



CWA District 6 Retiree Informer

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Retiree Outreach

President Cohen Will Not Seek Re-Election

By Larry Cohen, President CWA



Dear Sisters and Brothers:

After much thought, I have decided not to seek reelection next June as President of our union.

I informed the Executive Board at our meeting September 18. I am confident that our Executive Board can support a strong candidate but this is not a campaign note and that decision is up to you.

I appreciate those of you who take the time to read this note, it could and maybe should have ended here, but I want to share some thinking and feelings on what is, for me, a difficult moment. Too often in labor we make everything seem or sound simple, robbing ourselves of our ability to move each other in much deeper ways.

I am hoping my decision can be as much a signal of what we must do and the state of our movement as it is a notice about my own personal journey. This is the

tenth year I have been honored every day to serve as President of our union. I am proud to work with an Executive Board that understands the critical times that face so many of our members. I am proud to work with amazing staff in Washington and across our union.

But mostly, I am proud of all of you and the work we have done together for decades. Obviously, all that we do rests with active members, shop stewards who stand up and fight back, and local officers,

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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.

Going to the Polls—November 2014

By Claude Cummings, Jr. Vice President



Claude Cummings
Jr., Vice President,

“Control of the U.S Senate is at stake as well as key Governorships in our District and CWA will be there working hard for the candidates that support us”

In just a few short weeks on November 4 America will be going to the polls to make decisions regarding our leadership. I urge you all to do what citizens in some nations do not have a right to do and let your voice be heard by heading to the polls and casting your vote. While Politicians and our Government may cause you frustration at times we all must exercise our voice and vote. Everyday decisions are made that effect working men and women as well as retirees in this Country and far too often the decisions are wrong. As Retirees I am sure you have heard leadership in my position say this is the most important election we face. In essence it is true and it is true every election for Organized Labor. As we battle to save the middle class of this country we have many in the business and political world who work for our demise and would relish the day where labor unions cease to exist. In every State

throughout our District CWA Locals and Retirees are engaged politically as we close the last few weeks gaining support for those who support Organized Labor which is critical for us to maintain our ability to sustain and fight for the middle class in this Country. Control of the U.S Senate is at stake as well as key Governorships in our District and CWA will be there working hard for the candidates that support us. At stake is the future of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) or what is being labeled as NAFTA on steroids. The only way the American economy can rebound where more than the one percent among us enjoy the prosperity of our great nation is to insure the survival of the middle-class with secure sustainable jobs in this Country and we need to support candidates that support this cause. A retirement with dignity is something we all work for or in the case of our Retirees have worked most of their lives for, yet in this Country half of those who

retire do so with no employer sponsored health care. If we hope to sustain what we have gained through decades of collective bargaining to paraphrase President Kennedy we must be a rising tide and a rising tide lifts all ships. Recent Supreme Court decisions such as “Citizens United” have put our Government for sale to the highest bidder. While we certainly don’t have the money to compete on the same playing field as Corporate America, we do have numbers to turn out to the polls and make a difference in elections. So again this is why this election is the most important we face, and the next one will be the most important we face as well Organized Labor may well be the last bastion to fight for survival of the middle class and the American dream. I encourage you all to get out and vote and if you are able, contact your Local and ask what you can do to help. Together we can make a difference.

AON Retiree Health Exchange Enrollment Underway for AT&T Retirees.

As most AT&T retirees who are on Medicare know the Enrollment Calls for you Medicare Supplemental Plans through the AON Exchange have started. With this round of telephone calls there seems to be as many questions being raised as there were during the Education Calls. On September 19th on the myretiree-healthexchange.com website AON posted a list of frequently asked questions. The link to read these questions and answers is: http://myretiree-healthexchange.com/pdf/ATT_Master_FAQs-073014.pdf. A lot of questions you may have are answered here but I would like to make you aware of some issues that have come my

way. I would pay close attention to question number 8. The issue is can you purchase a RX plan through the exchange effectively activating your HRA and then purchase a supplemental insurance plan such as a Medigap plan. The answer to question 8 certainly leads you to believe that yet we have had several retirees call and be told they could not do that. As of the publication of this newsletter we are trying to gain clarity to this issue and will update as soon as we confirm. If you have picked this option and AON told you this is allowed could you please drop us a line at D6Retirees@gmail.com. The information you share will remain confidential

and your identity will not be disclosed to anyone. Also many retirees have inquired about AARP Medigap plans and unable to view such plans or plan cost online question 15 answers those issues. While this publication does not endorse any specific plan or groups of plans we do advise you to choose carefully and make sure you select a plan that meets your needs and is accepted by your Doctors. If you are having issues with AON please call the District 6 Retiree Outreach Program Rep at 314.965.9024. We are currently experiencing heavy call volume but if you leave a message you call will be returned.

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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/>

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mostly volunteers, who defend our values and past accomplishments and in these brutal days of domination by financial capital, still dream and work for real change.

At the end of the day, we each have responsibility for only our own journeys. Just as the earth orbits the sun at 65,000 miles per hour, each of us, as one of 7 billion, finds our way on this earth for our lifetime, living, loving, seeking meaningful work, having fun when possible, but most of all, making a difference. It has long seemed to me that my own journey has meaning for me for the same reasons we all share—faith in basic values, love between family and friends, and shared commitments.

Jumping to our beloved CWA, we do amazing work together in these times. We push out of the shrinking box of traditional unionism, while cherishing the rights on the job we still enjoy. We realize that our traditional and historic union role by itself is much like a death march as our numbers across the USA and even Canada shrink under brutal attacks by the financial elite whose greed has reached historic proportions and whose power is nearly complete. After Wisconsin, and so many other attacks, public and private sector, together, we developed our movement building strategy and our focus on linking economic justice and democracy. We realized that waiting for labor to unite around a common strategy would lead us to the dust-

bin of history. Unions have different strategies—some at least for now are faring better, some avoid the grasp of Wall Street greed. Some unions, whether local or national, have a different view based on a simpler agenda or a more traditional collective bargaining approach. This is true within CWA as well, differences are part of democracy as long as we stay tolerant and are not frozen by a lack of unanimity. So we work with those who are willing, starting in our workplace, our local, our district or sector, then in labor councils or unions in our communities. But we don't stop there. Our strategy is rooted in the need for national change, even if our own goals are local or just at our own employers. More than ev-

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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.

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er in our history we must build deeper partnerships beyond labor with groups that are willing to develop a common strategy for economic justice. With six percent of the private sector organized, unions must be ready to partner and not just expect to lead.

Collective bargaining and organizing rights are falling in the private sector and half the states in the public sector, and are far below the rest of the world's democracies, and we can't change that one employer at a time. That kind of national change, as we learned after the elections of 2009, is blocked by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Wall Street, the right wing, yes, a giant national con-

spiracy of wealth and privilege, linked to a conservative social agenda that blocks us even when we demonstrate strong majority support. So after decades of organizing, bargaining and movement building work, it seems time for me to pass the torch as CWA President next June, but I will double down on building the mass movement for democracy and economic justice. Our union has more activists and a better commitment to what must be done than ever. As we battle for fair trade or to get big money out of politics, we demonstrate that we can build amazing new alliances and deeper than ever. And by your convention action over the last ten years,

we have millions of dollars each year to commit to those fights, as well as the best activists in the movement and the resources to train thousands more.

I am not leaving for another job or personal benefit. I am not leaving because of the growing anger I feel from the attacks on our members every day. Using last week as an example, first GE announced the sale of its Appliance Division to Electrolux with thousands of our members' jobs on the line. Then at Cablevision, two weeks after firing one of our best leaders, the billionaire CEO compels the 300 techs to attend a captive meeting

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Problems or questions with your benefit plan?

You can contact the CWA District 6 Retiree Outreach Benefit Coordinator at 314.965.9024 or e-mail at D6Retirees@gmail.com

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where he makes all kinds of promises, and tells them that he is paying for a private election the next day so they can vote out the union. Illegal, yes, but it is already six months since the trial ended on earlier equally outrageous NLRB charges.

It's true that we also have great days like this past Monday, receiving an NLRB decision that CNN must rehire more than 100 technicians and bargain with our union 11 years after they were fired. Or Tuesday, winning the representation election at American Airlines where so many have struggled 18 years

through election defeats and vicious attacks and now 15,000 have a union.

In the Grapes of Wrath, the main character Tom Joad is asked near the end by his mother, "Where will you go?" I am not Tom Joad and my journey is just my journey. But as Tom said, "wherever there's a fight...I'll be there."

For the next nine months, I'll be right here. Working harder than ever, every chance I get to support our bargaining, our organizing and our movement building work. Fighting the TPP, the worst trade deal in a 20-year string. Fighting to change the Senate rules so they actually debate the issues of the day. Fighting for organizing rights at T-Mobile and

Cablevision so one day the sacrifices of so many will make a difference.

After that I'll be working just as hard to build the movement of 50 million, knowing that CWA will keep leading and I can work with others to help convince them that our work together cannot just be about the next election. Economic change in America will not happen without a broad movement that includes bargaining and organizing rights as a key part of that change. More than ever, I am committed to that effort.

One day longer, each day stronger!

Solidarity forever!

Larry

News from around the web

No Change in Medicare Part B Premium for 2015

<http://blog.aarp.org/2014/10/10/no-change-in-medicare-part-b-costs-means-more-change-in-your-pocket/>

Amazon Workers take Security Check woes to Supreme Court

http://cwa-union.org/news/entry/amazon_workers_take_security_check_woes_to_supreme_court#.VEIRx_nF91Y

Beware of Shifting Options within Medicare Plans

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/04/your-money/beware-of-shifting-options-within-medicare-plans.html?smid=fb-share&r=0>

Congress to Consider Halting the stripping of Retiree Health Benefits

On September 17, 2014 HR 5523 was introduced into the U. S House of Representatives. The bill was sponsored by Louise Slaughter the Representative from New York's 25th Congressional District. The title of the Bill is Employee Benefits Protection Act of 2014. The full title of the bill, states to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the National Labor Relations Act to protect the health benefits of retirees, and for other purposes. Representative Slaughter is a Democrat, she does have one co-sponsor on the Bill and that is Congressman Walter Jones a Republican from North Carolina's third Congressional District. A full text of this legislation can be read at <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr5523/text>. The presumption of this Bill is that once earned, Retiree Health Benefits cannot be modified or terminated. There is a similar Bill in the US Senate, S-2418 titled Bankruptcy Fairness and Employee Benefits Protection Act of 2014. This Bill was introduced by Senator John Rockefeller IV Democrat West Virginia. Senator Rockefeller has on co-sponsor and that is Senator Elizabeth Warren from Massachusetts. To read the full text of this Bill you can go to <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s2418/text>. Experts see issues with the bill as far as costs for business since our population is growing older and Retiree Health Care is starting to become a major issue not only with Organized Labor but Americans as a whole. S2418 has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee Chaired by Vermont Democrat Patrick Leahy. The House Bill has been referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce Chaired by Representative John Kline from Minnesota's 2nd Congressional District. The makeup of the House Committee consist of 22 Republicans and 17 Democrats. Members of the House Committee who are in CWA's District 6 territory are Ruben Hinojosa from Texas' 15th Congressional District and Kenny Marchant from Texas' 24th Congressional District. On the Senate Judiciary Committee the makeup is 10 Democrats and 8 Republicans. Those on this Committee who represent CWA Members in District 6 are Senator John Cornyn and Senator Ted Cruz. It is anticipated that currently as they sit these bills are a long way from becoming law. The website govtrak.us gives the Senate Bill just a 7% chance of getting out of Committee and a 2% chance of becoming law, while on the House side it rates HR5523 with just a 2% chance of clearing Committee and a 1% chance of becoming law. While there are certainly flaws in both these bills it is abundantly apparent that at least 4 members of Congress understand the issue of earned benefits for Retirees and the crisis we face of corporations at their will breaking their promises and taking these benefits away. As we get ready to vote in the next few weeks as Retirees we should be bringing this issue forward, ask those who ask for your support their opinions on these Bills and what level of support they would offer. We cannot rely solely on collective bargaining and the Supreme Court of the United States to fix what is wrong with this system. This is not only a CWA Issue this is an American Worker Issue.

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 or you can leave a message on our phone line at 314-965-9024.