

We need the

**Employee
FREE
CHOICE ACT
NOW!**

‘It Was Hard Work But It Was Worth It’

Rosa Samaniego began working in a call center for the company then known as AT&T Wireless in 1998. Back then, all she knew about unions was what her manager told her.

“A few months after I started work, some people from the union handed me a card at the entrance to the parking lot. I asked my manager what it was about and she said that if I filled it out it would be like voting ‘yes’ for the union and she said I shouldn’t because it would take away our bonuses.”

Eleven years and two company names later, Rosa is a chief steward for CWA Local 9421. But organizing a union didn’t happen until CWA negotiated a neutrality and majority sign-up agreement with the company when it became Cingular Wireless, now AT&T Mobility.

Cherri Heinze, who works for Local 9421, remembers what it was like before the agreement. “ATT Wireless had guards patrolling the area to make sure union organizers stayed on the sidewalks. Sometimes — for no reason —

they would call corporate security on us. It was a way of intimidating their employees. Managers would watch from the windows to see who took information flyers and then later harass those workers, especially new hires.”

When Cingular took over, and the agreement was in place “the whole scene changed,” Cherri said. “Management was notified that they were to remain neutral with respect to union organizing. Managers provided the union with lists of titles and organizers were allowed on company property.”



Rosa Samaniego

The company even gave the union space in the cafeteria to answer questions and collect cards. While management itself hadn’t changed, the direction from the top of the company did, and that made all the difference.

Rosa was still fearful at first, not sure if workers really were going to be free from retaliation. But she was tired of threats of discipline or termination for people who didn’t meet quotas set by managers. She wanted a voice at work.

“I decided to attend a union meeting in January 2005, after Cingular took over,” she said. “I was a little scared since I had heard horrors about other workers who had attempted to join the union. I’d even heard that when people would leave union literature in the bathrooms, the company would find out who left it there and then for some reason or another they’d be fired.”

But this time none of that happened. And Rosa says that’s why all American workers deserve to have the Employee Free Choice Act — so they can decide for themselves, without interference or fear, whether to join a union.

“Once my fear was gone, I joined the campaign,” she says. “I would talk to my coworkers and sit in the cafeteria with union information. I’d stay after work and even go on the weekends. It was hard work but it was worth it.”

And it’s been good for AT&T Mobility, too, she says. “Before, we didn’t have any input. Everything was the company’s idea. Now they listen to our ideas, and we have some very good ideas for improving quality. We suggested a system so experienced workers can coach employees who need help, give them feedback. We tell the managers: ‘We’re here to help the employees succeed, and when they do better, so do customers and so does the company.’”