The EFCA makes joining a union as easy as signing a card. If the majority of employees agree on the outcome of the election, the designated union begins bargaining a contract immediately. If no agreement on a first contract is reached within 120 days, then the issue goes to binding arbitration for resolution. The new contract must cover workers for a minimum of two years. Employers are subject to \$20,000 fines per incident for violating the provisions of the Act.

But getting a Bill through Congress doesn't make it a law automatically. The EFCA still has to win a vote in the Senate. Right now, EFCA only has the support of 47 Senators, with 11 Senators sitting on the fence, and the remaining 42 (predominantly conservative Republicans) strongly opposed to its passage. Debate begins this summer.

We've suffered long enough under a system that favors injustice over a level playing field. It's time to give the American worker, particularly women (who only make about 75% of what men make in non-union jobs), a fair chance to get ahead.

**Rey Massa**

President  
CWA Local 1023



## **INSIDE THIS ISSUE . . .**

### **IN SOLIDARITY**

#### **QUARTERLY GRIEVANCE REPORT**

#### **THE CRANKY CONSULTANT – NEW!**

#### **JO ANN DIANA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION**

**. . . AND MORE**



# CWA 1023 GRIEVANCE REPORT – FIRST QUARTER 2007

In any given quarter, one Area may report closing out more or fewer grievances than other areas. This disparity is caused by the grievance process itself, since grievances are often pending for additional records, or to verify pertinent information, or are in the appeals process.

## AREA ONE

Vacation, EWD, etc.	Settled
Vacation, EWD, etc	Won
Working Conditions	Won
Unfair/Unequal Treatment	Settled
Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Won
Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Dismissal	Settled
Dismissal	Settled
Dismissal	Settled

**Total Grievances for Area One: 16**

## AREA TWO

Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Won
Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Dismissal	Settled
Dismissal	Settled
Dismissal	Settled
Suspension/Letter of Suspension	Settled

**Total Grievances for Area Two: 35**

## AREA THREE

All first quarter grievances currently reported as open.

**Total Grievances for Area Three: 31**

## AREA FOUR

Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Unfair and Unequal Treatment	Won
Unfair and Unequal Treatment	Won
Equalization of Overtime	Won
Denial of Union Representation	Won

**Total Grievances for Area Four: 35**

## AREA FIVE

Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary	Settled
Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won

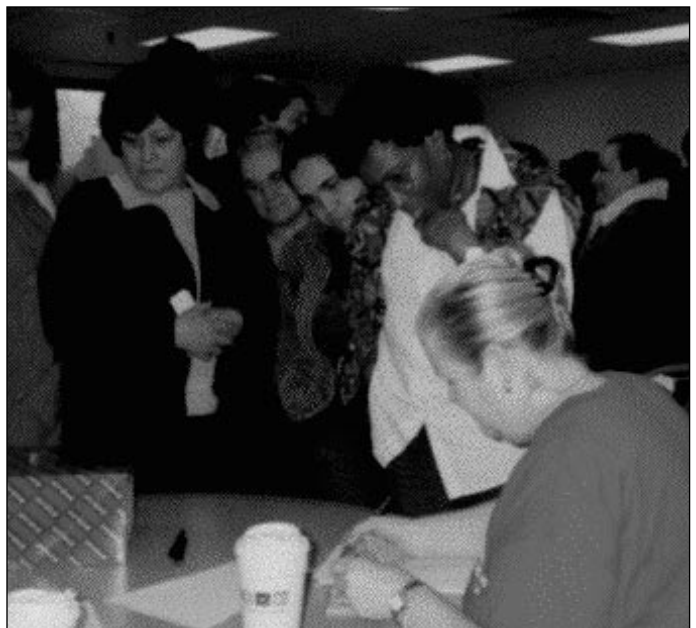
**Total Grievances for Area Five: 29**

**Total Grievances for All Areas (01-01-07 through 03-31-07): 146**

### American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark Announces New Featured Exhibit: *The Shirts Off Our Backs*

The American Labor Museum will be exhibiting “The Shirts Off Our Backs,” through the end of the year. This exhibit, made possible by a grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, which features a solid wall of shirts featuring logos and slogans worn by union workers through years of struggle with corporate America, will be on display through December 31st.

The American Labor Museum is located at 83 Norwood Street, Haledon, New Jersey. Contact the museum for further information at 973 595-7953, or email [labormuseum@aol.com](mailto:labormuseum@aol.com).



**OCUC members prepare to vote.**

## STOP PAYING LIP SERVICE TO THE IDEA OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

### By The Cranky Consultant

As Verizon employees we probably are well aware that we face a difficult battle in the fight against cable. It is a battle we all have a stake in because if Verizon loses, our jobs are at risk. We received good news recently when the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index showed that Verizon had received the top ranking in customer service for a wireline telephone company. Cable company ratings for their phone service were below average, and as a whole, cable companies received the lowest customer satisfaction scores of any industry measured in the survey.

Apparently our customers like the job we are doing. So, if we're in a fight for our proverbial life, we need to ask what do customers want and why would they leave one company for another? The answer can vary greatly depending upon exactly what kind of service we're talking about, but generally speaking customers want reliable service at a reasonable price. They want to know what they are paying for, know when there are changes and why. They want bills that are clear, and they want to easily reach a knowledgeable person to explain that bill or to make changes. The one area where there's a lot of difference in opinion is that some people value price more than anything else, while others will pay more for reliable products or for what they perceive to be good service.

Last year Verizon established a Retention Center to try to stem "line loss" i.e., customers disconnecting some or all of their telephone lines. We in the Business Office recently received an email from the head of that office which laid the blame for line loss at the feet of the consultants. The email essentially says that we need to show up, smile and be polite and offer services. If we don't do these things, then, and I quote, "Customers will leave." The email makes a passing reference to troubles in Repair and Installation, but essentially, every customer who leaves does so because of us failing to do our job.

This insulting email demonstrated a narrow-minded, myopic and ultimately useless perspective on the subject of line loss. While I wouldn't expect a college thesis on the subject, the email fails to recognize that technology has changed and so has how people use our service. And, of course, we now have true competition in the form of VOIP and cable.

While I can't disagree that "yes" we need to show up to work, have a good attitude, and offer our services, the idea that simply doing all this will mean customers won't disconnect service is absurd on its face.

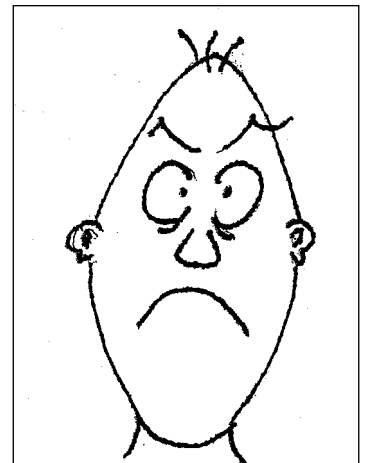
Let's call a spade a spade. If customers can't understand their bills, they will leave. If they can't get a human being on the phone after spending twenty minutes trapped in a VRU, they will leave. If they get passed around from department to department because the

company thinks it's smart to keep hacking the job into smaller and smaller bits, they will leave. If they get different price quotes every time they call because nobody has been trained properly, they will leave. If Verizon raises its rates on every calling plan and package in the face of lower priced competitors, they will leave. If Verizon insists on sowing confusion for their customers, they will leave.

If we are to do our job effectively (both the sales part and the service part) we need competence and confidence, and for that we need a solid support system. We need simple computer systems that work, not the myriad of mishmashes we use now that is often confusing or crashes. We need simple, easy to follow promotions and guidelines on how to offer products without confusing ourselves or our customers (so that customers don't get five different quotes from five different reps). Instead, the promotions are too complicated, they change too often, and the training is incomplete or nonexistent. When we have questions or problems we need easily accessible reference material and true leaders who are knowledgeable and available. Instead, we have cheerleaders called Team Leaders, a useless computer reference guide and the only true support staff is not always accessible.

Verizon talks about customer service, but fails to support us so we can give it. Nor does the company ever reward us for doing so. We have to sooth irate customers and are then expected to turn them around and sell them something. When was the last time you saw a contest for the most customer commendations? When did you ever get a "golden ticket" for getting a commendation from a customer? But I'll bet there's a contest in your office every day for selling DSL or DTV or a calling package.

That University of Michigan study proves we already provide outstanding service in spite of the failures of this company to support us. Consultants exceed expectations every day, but all we get is the blame. Bottom line? As long as Verizon keeps treating its customers as if they don't matter, customers will leave. And as long as Verizon keeps blaming the consultant for line loss rather than examining the company's own failures, consultants will leave.



**"Maybe I'm just having a bad day!"**

## OPPOSITION TO VERIZON SALE OF NEW ENGLAND LANDLINES TO FAIRPOINT COMMUNICATIONS IS GROWING

In the few short months since Verizon announced its intended sale of landlines in the three states of Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine to FairPoint Communications for \$2.72 billion dollars, more and more scrutiny by state governments and opposition from organized labor have turned Verizon's slam dunk into a maybe not.

During hearings held by the State of Vermont Public Service Board, expert witnesses noted that although Verizon's maintenance of the telecom network in the state had been deteriorating steadily since 2001, it was doubtful that FairPoint would be able to turn the situation around. In all likelihood, service would deteriorate at an increasing rate. Dr. Kenneth R. Peres, an economist for CWA stated that "If Verizon wanted to, it has the resources to improve service quality. Even if FairPoint wanted to improve service quality, it would be very difficult to achieve given its limited and strained resources." Dr. Peres recommended that the Board of Vermont Public Service not approve the transaction, as did Randy Barber of the Center for Economic Organizing. Barber pointed out that in order to satisfy its shareholders, FairPoint had been cannibalizing its assets for some time, and that the sale would not be in the best interests of Verizon's customers, employees, or the State of Vermont as a whole.

Meanwhile, on another front, the State Senate in Vermont passed a bill requiring in part that FairPoint must demonstrate that it has the financial, technical and managerial resources to extend broadband into the rural areas of the state before the sale could be approved by

the newly created Vermont Telecom Authority.

The sale is also opposed by CWA and IBEW. Both unions have been busy holding rallies in the affected states, and plan many more.

### 40 MILLION AMERICAN WORKERS HAVE SUBSTANDARD WAGES AND BENEFITS

More than 40-million jobs in the United States—about one in three – pay roughly \$11 per hour or less and rarely include health care insurance, retirement accounts, paid sick days or other benefits, according to a new report by The Mobility Agenda, a project affiliated with the Center for Economic and Policy Research.

"All too often, these low-wage jobs are replacing jobs that have supported a broad middle class," said Margy Waller, one of the authors of "Understanding Low-Wage Work in the United States."

The full report is available on the Center's website at [www.cepr.net](http://www.cepr.net).

*(Source: CWA National Website)*

## CWA PROUDLY SUPPORTS AIR AMERICA RADIO WWRL 1600 AM ON YOUR RADIO DIAL



**(Left to right)  
Lynn Boyko and Nick Dankanyin from the OCUC Bargaining Committee look on as Trish Kessell and Rey Massa tabulate the vote.**

## Retiree Thank You's



*"To the Members of CWA Local 1023,*

*I just received my retiree's package from the Local and I wanted to express my thanks to all the members for the gold retiree's card, really nice and the check, really **really** nice.*

*I also want to take this opportunity to wish CWA and Local 1023 all the best in the coming years, i.e. August 2008, in all your endeavors. It was my pleasure and privilege to be an active member during my 29? years in the Commercial-Marketing Bargaining Unit.*

*Fraternally yours,"*

**Fred Weisel**

*"To Local 1023*

*Thank you for my retirement gift. I am proud to have been affiliated with CWA for so many years.*

*All good wishes go to you.*

*Regards,"*

**Paula Belmonte**

### MARYLAND MAKES HISTORY AS FIRST STATE TO REQUIRE A LIVING WAGE FOR WORKERS

With Governor Martin O'Malley's signature on the bill, Maryland this week became the first state to require government contractors to pay their employees a living wage — \$8.50 per hour in rural counties and \$11.50 per hour in urban areas.

Unions and other advocates have pushed for a living wage in Maryland for the last decade.

The state legislature passed a similar measure in 2004, but the Republican governor, Robert Ehrlich Jr., vetoed it.

Supporters estimate that the new law could help as many as 50,000 workers in the state of Maryland.

*(Source: CWA National Website)*

### **Attention Members!**

***Check out the Local's  
Website at:***

**[www.cwalocal1023.net](http://www.cwalocal1023.net)**



**"There's no other feeling quite like knowing you've bargained a fair contract for the people you represent."**

## Welcome New Members

**Ahmad Abdul-Muid** – Scotch Plains BSC, **Renalda Baptiste** – Madison CSSC, **Damian Bargaineer** – Scotch Plains BSC, **Ceola Bell** – Madison CSSC, **Daniele Bernard-Pasquali** – Scotch Plains BSC, **John Bradley** – Madison CSSC, **Asia Bratton** – Madison CSSC, **Dione Briones** – Scotch Plains BSC, **Irving Caraballo** – Cingular Wireless, **Chaquia Crawley** – NJ Retention Center, **Nicole DeLuccia** – Cingular Wireless, **Jesus Enriquez** – OCUC, **Preston Forster** – Cingular Wireless, **Angelique Fournier** – Scotch Plains BSC, **Lorwin Gardner** – Cingular Wireless, **Serafim Kalpouzos** – Madison CSSC, **Richard Kunz** – NJ Retention Center, **Abdeel Maqbool** – Cingular Wireless, **Terry McMillian** – Scotch Plains BSC, **Nancy Morgan** – NJ Retention Center, **Qasim Muid** – Madison CSSC, **Kevin Peach** – NJ Retention Center, **Gipsy Pear** – OCUC, **Louis Perez** – Scotch Plains BSC, **Michael Rhode** – Cingular Wireless, **Maria Sanchez** – OCUC, **Gayl Schaad** – OCUC, **Takeehah Sessoms** – Scotch Plains BSC, **Cinemon Sobers** – South Plainfield LBS, **Arkadiy Veltman** – Cingular Wireless, **Maureen Woodley** – NJ Retention Center



### Congratulations Retirees

**Christine Delaney** – NJ Encore, **Dorothy King** – NJ Encore

## MOVING?

*Please remember to give your new address and phone number to the Local Office when you move.*

- ✓ You can call: (908) 709-1023
- ✓ You can Fax: (908) 276-8921
- ✓ You can e-mail; [cwa1023@verizon.net](mailto:cwa1023@verizon.net)
- ✓ You can send by mail:

**CWA Local 1023**

**118 South Avenue East, Cranford, NJ 07016**



### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*“An injury to one is an injury to all!”*

**Slogan of the Industrial Workers of the World**

The Community Minded Union  
**Locally Speaking**  
 The People Minded Local

The voice of local 1023 endeavors to provide factual, informative and relevant comment on matters of interest to the Membership. Reprint permission is granted to All Union Publications, with credit to the author. All inquiries concerning this publication should be referred to the Editor.

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