



# CWA District 6 Retiree Informer

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## Retiree Outreach

### Notes from MY AON Retiree Health Exchange Webinar

By Kevin Kujawa

On May 20, 2014 I attended a webinar conducted by AT&T and AON as we started getting explanations on how the new process will work for AT&T Retirees who are Medicare eligible and 65 years of age or older. As most AT&T Retirees should know by now your Company sponsored healthcare will be changing if you fall into the group mentioned above. At the beginning the spokesperson for the Company and AON laid out the changes taking place as they are shifting Medicare Eligible Retirees from the Company sponsored Group Plan to individual plans in the created private exchange. They explained the reason AT&T elected to go this route is that a "private" exchange offers more choices and better prices than the current Group Health Plan that serves as the supplement to Medicare. They advised us

that all Retirees will have one advisor or consultant assigned to them and that person will be their point of contact at AON. These Advisors are licensed and certified insurance agents who work on a salary and not commission according to the spokesperson from AON. They work in five call centers all located in the United States. In May education kits and appointments were mailed to all Medicare eligible Retirees who are being moved to this plan. In this packet should be an appointment time prescheduled for you to have your "Education" call with your advisor. **Important Note: Once you receive this packet with your education appointment it is important that you call and confirm the appointment by the date listed in the letter. If you do not confirm or reschedule your appointment AON will not call you and**

**you may suffer a loss of benefits.** Education appointments are scheduled for July, August and September. We were told that the mailing date for the Education packets was May 19<sup>th</sup>, so if you have not received your packet as of yet I would advise you to call AON at 800 928-8027 and inquire as to why you haven't received it. They also advised us if you would like someone on your "Education" call with you just advise them and that should be no problem. During the education appointment or call they should be able to tell you what AT&T's contribution to your HRA or Health reimbursement Account will be this will give you some idea of what you have to work with although plans and prices will not be available until October. With-

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Claude Cummings Jr., Vice President, CWA District 6

*I encourage all Retirees who are not involved to get back in the cause.*

## The Battle Continues

By Claude Cummings Jr Vice President CWA District 6

I am pleased to report a huge victory in Missouri in our battle to stop the attacks on working men and women. Right to Work (for less) and Paycheck Deception laws failed to gain the necessary votes to clear the Missouri House of Representatives thus killing these bills for the just ended Legislative session. I am extremely proud of all the Missouri CWA Locals and their Retirees Activist who partnered with the AFL-CIO, other Labor Unions and Social Organizations to build a movement to stop the advancement of these bills into law. While we might be able to breathe easy in Missouri for the moment, you can rest assured those who do the bidding of big business and corporate greed will raise their heads again in this state as well as all states in our District. As we try to grow our movement and improve the working conditions for the men and women in this Country it becomes increasingly difficult when we must spend so much of our time playing defense. At all

levels of our Government we are constantly fighting the agenda of diminishment of workers' rights. With recent Supreme Court rulings like Citizens United our Government is now for sale to the highest bidder and you can believe that bidder won't be working class Americans or Retirees.

I believe a strong Labor Movement is the only protection we have against those who want to radically change the way the middle class now exists in this Country to the point of extinction. This battle unfortunately cannot end upon retirement. If we are to succeed in our cause it will take all of us from first day member to Retiree. Without a strong CWA we cannot expect to guarantee Retiree Healthcare, or pension plans from our employers when very few non-union employers offer what we gain through the collective bargaining process. We have all heard the term "race to the bottom" used before and today it is more appropriate than ever. In a Country as rich as ours we have seen in a

little over a decade the employment situation go from very good to very bad and just now starting to show some signs of recovery. The social contract workers in this country have long enjoyed ensuring a retirement with dignity whether it is company provided healthcare and a pension, or Social Security and Medicare are all under attack daily by those who put profits ahead of people. I applaud CWA's Retired Members Council and all our Local Chapters as well as the Retiree Activist who continue the fight on a daily basis, but we can use more. I encourage all Retirees who are not involved to get back in the cause; we all have too much at risk to sit this out. I believe we are all in this boat together and today finds us on a turbulent stretch of water. We can all pick up an oar and get through this, or we can be passengers and hope we can make it through. I choose to be active and I hope you do as well.

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For the latest breaking news that all CWA Retirees need to know follow us on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CWAD6RetireeOutreach/>

## Surviving Dependent Coverage for Healthcare Benefits

One question we receive a lot in the Benefit Representatives office is not from our Retirees unfortunately but from surviving dependents after the Retiree has passed away. That question is what happens to my healthcare insurance and how long can I stay on the company plan. While we highly recommend Retirees discuss their insurance coverage with their spouses we certainly understand that in a lot of families one person typically handles these matters and if that one person passes away that may leave the spouse with a lot of questions to be answered. The following is a summary in simplistic form for some of our major employer groups as to the length of time surviving dependents can remain on company sponsored plans. As always please refer to your Summary Plan Descriptions for exact specifics and all plan rules but we hope this general guide will be of some benefit to our Retirees and their dependents.

If you are covered under the **AT&T Southwest Medical Program**:

Medical coverage for your surviving Class 1 dependents enrolled at the time of your death can continue under the Company Extended Coverage for a period up to 12 months at which time they may elect COBRA Coverage.

If you are covered under the **Lucent** plan:

Benefits will continue for your surviving dependents for 6 months after which they may elect Cobra Coverage.

If you are covered under the **AT&T Legacy** agreement:

Benefits will continue for your surviving dependents for 6 months after which they may elect Cobra coverage.

For Retirees in the **AON Retiree Health Exchange** survivor benefits have not been decided at the time of this publication

# Notes From MY AON Retiree Health Exchange Webinar (continued)

*(Continued from page 1)*

out getting into a lot of specifics there are basically two types of supplemental coverage, what they termed as Medigap which has a higher monthly premium but covers most out of pocket expenses, and the other is a type is what is referred to as an Advantage plan which has little or no monthly premium but more out of pocket expense. Your advisor will go over these plans with you in depth we were assured. Next it was discussed how the HRA's would work. AT&T will deposit "their" share into this account at the beginning of the year for you use to be reimbursed for qualified health expenditures. As I mentioned earlier the amount going into this account for you will not be disclosed until your education appointment. You will only get the benefit of the HRA if you purchase your supplement through the "private" exchange. From what was said if both you and your dependent are eligible for this coverage you will each have separate HRA's. You will basically be paying your monthly premiums and AON will reim-

burse you cost from the HRA. The AON spokesperson indicated that reimbursement usually occurs two to three weeks after you have submitted proof of payment and that there is an option to automatically set up proof of payment with the company that is in your plan which possibly would speed up the process and require less effort on the part of the Retiree. Once you HRA is depleted you will be responsible for all expenses not covered by Medicare such as premiums for whatever plan you may choose. The issue of survivor benefits was brought up during this webinar and the Company spokesperson stated they are still working through the survivorship issues and release them at a later date although he inferred they would probably follow close to the same as you have today. Although the survivor can maintain membership in the exchange the question will be how long will the HRA remain in effect and be funded. The last thing I would like to share is the Spokesperson from AON stated when you purchase these plans this year you will be accepted without the typical requirements of physi-

cal and medical information since you are transitioning from a group healthcare plan. This may not be the case if you change plans for 2016. Recorded webinars will be posted on the website in mid-June for everyone with internet access to view and you can gain more information through that process. I certainly do not claim to be an expert on this process but I thought it important to use this newsletter to get as much information as we have out to our Retiree base. Webinars and Seminars are being conducted now to get more information on when and where you can go to [myretireemyretiree-healthexchange.com](http://myretireemyretiree-healthexchange.com). I would advise everyone who falls into the category of moving to this coverage to seek out as much information as possible and get acquainted with this new process. Unlike past enrollments for you it will not be an option to just let your coverage roll over this year because coverage as you know it in the group plan will be going away. I will continue to use this newsletter to update you on any new information I receive.

If you know a fellow CWA Retiree who is not receiving this newsletter please have them go to the District 6 Website at <http://district6.cwa-union.org/> and hit the For Retirees Tab to subscribe.

## CWA STATEMENT ON THE U.S. SUPREME COURT'S DECISION ON MCCUTCHEON V. FEC

Washington, D.C. -- The following is a statement by the Communications Workers of America (CWA) on the Supreme Court's decision in *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*:(\*)

The Supreme Court continues to confuse money and speech, causing real harm to our democratic election process. Four years ago, the court's *Citizens United* decision opened the floodgates to unlimited corporate spending in our elections. Today, the court's 5-4 decision struck down aggregate contribution limits, so that one super-wealthy donor can now inject up to \$3.6 million into our politics to candidates and parties -- shattering one of the remaining campaign financ laws on the books. (\*)

These spending caps are critical to stop the corrupting influence of big money in politics. Unfortunately, thanks to *Citizens United*, we already know how today's decision will further erode our democracy and disenfranchise ordinary Americans. The super-rich will join corporations in using their millions to pressure elected officials for special access, policy agendas and tax breaks and to flood the airwaves with anonymous political messages. Working and middle class families will find their voices even more diminished. The result likely will be even more "pay-to-play politics" and political inequality than we've seen since 2010 and *Citizens United*, and even more disillusionment in the political process by ordinary Americans. Decisions by this Supreme Court have made it more difficult for ordinary Americans to vote in an election but have made it much easier for the super-rich to buy an election. (\*)

## T-Mobile Shareholders to Vote on Human Rights Risk Assessment

At the June 5 annual meeting of T-Mobile U.S. Inc. (NYSE: TMUS), stockholders are voting on a proposal urging the T-Mobile Board of Directors to disclose how it assesses human rights risks in its operations and supply chain. The human rights shareholder proposal will be presented by Greg Kinczewski of The Marco Consulting Group, a Chicago-based registered investment adviser.

The human rights shareholder proposal, No. 4 on the company's proxy card, urges T-Mobile's Board of Directors to report on its compliance with the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, also commonly known as the "Ruggie Principles." T-Mobile's parent company Deutsche Telekom, which owns 67 percent of T-Mobile's outstanding shares, has endorsed the Ruggie Principles.

"Human rights violations can have detrimental effects on a company's reputation and its brand name" said Brandon Rees, acting director of the AFL-CIO Office of Investment. "Ensuring that T-Mobile complies with human rights is good for T-Mobile's business and its shareholders," he added.

Read more at: <http://www.cwa-union.org/news/entry/t-mobile-shareholders-to-vote-on-human-rights-risk-assessment-proposal>

### *Problems or questions with your benefit plan?*

You can contact the CWA District 6 Retiree Outreach Benefit Representative at 314.965.9024 or e-mail at [D6Retirees@gmail.com](mailto:D6Retirees@gmail.com)

Share the news and build the cause. If you know a CWA Retiree who does not have internet access please print them a copy of this newsletter.

# One Retirees Opinion

Recently one of our Retiree Activist sent me an article he found in a publication in a Doctor's office published by the Kaiser Family Foundation. In his e-mail he asked the question rhetorically "like we didn't know". Now I have no doubt that this gentlemen was well aware of our current plight as Retirees as my conversations with him have proved that he is definitely on top of the changes taken place and the impact they are having on us and retirees throughout the country. As I read this article though I wondered how many of us really understand the changes that are taking place in this country and how deep the cuts have been. The first statistic that jumped at me was that since 1988 the percentage of large firms that offer Retiree healthcare has dropped from 66% to 28% in 2013. I think anyone who is following the plight of company sponsored retiree healthcare have no problem believing this statistic. I have heard many reasons as to why companies are dropping retiree healthcare or raising the cost to retirees, from increased cost, to the affordable care act, to corporate greed. They all may or may not be a factor but this article stated the biggest decline of large employees dropping Retiree

Healthcare for either existing or future retirees came between 1988 through 1991 and the reason they stated was a corporate response was a change in the Financial Accounting Standards Board requiring private sector employers to account for cost of health benefits for current and future retirees an accounting maneuver from what I am told that negatively impacts the corporate bottom line. The article further stated that for a Medicare eligible couple retiring in 2013, relying solely on Medicare, it is estimated they will need \$220,000.00 to cover medical expenses throughout retirement, in addition to cost for over the counter medications and long term care. The final stat I will throw at you from this article is that for Medicare eligible retirees company sponsored health plans account for 31% of supplemental coverage to Medicare. The largest single source of such coverage and that Retiree medical coverage is much more common in unionized firms than non-union firms. So what does all this tell us, well believe it or not with the increases most of us have seen in our retiree healthcare we seem to be better off than most, but even if you accept that premise and are comfortable with that thought we bet-

ter not rest on our "good fortune" because if anything these statistics tell us we will be in a fight to keep what we have a fight that some may say we are losing. I believe the only chance we have is to stay involved with our union. Yes we may have retired from the companies' we have worked for but we should not retire from CWA. For our union to be successful we all need to stand behind it and be ready to answer any call for help that is requested. Our union is the only way we can ban together and fight our employers to live up to the promises they have made to us. Together like we did when we were working members of CWA we can join the movement for justice and try to protect our right for the secure retirement we worked our whole lives for.

My name is Kevin Kujawa and that is one Retiree's opinion.



# Supreme Court to Rule on Retiree Healthcare

In May the Supreme Court has decided to accept and rule on a case involving Company Sponsored and Union negotiated Healthcare. The case is M&G Polymers vs Tackett. The case involves a group of Retirees who sued M&G Polymers when it was announced in 2000 that Retirees would be required to contribute to the cost of their healthcare. The group received a positive ruling in the Sixth Circuit basically stating that Retiree Benefits were status benefits absent language of expiration in a collective bargaining agreement these benefits should remain intact as long as the Retiree in fact remains a Retiree. Other circuits, namely the Second, Third and Seventh have had rulings much the opposite stating somewhat that Retiree Healthcare only remains unchanged for life if bargained that way, thus requiring language in the contract to state such. The Sixth based their ruling of the UAW vs Yardman case. The Supreme Court has had other opportunities to rule on such a case and put uniformity into how this is legally interpreted in this country and has passed on the opportunity. Most legal scholars believe that the ruling will go against the Retirees, but until a decision is reached it is purely speculation. A ruling sustaining the Sixth Circuits opinion would be welcomed by retirees everywhere who see their healthcare cost rise and in some cases eliminated by their former employers. While it is too early to speculate what such a ruling will have on CWA Retirees, if any, it is certainly a case we will keep our eyes on. A ruling by the Supreme Court is expected by June of 2015. If you would like to read the filing here is a link to the transcript.

[http://sblog.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/13-1010-MGPolymers\\_Tackett\\_MG\\_Cert\\_Pet\\_w\\_Appx.pdf](http://sblog.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/13-1010-MGPolymers_Tackett_MG_Cert_Pet_w_Appx.pdf)

## News from around the web

### **Social Security Threatens To Close All Field Offices**

<http://labornotes.org/2014/05/social-security-threatens-close-all-field-offices>

### **Judge issues formal order on health benefits for American Airlines retirees**

<http://aviationblog.dallasnews.com/2014/05/judge-issues-formal-order-on-health-benefits-for-american-airlines-retirees.html/>

### **The Supreme Court saddles up for an attack on retiree benefits**

<http://www.latimes.com/business/hiltzik/la-fi-mh-retiree-benefits-20140512-column.html>

### **Median CEO Pay Crosses \$10 Million For First Time**

<http://www.nbcnews.com/business/economy/median-ceo-pay-crosses-10-million-first-time-n115126>

# Benefit Plan Contact Numbers

Verizon 855-489-2367

AT&T 877-722-0020

Avaya 800-526-8056

Lucent Aetna POS 800-872-7136

Blue Cross/Blue Shield (Oklahoma) 800-6610083

HMO Medicare Option 888-232-4111

AON Retiree Health Exchange 800-928-8027

## Editors Note

This newsletter is published for the purpose of keeping CWA District 6 Retirees informed and educated on issues you may face in retirement as well as to keep you current with CWA. IF you have an article or story you would like to see published please do not hesitate to contact us and we will do our best to meet you request. You can send your request or comments to [D6retirees@gmail.com](mailto:D6retirees@gmail.com) or you can leave a message on our phone line at 314-965-9024.