



CWA District 6 Retiree Informer

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Retiree Outreach

Retiree Chapter Presidents Meet at District 6 Meeting



On Tuesday, August 26 Retiree Chapter Presidents from all around District 6 made their way to South Padre Island to meet at the District 6 Retired Chapters Presidents Meeting. The meeting room was packed as Chapter Presidents reported what was happening in their Chapters, and discussed issues of importance regarding CWA Retirees. The conversion of certain AT&T Medicare eligible Retirees to the private exchange was an extended discussion. District 6 Vice President Claude Cummings Jr attended the meeting and answered questions from the attendees. The Vice President committed continued support to our Retirees and vowed to continue to engage AT&T over continued cost shifting of active and retiree health care. In District 6 we have nineteen Retiree Chapters and are certainly looking for more. It only takes five Members to charter a Retirees Chapter. President Kramer has offered his assistance to anyone who needs it in establishing new Chapters. If you would like to join a Chapter in your area you can contact the District 6 Retiree Outreach Program at D6retirees@gmail.com or go to the District 6 website and hit the "Retirees" tab click get involved and we will put you in touch with your closest Chapter. You may also contact President Ray Kramer at 817-295-0444 and he will be happy to get you in a chapter or help you start one in your area.



Claude Cummings Jr., Vice President, District 6

“while some may despair our position I choose to be more optimistic”

Celebrating “Our” Holiday

By Claude Cummings, Jr., Vice President Communications Workers of America District 6

As we celebrate the One Hundred and Twentieth Anniversary of our Holiday, Labor Day, I would like to take a brief look back and see how this Holiday that celebrates our contributions to the American fabric came into existence. The first Labor Day Parade was held in New York City on September 5, 1892. Two years later, President Cleveland signed into law the Bill making the 1st Monday in September the National-ly recognized Holiday. While President Cleveland was certainly no friend of Labor and especially Organized Labor, it is the belief of many at the time he was trying to undo some political damage. Earlier that year he had sent in National Troops to put down a strike in Chicago of the American Railway Union against the Pullman Company which resulted in the deaths of 34 workers. Regardless of the motivation the American worker finally gained the recognition they

deserved. Throughout our great District on Labor Day Members, Retirees and their family and friends took part in parades, picnics, church services and other activities as we celebrate and show appreciation for the American Worker. It was on Labor Day 1974 that CWA's founding father and our first President Joseph Beirne passed away. So many ask me where I see the labor movement today. With the constant attacks we face from big business and the right wing political forces that seem to will our destiny to extinction, while some may despair our position, I choose to be more optimistic. Today Organized Labor is the last champion of the middle class and that is a responsibility we must all take seriously. As the President said in his Labor Day address, “From assembly lines to classrooms, across highways and steel mills, American workers strengthen the foundation of our Country and demonstrate that our economy grows

best from the middle out,” WE not only have the duty to maintain the middle class in this Country but to insure a living wage and a route out of poverty for those we can assist. WE MUST continue to fight for our Retirees to live their retirement years in dignity and we must protect their health care. Corporate greed and those who prefer that Organized Labor did not exist DO NOT share these values! As we celebrate our Holiday, I am more optimistic than ever that TOGETHER we can keep our Union great. We may not win every fight but we will always be there to take on the challenge and that is what we do as Union Members. I am hoping each of you and your families had a wonderful and safe Labor Day!





Remembering the Past Fighting For Our Future

By Sylvia J. Ramos, Assistant to the Vice President, Communications Workers of America District 6

Two of my favorite famous quotes are, "I know of no way of judging the future but by the past" and "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it!" As we look at the challenges that lie ahead for CWA, the mission is simple and has been laid out for us since 1965. It was at that National Convention that delegates adopted the triple threat policy which later became the well known CWA Triangle. Not only is this a blueprint plan on how to build a strong Union but it is also a daily map on how to successfully conduct our business. The triangle approach begins with a strong base of Representation as a Union and as Union leaders we must always strive to do our best to gain justice in the work place for ALL workers. Anything less puts our foundation at risk and the strength of the Triangle in jeopardy. Another side of the Triangle is Organizing. The challenge is basically the same and that is to grow our Union and have enough strength behind us for our cause to remain relevant. As always adding new bargaining units is challenging but necessary work. In fact with the political climate and the constant attacks on Unions building collective bargaining rights

in the workforce may be harder today than at anytime in the history of organized labor. Instead of armed guards and militia to break our support, employers come with high priced lawyers and deceptive practices to intimidate and confuse workers. We must remain ever committed to growing our Union not only as a means of survival but to carry out our noble cause of bringing justice to the workplace for American workers.

The last side of the Triangle is Movement Building, formerly know as Community and Political Action, and changed at our last convention to reflect the changing times we now live in. We all live and work in a community and we cannot live with our heads in the sand when it comes to helping those less fortunate than us. We must also engage politically and hold our elected officials accountable for supporting the agenda of working men and women in this country. Those who want to do away with labor Unions look at this as the number one reason our political involvement followed closely by their corporate greed. You have all heard it before but it remains true Organized Labor is the only chance for the middle class survival in America today.

One constant truth is we cannot do this alone. We must build coalitions of like minded organizations to capitalize on our commonalities to help accomplish our goals for the betterment of all. Those who oppose have deep pockets and can certainly outspend us to push their agenda, so we must counter this by gaining support for workers through what some may consider non traditional methods such as building strong alliances with the Sierra Club, APRI, OCCUPY, CBTU, LGBT and others to gain support and place added pressure on those who do not support working America. One such group that we have always counted on and will continue to in the future is our Retirees who have built this Union and have continued to fight to keep it strong. While the attacks on working America may never cease, I am confident we have the plan in place to make our Union stronger!



Share Your Story

If you're a grandparent, you share a lot of stories with your grandchildren. But what stories did your grandparents tell you? As we celebrate Labor Day and Grandparents' Day in the same week, we want to take a look back at the jobs and hard work of our grandparents. *Jobs with Justice* has launched a project to collect and share these important stories:

The Way They Worked. Will you join other retired CWA members and share your story? **Grandparents have a lasting impact on our lives. How did The Way They**

Worked shape you? Share your story today!

Go to <http://thewaytheyworked.org>

Work is a huge part of our lives, from the jobs we do to the skills we develop and the careers we try to build. And just as significantly, the jobs that our grandparents had play a huge role in our family history, setting us on a path to who we've each become. While the world of work has changed dramatically from one generation to the next, what hasn't changed is why we work -- to earn a decent living, to take

care of our loved ones, and to retire with dignity. Your story will live on *The Way They Worked* with hundreds of others as a tribute to your family's story and their work. Share the site with your family, and maybe they can share one of your stories as well!

Follow Us on Facebook!

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

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

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

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.

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.

PRESIDENT COHEN'S LABOR DAY 2014 MESSAGE

Working Americans Can't Just Wait for the Next President

We tried waiting and hoping for real change six years ago. Today, income inequality grows steadily worse while economic opportunity is out of reach for most. Collective bargaining coverage for working Americans has fallen to the lowest level in 80 years. Productivity grows while wages have not yet rebounded to the 2008 level.

Earlier this year, and largely unnoticed, the 160 million-member International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) published its report on the global state of workers' rights. It rated nations a "1" if abuses were uncommon and a "5" if workers had no rights at all. The U.S. came in at "4," meaning "systematic violations of rights." We lagged behind 73 other nations. For the first thirty years following passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, the U.S. would have been rated a "1." None of the more than 100 other nations in this report has declined as the U.S. has, and many countries like Brazil, Uruguay, South Africa, and most of Eastern Europe have improved dramatically. How bad is a "4"? This is hurricane season and if we think of a Category 4 storm, like Superstorm Sandy, we get some idea of the severity of this crisis. Just 6 percent of private sector U.S. workers have collective bargaining rights. Including public workers only brings the percentage of U.S. workers with bargaining rights to 11 percent. This is down from 35 percent some 50 years ago. No other nation has experienced a similar decline.

For all the useful talk about U.S. economic inequality and calls to raise the minimum wage, 2014 mostly will be another year like the last 50, with per-

sistent attacks on workers' rights, huge income and wealth gains for the top 1 percent and a declining standard of living for the other 99 percent.

Yet Labor Day this year will be much like recent years, a little less labor and a little more like the end of summer. Political attention begins to focus on November elections, but the food fight for the next presidential election is warming up. Six years ago, as the election of a new president loomed, there was much anticipation about a different economic order, and a focus on adoption of the Employee Free Choice Act, passed in 2008 by the House of Representatives with a 60 percent margin.

As important as a raise in the minimum wage is, that still would leave the other 95 percent of U.S. workers with the same troubling economic future that they face today. Workers would continue to have no hope on workers' rights and would be subject to a political system based more than ever on wealth thanks to a string of Supreme Court decisions.

The next presidential election likely will focus much less on workers' rights, and more on social issues and government spending. What we learned over the past six years is that the combination of dysfunctional Senate rules, big money in politics, the attack on voting rights, and barriers to citizenship for 20 million immigrants are real barriers to economic change. Unless we break through these barriers, it's just more of the same for working Americans.

There is hope if we link workers' rights to the huge democracy movement that is growing across the U.S. Labor, plus greens, consumers, and democrats from all parties realize that our nation today is not what democracy looks like. Can we all focus on the blocks to a 21st century de-

mocracy as at least our No. 2 issue?

Fifty large membership organizations now endorsing the Democracy Initiative say, "Yes we can!" Our collective membership totals more than 35 million and if we can focus a growing part of our time and resources on these structural blocks as well as workers' rights, the environment, poverty, and human rights, we might even dream the American dream again.

On September 8, the Senate will vote on a constitutional amendment that would reverse recent Supreme Court decisions and allow Congress to regulate election spending. It is now clear the amendment will receive majority support but based on likely total opposition from Republicans, it will fall short of the two-thirds required by the Constitution to move forward. More important, the vote will signal that there is serious support for reform, whether through an eventual Supreme Court reversal or amendment.

For the millions of Americans facing another Labor Day without labor rights, it is also a time to commit much more deeply to broader reform of our democracy and think far beyond the next election.

We do know what democracy should look like. Get big money out of politics. A Senate that debates and votes on the key issues of the day. Universal voter registration so all citizens can turn out on Election Day. A path to citizenship for immigrants that at least resembles the path that my family and others who immigrated 100 or more years ago followed.

This Labor Day I will look forward to a warm summer day, but I'm also dreaming of the movement we can build

One Retirees Opinion

I have read a lot of articles about increasing the minimum wage in this country lately and have studied differing opinions on the subject. Some of the facts I have uncovered are pretty glaring. I understand that the audience reading this piece probably in most cases has not worked for minimum wage in some time or if they do in a lot of cases it's for something to do or to earn a little mad money. Recently President Obama has called on business to pay \$10.10 per hour as a minimum and will require Federal Contractors to do so next year. Currently looking throughout the states that comprise District 6 we have only one state that has a minimum wage above the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour and that is Missouri which has \$7.50 per hour. Arkansas has a State minimum wage of \$6.25 per hour but I believe they have a ballot initiative going this fall to raise it to \$8.50 per hour. So today if you are a minimum wage worker and are fortunate enough to find a job that will work you forty hours a week. You will make \$290 a week or \$15,080 a year. Now at some time all of us reading this article have made that kind of money and lived on it but in my case that was the early 1980's. I would suggest to you that \$290 a week doesn't go as far as it did in 1980. The \$290 a week

equals \$15,080 a year. For one person the so called poverty line published in the Federal Register by the HHS is \$11670. I find it hard to believe that when you subtract the cost of housing, transportation, food or medical cost that these workers have a lot left over to save for a retirement. Now I will be the first to tell you that not everyone holds and keeps a minimum wage job for a career but for a lot of folks that is a start or a rebound after losing employment. Those who oppose raising the minimum wage cite losing jobs as the number one reason for opposing an increase and a recent Congressional Budget Office Report suggest that raising the minimum wage would to the level suggested by the President would cause a loss of 500,000 jobs. This only tells part of the story, the same study also says increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour would lift some 900,000 workers out of poverty plus there would be, overall a \$2 billion positive effect on the US economy. Of course I am assuming both of those figures are based on a supposition that someone seeking could find a forty hour a week job in this economy when so many employers hire part time to avoid the benefits of full time employment. I believe there is a price for citizenship in this country

and if that price means corporations like McDonalds and Walmart, to name a couple have to pay their employees livable wages so the taxpayers of this country do not have the supplement their employees while these companies make huge profits than so be it. The social contract in this country that most of us have grown up under has been in erosion and decay for decades. The Economic Policy Institute states that all wage increases in the last 15 years have gone to the wealthiest 10% and that 95% of all income gains between 2009 and 2012 went to the wealthiest 1%. This cannot continue in this country. We are seeing the American dream die right before our eyes and to sit back and do nothing is unacceptable. We are approaching the time of year where are elected representatives will once again be asking our support, maybe we should be asking them what are they going to do for the American dream? I know I will and I hope you do the same. My name is Kevin Kujawa and that is One Retirees Opinion.



Our Retirees in Action



CWA Local 6222 Retirees Club summer clothes, shoes and toiletries drive benefiting the City Wide Club of Clubs, 3229 Hadley, Houston, Texas. A special shout out to Local 6222 Steward Debra Andrews, who coordinated the drive for the crew working at and being dispatched from 5200 Hollister Drive. Pictured near the truck are Vice President Ray Rodrigues volunteer driver, Glory Jones, and acting President Bessie Mansfield. Not pictured Dorothy Williams Henry, Mary Groves and Deborah Joseph This non-profit 501C organization helps the homeless and less fortunate within the community. To ALL that helped it could NOT have been done without you. A special thanks to all of you that helped to make this effort a huge success.

News from around the web

Princeton Expert say we are no longer living in a Democracy

http://cwa-union.org/news/entry/princeton_experts_say_were_no_longer_living_in_a_democracy#.VA9c9_IdWSo

Gap between Higher and Lower Wealth Households widens

http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb14-156.html?e=gd&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery#.VADH1aWKrF4.facebook

Why Americas Workers need faster wage growth

<http://www.epi.org/publication/why-americas-workers-need-faster-wage-growth/#.VADHTw6p6cc.facebook>

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.