**NBC Master Agreement Expires**

**Intensive Talks Fail to Reach Agreement**

Union and Company negotiators worked past midnight on March 30th and March 31st - prior to contract expiration - in an attempt to reach an overall tentative agreement for a successor to the 2009-2015 NABET-CWA/NBCU Master Agreement. While progress was made on a number of issues, the contract expired on March 31, 2015, without an extension.

Before negotiations began in January, the Union and the Company agreed to an intensely focused and immersive approach to bargaining. The parties committed to a calendar of face-to-face talks during seven out of eight consecutive weeks, from January 20 to March 13. The shared goal was to conclude negotiations and deliver a contract to the membership for ratification consideration prior to expiration of the current Master Agreement. When it became apparent that the parties could not reach tentative agreement by the target date, the parties scheduled additional negotiating sessions, with talks ultimately concluding on March 31st. At that point, NABET-CWA negotiators offered NBCUniversal a contract extension agreement, which would have steadied the relationship and allowed talks to continue without the distraction of an expired contract. Company negotiators declined the offer of a contract extension.

Due to previous commitments, the parties did not meet during the month of April. Negotiations resumed May 5-8 in New York City. Once again, the parties were able to reach agreement on several items, but remained apart on a number of crucial issues. At press time, with no new bargaining dates scheduled, the parties have committed to keeping the lines of communication open and returning to the bargaining table at the earliest mutually agreeable time.

Though the Master Agreement has expired, existing labor laws call for most terms and conditions of the contract to remain in effect. Members should continue to report to work as usual.

The Negotiating Committee reminds all members that a solid show of unity and strong resolve and solidarity are critically important in this process. Members should be prepared to engage swiftly and participate in mobilization activities as necessary. The Sector and Network Locals will distribute bulletins and other official information concerning the talks on a regular basis.

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**CNN Dealt Another Blow in Longest-Running Labor Dispute in Broadcast Industry**

On March 20, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) rejected CNN’s latest appeal, which asked for reconsideration of the Board’s September 2014 ruling that the network and its unionized subcontractor – Team Video Services (TVS) – were joint employers. The NLRB found that CNN and TVS violated U.S. labor law by terminating their contracting relationship in 2003, which led to the firing of more than 300 CNN/TVS employees.

A three-member NLRB panel held that CNN’s bid for reconsideration “failed to raise any substantial argument not previously considered by the Board… the evidence provides ample support for the Board’s finding that CNN and TVS had a joint employer relationship at the time of the unfair labor practices.”

CWA President Larry Cohen said, “it’s time for CNN to follow the law and end the enormous damage to these employees and their families.”

Because of the lengthy delays in justice for the former CNN/TVS employees in New York City and Washington, D.C., some workers have lost their homes, gone bankrupt and struggled with medical bills. In the 12 years since the firings, a number of employees have passed away as the case trudged through the NLRB process.

“No worker should ever have to wait this long to see justice. Now again, we wait to see if CNN owns up, or continues to stall. As a group we will never give up until all our members are made whole,” said Jimmy Suissa, who worked for CNN for 17 years.

In 2008 – five years after the workers’ were fired – an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) ruled in favor of NABET-CWA, finding that CNN had engaged in “widespread and egregious misconduct” and demonstrated a “flagrant and general disregard for the employees’ fundamental rights.” CNN appealed this ruling.

Despite the Union’s calls for due process, the case did not receive further attention by the NLRB until September 2014 when the Board affirmed the ALJ’s 2008 decision and ordered CNN to rehire nearly 100 workers who were fired, and further to compensate about 200 more who stayed with the company without the benefits of a union contract.

As part of the ruling, the NLRB ordered CNN to post notice in the workplace informing workers that the NLRB found that CNN violated federal labor laws. The notice to employees also states that federal law gives them the right to form, join or assist a union, and that CNN will notify the Union in writing that it recognizes NABET-CWA as their exclusive representative and will bargain with the Union concerning the terms of their employment.
NABET-CWA Bids Farewell to CWA President Larry Cohen

CWA President Larry Cohen will not seek re-election at the CWA Convention next month. Citing a “growing anger from the attacks on our members every day,” Cohen said he is leaving CWA, but will continue to build the movement of 50 million to bring economic change to America. He holds firm to the belief that bargaining and organizing rights are “a key part of that change.”

Cohen has always been a tireless advocate for NABET-CWA, bringing the Union into the CWA family and supporting our members in a rapidly changing industry. In a farewell message that listed the many obstacles confronting labor today, Cohen said there also are “great days,” such as when the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ordered CNN to rehire 100 technicians and bargain with the Union.

When the NLRB re-affirmed this decision in March, Cohen again showed his support: “This company has dragged its feet every step of the way. But after more than a decade of delays, CNN is finally running out of options.”

Cohen helped to build a coalition to support Senate confirmation of the NLRB members in July 2013. Without a functioning NLRB, the CNN decision would never have been possible.

“During my tenure as Sector President, I always found Larry Cohen to be an enthusiastic ally in our battles with employers in an increasingly difficult time,” said John S. Clark, NABET-CWA President Emeritus. “He took the time to learn about the key issues that impact our non-traditional CWA industry and was always there to help us get financial and other assistance for mobilization actions.”

Clark served as NABET’s principal draftsman for the Merger Agreement between NABET and CWA in 1994. He worked with then-International President Jim Nolan and Cohen, then CWA’s Director of Organizing, to give the smaller NABET higher visibility and greater resources while increasing CWA’s membership and influence in the media industry.

When Jim Nolan retired in October 1993, Clark became president of NABET and was named Sector President upon the full merger with CWA in 1994. Clark has said that it was one of his proudest accomplishments while at NABET-CWA.

“During the negotiations that led to the merger of NABET and CWA, Larry worked with us to insure that NABET maintained all the key aspects of its autonomy, so we could continue to govern our affairs and move forward without fear of having our identity swept away by a larger, unfamiliar organization,” Clark said. “He was a true friend of NABET and will be missed.”

Cohen has often taken the time to speak to NABET-CWA members directly. He addressed NABET-CWA delegates at the 2011 conference, speaking passionately about the struggles facing the labor movement. In 2013, Cohen greeted Union members at the New Activist Training and urged them to “take inspiration by looking at history, looking at other groups that are succeeding now, and build a movement.”

NABET-CWA extends best wishes for good health and great success to CWA President Larry Cohen as he embarks on this next chapter in life!

NABET-CWA Urges Members to Take Advantage of lynda.com Training

Jim Kolendo, who manages lynda.com training for NABET-CWA Regions 2 and 6, will describe the vastly expanded course offerings during the Union’s Sector Conference in June. Kolendo first started administering the training program six years ago, lynda.com offered just 220 courses. That list has now grown to over 6,000 courses, which members can choose from.

“They can pick and choose whatever they want to learn,” said Kolendo. “We want to get them involved, to enrich their lives, to pad their resumes, or to just learn something new.”

The service, which typically costs $375/year for the public, is offered free to all NABET-CWA members in good standing.

Recognizing that broadcast employees have schedules which may make it difficult to log in and train on a regular basis, Kolendo has extended the amount of time that NABET-CWA members can train on the program. Members now have access for up to four continuous weeks, instead of two.

Kolendo encourages all members to register for this remarkable and free Union-sponsored benefit.

NABET-CWA Exhibits at NABEF Career Fair

ABET-CWA was one of several dozen exhibitors at the NABE-CWA was one of several dozen exhibitors at the NABE-CWA was one of several dozen exhibitors at the NABE-CWA was one of several dozen exhibitors at the NABE-CWA was one of several dozen exhibitors at the NABE-CWA was one of several dozen exhibitors at the NABE-CWA was one of several dozen exhibitors at the NABE-CWA was one of several dozen exhibitors at the NABEF Education Foundation (NABEF) Career Day event, a feature of the NAB Show in Las Vegas on April 15th. NABET-CWA Staff Representative William Murray managed the Union’s booth, where he spoke to more than 100 students about the broadcasting industry and helped them find job information through the NABET-CWA phone app.

“This is the first introduction to a Union for many of these young people, so we are helping them find work and guiding them to our website,” said Murray.

The NAB Show is a massive annual affair with attendees representing every sector of the industry from 159 countries. This year’s show attracted 97,915 media and entertainment professionals, including 1,693 members of the press.

NABET-CWA Kids

Birth Days: Local 17’s newest members in good standing

Katie Lynn Peck, born April 30, 6lbs 5.8oz, 19.5”, daughter of Local 17 member Corey Peck and his wife Kerri

Jacob “Jacob” Muneton, born April 29, 9 lbs, 4 oz., 21”, son of Local 17 member Dario Muneton and his wife Pilar Salazar
On April 22, I attended the 2015 GE share-owners meeting in Oklahoma City. I was joined by other union representatives from Lynn, MA, Louisville, KY, Erie, PA, Milwaukee, WI, and two busloads from UFE-CWA Local 1004 in Winfield, KS. In addition, prominent GE retiree Dennis Rocheleau attended. Rocheleau was once GE’s chief negotiator.

We were there to demonstrate and speak out against GE’s thoughtless and reckless termination of its long-promised post-65 retirement benefits. I spoke first, followed by Rocheleau, who spoke very eloquently. Below you will find my statement.

If you want the entire transcript of the meeting, or listen to the meeting you can find it on the web at www.ge.com/investor-relations/events. Scroll down to Past Events, and click on the link: View Event Details and Materials. Below you will find my statement.

Good morning fellow shareowners.

My name is Bill Freeda, and I am here to tell you that I am voting AGAINST Jeff Immelt, and the members of the Management Development and Compensation Committee. That is: John J. Brennan, Chairman, and Lead Director; James I. Cash; Marijn E. Dekkers; Andrea Jung; Robert W. Lane; and, Douglas A. Warner III. I would urge all of you to do the same.

It has always been my understanding that a CEO’s compensation was based on performance. Let’s examine Mr. Immelt’s performance during 2014. On January 2, 2014, our stock price was $27.86, and on December 31, 2014, it stood at $25.42, a decline of almost ten percent. But let’s be fair. We should take into account the generous one-cent increase in the dividend. In all, Mr. Immelt’s salary and cash bonus increased eight percent, and his total 2014 compensation nearly doubled to $37.5 million. Much of his increase came from a big jump in his supplementary pension, from $52 million to more than $70 million. It does make you wonder what the Board would have granted Mr. Immelt had he actually been successful in 2014.

I know the Board says Mr. Immelt has met all of the company’s goals, but is it possible the company’s goals for 2014 were to have our stock price decline 10% and increase the dividend by a mere 1 cent? I very much doubt it. So my question to the GE Board of Directors is, with all due respect, have you all lost your minds? GE executives bandy terms about, like “cash flow from operating activities,” “operating margin” and “organic growth” in an attempt to justify their inflated compensation packages. When in fact the only term that really matters to shareowners is “ROI,” “Return on Investment.” And there can be no doubt that when it comes to ROI, Mr. Immelt has been a colossal failure during his tenure as CEO. Yet the Board of Directors bestows great praise, and greater riches on him.

What makes Mr. Immelt’s more than 30% increase in his supplementary pension even more egregious is that it was granted against the background of GE’s, which all but eliminated the company’s post-65 retirement benefits for tens of thousands of long-tenured GE retirees on January 1, 2015. So I ask the members of the Board, how is it possible that a group of intelligent and accomplished men and women like you be so totally tone deaf and disrespectful to the men and women who built this company?

Though some may differ, it is my belief that the Board of Directors was not given all of the facts before a vote was taken on this issue. Did all or any of you do your due diligence? So let us revisit the issue of post-65 retirement benefits:

Did you know that beginning January 1, 2003, newly hired GE employees were no longer eligible for these plans, therefore guaranteeing a slow but steady decline and eventual elimination of these benefits?

Did you know that this program has four components, two of which are paid entirely by the participants in the plan?

Did you know that the cost of GE retiree healthcare, including prescription drugs has been declining in recent years?

Did you know that by forcing us to move from the GE plans to individual Medigap plans, retirees may be declined coverage due to pre-existing conditions if they try to switch to another Medigap plan in the future?

If the answer to any of these questions is NO, you should be asking Mr. Immelt and his surrogates, WHY?

Based on these factors, what was the urgency for Mr. Immelt to terminate these long-standing, and long promised plans? I can come to only one conclusion: Mr. Immelt does not feel GE retirees are dying fast enough.

As I stand here, the day before my 75th birthday, I can assure you Mr. Immelt that as you get older, you may look back on your career to see what impact you have made in people’s lives. During that reflection I hope you will finally realize the damage you have caused tens of thousands of GE employees, retirees and their families, all members of the GE family, by making them the scapegoats for your inability to increase the “Return on Investment” to GE shareholders.

In closing, I would ask the GE retirees who are present today to rise, and join me in turning their backs on Jeff Immelt, because that is exactly what he has done to us.

GE Retirees’ Healthcare Lawsuit Moves Forward

Two General Electric retirees – Dennis Rocheleau, GE’s former chief labor negotiator, and the former senior corporate benefits executive Evelyn Kaufmann – filed suit in federal court against the company alleging that it violated federal law when it dropped its supplemental health coverage, and placed retirees in a health care exchange. Judge Lynn Adelman wrote in a decision on the case that the retirees have a better-than-average-shot with claims that GE breached its obligation and fiduciary duty to former employees. (Courier-Journal, Jan. 1, 2015).

“Employers should not be encouraged to promise attractive benefits to employees and create the impression that such benefits will continue as long as certain circumstances do not occur and then eliminate the benefits even though such circumstances do not occur,” Adelman wrote.

The suit states that GE began notifying employees (and their spouses/partners) in 2012 that they wouldn’t be eligible for the company’s post-65 retiree health care benefits if they had not turned 65, retired or enrolled in the plan on or before Jan. 1, 2015. The company then sent a letter in 2012 to those over 65, that said a new contribution structure would be imposed for certain enrollees in GE Pensions Prescription Drug Plan and/or the GE Medical Care Plan for Pensions. The suit states that in 2014 GE notified those over 65 that the company was terminating GE Medicare plans altogether and would provide a $1,000 subsidy for older retirees to use for insurance through the private exchanges.

Rocheleau and Kaufmann contend that GE used language that would “confuse or mislead” the average participant about when the coverage would terminate. “GE officials had to know when they issued a handbook in July 2012 promising no changes to the health plans that they had other ideas because they announced them two months later,” the judge wrote, “which amounts to a breach of the company’s fiduciary duty that may succeed if the case continues.”

“It is important to note that defendant [GE] did not terminate the plans for reasons ... listed in the handbook, all of which involve a force majeure, something outside of the defendant’s control such as a change in the law. Rather, defendant appears to have terminated the plans to save money,” Adelman wrote.

GE’s 2012 annual report projected the cuts to its post-retirement benefit would reduce its liability by $832 million. Kaufmann said the cost to her personally will be about an additional $50,000 for her life span.

Rocheleau said he took this action because the company repeated benefits that he spent years bargaining for as a GE representative.
On April 24-25, fifteen NABET-CWA stewards, local leaders and activists gathered in Cleveland for new leadership training. The training brought the Union’s future leaders together for two days of intensive skills-building, with hands-on, practical workshops and bargaining exercises.

NABET-CWA Locals 41 (Chicago), 53 (Los Angeles), 43 (Detroit), 48 (Saginaw, MI), 31 (Washington, D.C.), and 212 (Wheeling, WV) sent representatives to the seminar.

NABET-CWA Staff Representative Carrie Biggs-Adams started off the seminar with workshops on “The Economic Environment and Movement Building,” “How to Start a Revolution,” and “Mobilizing to Build Power.” She was joined by NABET-CWA Staff Representative Lou Fallot for a presentation on collective bargaining, which showed participants how mobilization can change bargaining. Through role-playing exercises, participants also learned how to represent members in a disciplinary situation and were able to act out grievance and bargaining roles.

“They really liked the hands-on exercises and playing out various scenarios between the Union and management,” said Biggs-Adams.

Other sessions focused on Defense, Members’ Relief and Strategic Industry Funds for use in bargaining and mobilization, as well as a presentation entitled “Whose Media?” on messaging and media coverage.

On day two, the focus shifted to collective bargaining agreements, grievance writing and filing, arbitration procedures, organizing new units, as well as political action and legislation. Biggs-Adams led workshops entitled, “Organizing: How We Do It” and “Decertification: How We Prevent It.” Acting Sector President Charlie Braico met with attendees and listened to their evaluations of the training.

This year’s NAT was held simultaneously with the NABET-CWA Region 2 & 6 Joint RAB meeting. Biggs-Adams noted that a number of people who attended this year’s RAB meeting began their Union careers as NAT participants: “It was the first generation of NAT graduates who are now serving as local officers,” she said.

Region 2 locals fund the annual James P. Nolan Memorial Scholarship. Members of Region 2 locals are eligible to enter the names of current high school seniors or students currently enrolled in higher education institutions. This year’s winner of a $1000 scholarship is Autumn Spina, daughter of Local 25 member Alan Spina. Autumn plans to attend the University of Buffalo. Region 6 locals fund the annual Jim Harris Memorial Scholarship, honoring longtime Region 6 Vice President and Local 43 President Jim Harris. The winner of this year’s award, also a $1000 scholarship, is Bria Lynn Myers, the daughter of Local 43 member Marcus Myers. Bria will attend Central Michigan University in the fall.
On April 24-25, NABET-CWA leaders from more than 15 different locals convened for the Regions 2 and 6 Joint Regional Advisory Board meetings in Cleveland, OH. Participants met with national leadership, received training and were presented awards for outstanding Union leadership.

Day One
Regional Vice Presidents Fred Saburro (Region 2) and William Wachenschwanz (Region 6) welcomed participants and introduced Acting Sector President Charlie Braico.

The day’s agenda included a presentation by NABET-CWA Staff Representative Bill Murray on grievance writing, which often makes up the bulk of a local officer’s duties. Next, NABET-CWA General Counsel Steve Sturm walked through the procedures for the upcoming Sector Conference and Roberts Rules of Order. Assistant to the Sector President Jodi Fabrizio-Clontz, Colin Bailey (L-211) and Patrick Tubiolo (L-21) led a panel discussion about Treasurer’s best practices. In addition, Dave Roger, President and CEO of JayStar Group, trained attendees on the new Orion database software, which helps Local officers organize and track membership information. Sector Staff Attorney Judiann Chartier provided a report on the past year’s arbitration awards, along with an update on other pending litigation.

The day wrapped up with the presentation of Local Scholarship Awards.

Day Two
The second day began with Regional Vice Presidents Fred Saburro (Region 2) and William Wachenschwanz (Region 6) introducing CWA District 4 Administrative Director, Frank Matthews. Brother Matthews, who has a long, robust relationship with NABET-CWA, stepped-in for CWA District 4 Vice President Linda Hinton, who was busy with AT&T contract negotiations. Acting Sector President Charlie Braico, gave an update on the Sector’s committees, including the Network Remote Servicing Committee. Jim Kolendo (L-42) gave his report on the lynda.com training program.

As part of the RAB 2 & 6 tradition, several awards were presented to various individuals:

CWA Political Action Fund (formerly COPE):
Locals 21, 26, 28, and 48 - These four locals have the highest PAF/COPE participation in NABET-CWA.

Local Leadership Awards:
Zaragosa Maldonado (President, Local 48)
Dorthea Brown-Maxey (President, Local 43)
Anthony Vecchio (President, Local 211)

Organizing Award:
Andy Halpin (President, Local 17)

“Everything You Do for Us” Award:
Jodi Fabrizio-Clontz once again received this special award in recognition of her hard work putting together this and other Sector meetings – and always making sure that every last detail is taken care of. Many thanks, Jodi!!

“Always Remember Who Loves You” Award:
RVP 2 Fred Saburro was presented with this special award, honoring his signature sign-off!
Day-to-day news coverage can have its hazards – water main breaks, toxic spills, fires, inclement weather, or hauling heavy equipment. It takes on new meaning when an assignment calls for covering a protest, riots, or a war.

“There is such a wide range of issues that affect our safety, from a slippery side walk to someone dying in a hazardous war environment,” said Mike Noseworthy, a NBC production sound mixer, who has worked in war zones.

He says the average network cameraman pushes upwards of 300 pounds of equipment on a cart. In addition, news crews must do their jobs very quickly and often on their own. Today, one person is usually doing the amount of work that three people would have done 25 years ago. When someone is constantly multi-tasking, they can become highly distracted and may cut corners.

“Unfortunately, the people in corporate America who are making these decisions on contracts and deployments have no idea what the dangers are,” said Noseworthy. Financial constraints have meant that the days of two-man crews that enabled crews to take the time necessary to follow safety protocols, such as securing cables, is more challenging.

Journalists Under Attack?

In highly hazardous situations, such as the recent riots in Missouri, New York and Baltimore, or in Middle East war zones, news crews put themselves at risk of physical attack. In a crowded situation, where there are a lot of people moving around, having a two-man crew – another photographer or sound person – who can look out for possible dangers is invaluable.

WNBC photographer/editor Tom Cooke says crews should never be alone in these situations: “We need to have someone besides a reporter in sync with us and watching our backs.” In some cases, armed guards have accompanied crews, but only when talent is involved in the story.

“When we ask for additional personnel, it’s for safety reasons and not just that we want more people on the job,” said Local 11 President Lou Marinaro. It is difficult for just one person to do a live shot and also break down the mast and remove cables, especially if you have to get out of a situation quickly.

“The Union’s position is: Don’t become part of the story,” said Marinaro. “Safety is more important than gear. Use common sense because no good will come of it if you get hurt.”

Some journalists covering the Baltimore riots in April were attacked and robbed by angry locals and pepper-sprayed and detained by police. Journalists reported being robbed of their phones and equipment and beaten, with some posting photos of their bruised and bloodied faces. In the protests against a police killing in Ferguson, MO, 15 journalists were arrested. Some were told by police that their safety couldn’t be guaranteed.

In an April 28 U.S. News and World Report story, the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) said most of these attacks were likely due to protesters not wanting to be photographed committing crimes. If the police use that footage to apprehend suspects, journalists could be in even more danger.

In its annual World Press Freedom Index, Reporters without Borders (RWB) found a global decline in press freedom partly because of attacks on reporters covering protests. The group is very concerned about a trend toward journalists becoming targets. Both organizations believe that “equipping press with protective gear is one of the only guaranteed ways to protect against violence,” NPPA added. “Working in groups is a good idea.”

“We put ourselves in danger and do get hurt. We have network crews that have to deal with tear gas. In Syria, they’re dealing with nerve gas,” said Noseworthy. “A crew was taken in Syria last year. There are very serious dangers that networks are aware of, but aren’t doing enough about.”

These extremely hazardous overseas assignments are voluntary. News crews are paid a flat rate for 12 hours a day. At times, they sleep in tents and are embedded with combat troops.

“The reason we do it is we have loyalty to our profession. It’s more than just a job to us,” Noseworthy asserts. “We signed up to cover news and to make NBC a credible news organization.”

“When people are watching TV and see a reporter in a tense situation, viewers tend to forget that there are people behind the scenes: camera techs, audio engineers and others who are helping to get the story out,” says Marinaro. “If they didn’t have the guts to take these assignments, people wouldn’t be seeing these stories.”

There are provisions regarding safety in the NBC contract, including the right to turn down an assignment if a member feels they are in imminent danger. “Safety is priority number one,” says Marinaro. “The Union is 100% behind our members.”

Noseworthy and Cooke serve on Local 11’s three-person safety committee, along with Bill Clark (Chair), which monitors the safety aspects of work in the field and in the workplace. The committee keeps in direct contact with members about their needs and relays the information to the Company.

All of the ENG trucks are equipped with safety gear that meets OSHA standards. In cases where the truck operators need equipment that is not required by OSHA, like respiratory gear, the Union meets with the Company to try and make sure crews have what they need.

Giving Crews the Tools They Need

Cooke, who has worked for WNBC since the 1970s, says the Union currently is in discussions with the Company over its safety policies, which are not applied uniformly between the network and local crews in terms of training and equipment.

After 9/11 and news crews developed persistent coughs, the Company handed out extra equipment – gas masks, iodine, duct tape, etc. – to keep crews safe while they extricate themselves from a volatile situation. These days, however, the Company is more ambiguous, leaving it up to the crews to determine when to leave a story.

“We are told to ‘be safe,’ but the tools we’ve been given are minimal,” says Cooke. “We aren’t prepared for any long-term exposure with the equipment we have.”

Cooke points to a recent gas explosion in New York’s lower east side as an example. Crews covering the story of the resulting fire and building collapse lacked the proper equipment. In the explosion’s aftermath, the city’s Office of Emergency Management urged neighborhood residents to keep windows closed and limit time outside over “concerns about the air.”

When WNBC sent crews to Baltimore in April to cover the unrest there, they were told to retrieve gas masks and get training from the network in Washington before heading to Baltimore. Upon their arrival, however, they were told that the Company didn’t have any more masks.

“We are the final arbiters of our safety,” says Cooke. “But there is a disconnect between what we know is our legal right and what managers in the heat of the moment want you to do.”

Common Sense and Good Training

Crews should take a common sense approach. Marinaro suggests calling the assignment desk to find a safer location if you feel that you are not in a good situation.

Safety is more important than the story, but you must alert the Company about your decision. Live shots shouldn’t be done in the thick of it, especially if you are covering a protest or riot.

“In these situations, people are angry and start to harass the crew,” warned Marinaro.

In its “Journalist Security Guide,” the Committee to Protect Journalists recommends, “News managers should regard the safety of field journalists as the primary consideration in making an assignment. They should not penalize a journalist for turning down an assignment based on the potential risk. News organizations should recognize their responsibilities to support all field journalists…”

Noseworthy spent several months in Afghanistan after 9/11, embedded with the
Northern Alliance as they entered Kabul. He was last there a little over a year ago. Noseworthy said he was prepared for his overseas assignments and called the hazardous environment training he received “excellent.” He was given personal protective gear, including a chemical suit, an epi pen, and a gas mask.

He credits the head of his news division, Stacy Brady, for being very proactive when it comes to safety. He is certified as a remote first responder, which means he knows how to start an IV, sew someone up, and give CPR.

He learned to put his head “on a swivel,” looking out for land mines, trip wires and “signaling.” When traveling cross-country, you should drive in vehicle tracks because that means something had gone over that area already. Signaling (subtle, unnatural signs) could mean danger: a twig through a leaf on a tree or a stack of rocks. He also learned to never put himself where there was only one exit. It also is important to be careful about what you eat and drink. Noseworthy relayed a story of photographers who started eating the local cuisine (a.k.a. “street meat”), which didn’t sit well. Noseworthy kept to his freeze dried MREs and remained healthy during a two-month assignment in the Middle East.

“Common sense, combined with training and other things, and chances are you’ll be fine,” says Noseworthy. Even so, the network lost a sound man in Iraq when an IED went off near the Hummer he was riding in.

Everyday Hazards

On the local level, however, Cooke says crews are not equipped for the variety of assignments they get, whether it be protective equipment or footwear. One of the more frequent assignments in his job is to go down to a subway platform and take footage of passengers getting on and off trains. Cooke considers this somewhat dangerous and says photographers refuse to go down there without another crewperson to spot them.

“Injuries can happen in the most unglamorous way. Walking backward and you trip, you slip off a curb, or get thrown into a barricade,” said Cooke.

Cooke himself has been pushed into police barricades and been sidelined for months from accidents on the job. Still, he considers himself relatively lucky. “I know people who have been shot or have lingering accidents,” he said.

More recently, the Union has questioned the amount of electromagnetic radiation crews are exposed to when they use portable live video transmitters such as a LiveU on their bodies or in their vehicles. The potential for injury is further compounded when just one person is assigned to carry both a LiveU and a camera at the same time.

“If we make the Company aware of these dangers and they don’t do everything in their power to mitigate it, they open themselves up,” said Noseworthy. “In a lot of cases, they are letting money make their decision. Common sense should be making their decision.”
On April 17, the 53-member unit of broadcast recording technicians, engineers and satellite and signal operators (network engineering technicians and network operations) ratified a new four-year contract. Unit members received wage increases of 2.5% in each year of the contract, beginning January 2016 through the end of 2019. Unit members will also receive a one-time signing bonus of $750. In addition, the contract calls for an increase in short turnaround payments from $9.75/hr. to $15/hr., as well as TD wage increases. Union negotiators were also able to eliminate the two-tier wage structure while reducing the wage escalator system from 10-steps to 6-steps. The Benefits Task Force model was preserved for benefits decisions, and the “no-layoff” provision was extended in order to protect all regular employees on the payroll as of April 1, 2015.

These talks began in January 2015, and the two sides worked every available day in March to negotiate that agreement. “Almost all of the company proposals that we objected to were removed from the bargaining table,” said NABET-CWA Staff Representative Carrie Biggs-Adams. She further stated that the pressure from an April deadline, and the “no-layoff” provision was extended in order to protect all regular employees on the payroll as of April 1, 2015.

The peanuts reflect Nexstar’s wage proposals: “WJET pays peanuts wages.” Additional bargaining dates are being scheduled. The contract expired at the end of 2014. The bargaining committee included Joe Mills, Kurt Stalnaker and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi. 

KTTV-TV – Los Angeles, CA (Local 53)

The new owner of Koin – Media General – has hired the Nashville-based law firm of King and Ballow, a well-known union-busting firm to handle negotiations after the firing of in-house counsel Ron Allen. Mr. Allen racked up numerous Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charges while representing Koin. In one case, the Company disciplined a photographer who was simply performing her job when a “Koin: Bad News For Workers” sign suddenly appeared on-air behind the talent. Company representatives resolved the ULP prior to the NLRB hearing by agreeing to rescind the disciplinary letter from the member’s personnel file. NABET-CWA has also reached an agreement with the Company that all pending or deferred charges against the member will be resolved as well.

For the contract that expired on July 27, 2013, Union and Company negotiators continue to meet with a federal mediator on a regular basis. The most recent meetings were held in early May. The Company continues to propose that managers and others can perform jurisdictional work, unlimited use of Multi-Media Journalists (MMJs) without protections for existing positions, and extreme increases in health care premiums. The Company’s latest health care proposal calls for higher rates of up to $750/month, which the Union was able to negotiate down to $312/month. The unit is staging regular mobilization events at various station advertisers on Saturdays.

NABET-CWA Network Coordinating Committee (NCC), a group of network local presidents, welcomes FOX hub member John Sullivan to NABET-CWA (left to right): L. 51 President Kevin Wilson, L. 43 Vice President Mike Moore, L. 31 President Rich McDermott, L. 53 President Steve Roes, L. 53 Member John Sullivan, L. 52 President Gil Maestas and Local 16 President Art Mazzaca. The group met in Las Vegas on April 16-17.

Representative Eric Seggi is working with Acting Sector President Charlie Braido and the FOX locals in Los Angeles, Chicago and Detroit on a comprehensive plan to respond to the Company’s proposed pension change.

KTTV – San Diego, CA (Local 54)
The two sides met for three days of bargaining, beginning April 20. The parties exchanged initial proposals for a successor contract for the 35-member unit at the E.W. Scripps station. NABET-CWA’s proposals centered on job security, improved work rules and wage increases. The Union also is seeking to remove some of the onerous contract provisions implemented in 2012 when Scripps bought the station from McGraw-Hill. The Company’s proposals seek to reduce job security through cuts in jurisdiction and seniority, along with economic reductions through cuts in short turnaround and night differential premiums.

“There is a better workplace relationship here, but bargaining may be difficult,” said NABET-CWA Staff Representative Carrie Biggs-Adams, who sits on the bargaining committee along with Local 54 President Dennis Cissell, Vice President Robert Buchanan, and Shop Stewards Frank Castillo, Jr. and Tony Qee.

WJLA-TV – Washington, D.C. (Local 31)

On March 21, NABET-CWA held a unit meeting at Local 31’s offices during which the membership raised concerns about new station owner Sinclair Broadcasting. Despite commitments to honor the previous contract with former owner Allbritton Communications, Sinclair made substantial changes to the benefit programs and terms of employment. The Union filed an Unfair Labor Practice charge, as well as a grievance over these changes. The current contract expires on August 23, 2015.

KTTV-TV – Los Angeles, CA (Local 53)

NABET-CWA has requested new dates to resume talks in this ongoing contract negotiation. In the meantime, VP & General Manager Kevin Hale recently announced his retirement from KTTV/KCOP. According to NABET-CWA Local 53, “Mr. Hale presided over the gutting of Fox 11 News and the precipitous decline in the ratings of its news programs. All news and public affairs programs at KCOP were eliminated under his watch.”

WFSB-TV – Hartford, CT (Local 17)

Contract bargaining is set to begin on May 27, in the midst of Unfair Labor Practice charges filed by both the Union and the Company. The two sides were set to begin talks earlier, according to NABET-CWA Staff Representative Lou Fallot, but the Company transferred members of the Union’s bargaining committee into new jobs. Three unit members were transferred out of maintenance and into a photography work group. The transfer has potentially caused a violation of the Local’s bylaws. The contract expires on June 30.

FOX Hub – Las Vegas, NV (Local 53)

Minor progress was made during three days of talks on March 11-13 in Las Vegas. The Company continues to seek the unfettered right to lay-off employees without regard to seniority and is further insisting that any recalled employees

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