



Union Update

Communications Workers of America Local 7250 ★ Spring 2021

#DefendOurJobs

CWA 7250 Fights Outsourcing, Job Cuts & Union-Busting



At the beginning of the year our Local Union told the AT&T Wireless upper management that preserving union jobs and keeping union-represented stores open was our top priority for Wireless workers. They responded by saying that they had no plans to close any more stores.

But then in late February of this year we were notified that AT&T was shutting down three more union-represented retail stores in Minnesota. This is on top of the nine closed in the state last year. This time the closings was part of a wave of nearly 100 stores across the country to be closed.

And the stores won't really be closed - they will be flipped - to outsourced, non-union, "authorized retailers" with the same AT&T branding but with substandard wages, benefits and safety conditions for the workers.

It's not like AT&T is hurting for money - the company continues to rake in billions of dollars in profits even during the COVID-related disruptions and recession. And these new "authorized retailers" are run by big corporations like Prime Communication & Connect Wireless that are built specifically on outsourcing formerly union AT&T jobs.

Our Local has responded by organizing against these job closings, taking action, and reaching out across the Union and the community to build the #DefendOurJobs campaign. So far here's what we have done:

- Organized a picket and rally at the West St. Paul store that included workers from all of our areas (Call Center, Techs, DTV & Retail), friends from CWA 7200 and CWA 7304, and District 7; HERE (Hotel workers); UFCW (Grocery workers) and the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation. Community groups like Residents of Color Collective from West St. Paul came and spoke, as did elected officials from the West St. Paul City Council and MN state representatives. Despite the rain, our picket was lively and at the end we sent a delegation of union, community, and elected officials to confront AT&T's upper management that arrived to monitor our protest.
- Spoke out at the March and April City Council meetings of West St. Paul and successfully got a City resolution passed demanding that AT&T change course and maintain the Union store.
- Begun to get attention for the campaign in local labor media (*Minneapolis Labor Review* and *St. Paul Union Advocate*) - but also a major article in *The Guardian* - one of the biggest mainstream newspapers/news-sites from Britain.
- Introduced a resolution to the CWA Minnesota State Council to only support political candidates that take firm, public stands against AT&T's outsourcing, job cuts, and union busting.
- Successfully proposed that CWA District 7 create a committee to coordinate the campaign across the District.
- Continue to build a spirit of solidarity, win grievances, and recruit stewards in Retail stores across Minnesota.

To get involved in the #DefendOurJobs campaign please email: union@cwa7250.org or call/text 612-516-7335.

Text CWA7250 to 33339 to sign up for Local alerts (members only)

NEWS FROM THE FRONT

DIRECTV "SOLD" BY AT&T

After months of rumors, AT&T announced in late February that it had sold DirecTV and that it would become a standalone company. In fact AT&T had only sold 30% of the satellite company to TPG Capital with 70% remaining in hands of AT&T. The majority of the new executive governing board comes out of AT&T as well. Whoever AT&T is pretending now owns DirecTV we are committed to defending and extending the rights and benefits of the union workers at the "new" Company. At the CWA District 7 conference, we asked what CWA leadership was expecting from this change. They stated that they did not believe that the "new" company would try and break the union, but that the negotiations for the new contract next year would be with TPG - the new owners of 30% of DirecTV. We continue to build the Union at the Eden Prairie, MN Call Center - where **Ann Jensen** was recently confirmed as Area Vice-President/Chief Steward for the center and 8 new members were welcomed into our Local.

BIG GRIEVANCE WINS

Winning grievances are never easy. You can have Johnny Cochran up in there and most of the time the Company representatives have been told to deny the grievance no matter what. But we have won four grievances so far this year and there are reasons why. First **Alaric Hatton** and **Sean McCawley** were able to get discipline and time reduced for a Tech accused of not reporting some minor vehicle damage from months ago. Then, **Larry Thompson** and **Kieran Knutson** were able to get the Company to agree to change the way they were enforcing rules around the Sales Force tool in the retail stores, and to get the discipline related to Sales Force fully rescinded for one RSC in Greater MN. In another Metro store we were able to get all discipline removed from another RSC when the Company failed to turn over video and documentation in a timely way after earlier failing to review the manager observations with our member within the timeframe described in the contract. In all cases the company had overreached or blatantly violated the contract, the member was involved in crafting the argument and gathering "receipts" for the grievance, and the Company understood that we were using these grievances to build the Union.

RECRUITING NEW UNION STEWARDS

Congratulations to the growing list of stewards who have been officially appointed in recent months: **Maggie** (Call Center), **Jahn** (DirecTV), **Justin** (Retail-St. Cloud), **Zach** (Retail-St. Cloud), **Cody** (Retail-Duluth), **Shalena** (Retail-Minnetonka), **John** (Retail-Woodbury), **Zac** (Retail-Maplewood), **T.** (Retail-West Lake), **Amalia** (Retail-West St. Paul/Virtual Call Center) and **Soraya** (Virtual Call Center). Stewards are the front-line of the Union; our eyes and ears in the workplaces. Stewards are a good first point of contact if you have a question, idea, or a possible grievance.

DOWNTOWN WORKERS COUNCIL

In January CWA 7250 Executive Board voted to join the **Downtown Workers Council (DWC)** initiated by SEIU Local 26, CTUL, Unite Here! Local 17, Sex Workers Organizing Project (SWOP), and Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC). The DWC aims to be voice for all those who work in downtown Minneapolis. The big decisions about downtown shouldn't just be made by Target, the big banks and property owners. **Chad Perkins** was elected as our permanent delegate to the DWC and **Justin Gilbert** sat in as rotating rank & file delegate at the first meeting, where the main topic was rights and protections for front-line workers during the COVID pandemic. Get in touch if you'd like to get involved: chad.perkins@cwa7250.org

HOW LONG FOR WORK FROM HOME?

On Thursday May 6th Laura Inda announced that Corporate Leadership plans to bring workers back to the AT&T Tower office this summer. AT&T offices in other parts of the country have already started to end "Work From Home" and have begun bringing employees back into the office. Our members now working from home have made it clear that they strongly support a Work From Home option going forward, and we have conveyed this to the CWA T&T office (over our contract). No further details have been announced for the Minneapolis Call center, but the Eden Prairie DirecTV Call Center has announced a blended workforce will remain, with 20% of employees (selected by seniority) continuing to work from home. Our Union will continue to have discussions about how best to fight for our members interests during any transition. "Nothing about us, without us!"

Our Union in Action



**May 1st International Workers' Day March
Lake St. in south Minneapolis**



Picketing Against AT&T's union busting in West St. Paul



**Labor Press Conference for Justice
for Daunte Wright, Brooklyn Center**



**Our Local
Community
Solidarity
Committee
delivered 100
thermal
blankets to
homeless
encampments
in Minneapolis**



**Delivering free groceries with
other unions in north Mpls**



**Visiting
Members &
recruiting
Stewards in
St. Cloud MN**

How do we fight back?

By Kieran F. Knutson, Local President CWA 7250

Lets be blunt. Our jobs are in a precarious position. Our employer AT&T is cutting jobs in Retail at a furious rate, and there has been no new hiring at the AT&T Call Center for years as we continue to lose union jobs through attrition. Our Eden Prairie Call Center was part of the so-called “sale” of DirecTV, and the growth of third-party technicians remains an ongoing threat to union jobs.

One of our members, feeling particularly stressed out recently, asked me, “Why do they want to break us in half?”. She knew the company was still raking in billions in profits - so why does AT&T keep squeezing and squeezing us? The answer is that the system we live under - capitalism - demands this from all corporations. If a company isn’t producing maximum profits, the Board and the shareholders will just replace the CEO with someone more willing to swing the axe.

Unfortunately the present-day Labor movement does not seem equipped to deal with the challenges we face. The main strategies are to seek “partnership” with the bosses and/or to look for politicians who will advocate for us - or at least not openly attack us. But there’s not much love there for workers. The bosses only want us to “partner” so that we don’t fight back; 90% of politicians are owned by the corporations and the rest are stuck pushing the boulder back up the mountain again and again and again.

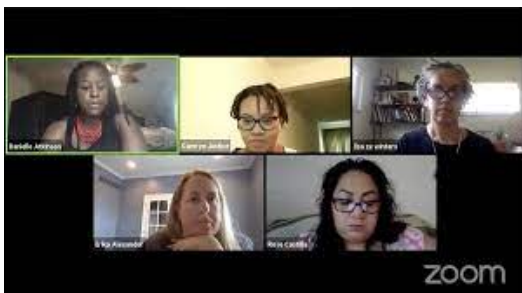
No one is coming to save us. We will need to organize ourselves. Here’s what I think we will need to be successful:

- We need to understand the system we are up against and reject “partnership” with the bosses.
- We need to organize our unions so that they are really controlled by the rank & file members.
- We need to defend each other at work against all injustices, disrespect, abuse and exploitation by the bosses.
- We need to live and breathe SOLIDARITY and reject racism, sexism, homophobia and all discrimination and divisions.
- We need to build solid united fronts with other grassroots unions, community organizations, social justice groups, and students.
- We need to re-learn how to use the power we have - to strike and shut down employers and cut off their profits.
- We need to imagine a new way of living, not based on profits and not controlled by a few billionaires, bureaucrats and politicians.

Congratulations!

Kasie Garcia, Exec. Vice President of CWA 7250 has been serving on the CWA National Committee on Civil Rights and Equity, representing District 7; Shari Wojtowicz, CWA 7250 Steward and former President was elected President of the CWA Minnesota State Council.

Membership Meeting Wednesday May 19th 7:15pm via Zoom



Your Union ★ Your Dues ★ Your Decisions

All members of CWA 7250 are equal with the same vote at union meetings. Any member can ask a question, make a proposal, speak for or against, and cast their vote. To get access to the zoom call, email: union@cwa7250.org



Get Connected with your Union

Sign-up for Text Alerts: Text CWA7250 to 33339

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address: 312 Central Ave SE STE 369, Minneapolis MN 55414