

CWA 7250

Kieran Knutson <kieran.knutson@cwa7250.org>

CWA 7250 Union Update - November 2022

Kieran Knutson <kieran.knutson@cwa7250.org>
 To: Union Officers <union@cwa7250.org>

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CWA 7250 Union Update - November 2022**Happy Veterans' Day! Happy Thanksgiving!****See below for Notes and/or Links on . . .**

AppFolio Opens Bargaining with Threats of Outsourcing - AT&T Tower Workers Rage Boils Over - Organizing at Activision Update - the 2022 Elections - Expert Gives Talk to CWA 7250 on Big AT&T Pension Changes - Rounding the Bases: DirecTV, AT&T Technicians, AT&T Retail, AT&T Tower Call Center - Scholarships - "Red November, Black November"

**1. AppFolio Threatens Outsourcing on Day One of Bargaining**

Recently, "Lisa Operators United" (LOU), an organizing project at AppFolio (a property management software services company) recently won union election 42-16, voted to affiliate to CWA Local 7250, and began bargaining a first contract. Minneapolis-based LOU organizer and Bargaining Committee member, **Kel Smith** reports on the start of negotiations: "Day one of contract negotiations with AppFolio took place on Monday, October 17th. While LOU came prepared with multiple proposals to begin bargaining a fair contract, the company brought zero proposals. Instead, Cat Allday, the VP of AI Initiatives, gave a speech informing us they intend to outsource all Operator positions and invite us to bargain our severage packages. Then, during our meeting, two non-unionized Operator teams (around 80 employees) were given separation agreements. Our union protected our jobs, but the fight is just beginning. We have filed an Unfair Labor Practice suit against the company for not bargaining in good faith, and we will continue to push for a fair contract while we request information from the company to prepare for the next time we meet at the bargaining table. While the company cannot implement their desired proposal at this time, we know they are no stranger to breaking the law and we are prepared to respond with additional ULPs if they illegally make any sweeping changes to the status quo. The next bargaining session with the company will take place on Thursday, November 17th at 11am CT and members are invited as observers."



2. Workers' Rage Boils Over at AT&T Tower Call Center

Weeks of anger at AT&T's cruel and reckless decisions affecting the workers at the Minneapolis AT&T Call Center finally boiled-over on October 14th. Less than a month after AT&T's unnecessary and risky forced Return-to-Office went into effect, the company announced it was ending excused/paid COVID-time for employees - from now on if you get COVID, the company is saying you will have to use your own vacation time, or take chargeable sick days and risk discipline. To add insult to injury, the AT&T Center Director called an emergency conference call with all employees to announce that the office would be moved to the AT&T facility in Bloomington by the end of next Summer. While for some employees who live in the south metro and drive to work, this news was welcome (or at least not harmful) - but for our many workers who live on the Northside, the north suburbs, north of the metro, or who don't drive - this became yet one more attack on our lives and livelihoods. All of this was just too much - a **"30 person mob"** reportedly marched onto the 8th floor Call Center chanting against the end of Work from Home and COVID-pay. As the workers approached the Directors office, her "open door policy" was suddenly rescinded on the spot and the office door slammed shut on the protesting union members. After a good laugh over the Directors' bad manners, chanting and clapping resumed - and then an orderly march off the floor. This powerful action elicited some hysterical reactions from management including claims that the Director "feared for her life", that she would "call the police if it happened again", that the disruptions inspired members to "stop taking any calls for 15 minutes - causing calls to be re-routed to Nashville". ***A couple things from this episode must be underlined: a) Upper management has been consistently trying to paint themselves as the victims of the union during our campaign to keep WFH. This must be rejected - it is not our job to dry their crocodile tears - it is our job to fight for the rights and well being of our members. The fact that people are pissed at management and that long standing friendly relationships have been damaged is the clear result of the company's stubborn refusal to take workers health, concerns, and ideas seriously; b) at 901 Marquette now and at 7900 Xerxes in the future - it is the workers who ultimately control the floor - it is we who take the calls, write the emails, send the letters, submit the disputes, process the payments, restore the accounts (and a dozen other crucial tasks) - so when we organize and make our voice heard - management will know it (no matter how hard they slam their door shut).***



3. Organizing at Activision Blizzard Continues . . .

Activision Blizzard, the video game holding company that owns and operates famous games like *Call of Duty*, *Candy Crush*, *Guitar Hero*, and *World of Warcraft* is facing a more real challenge: Their own workers. **Gabbi Pierce**, CWA 7250 Organizer, reports on the progress of organizing: "At Activision, we've been organizing to fight a series of mass

Performance improvement plans that have been rolled out, surveying folks on workplace health stressors, and fighting back against union busting happening in two unionized locations at Activision. Meanwhile, two other campaigns at large tech companies are still underground but making good progress, including a petition at one of these workplaces to preserve remote work with over 300 signatures collected."



4. 2022 Elections - This Tuesday, November 8th

The 2022 Mid-Term Elections are upon us (if the thousands of political advertisements hadn't tipped you off). Props to the many CWA 7250 members that have worked with CWA Minnesota State Council President **Shari Wojtowicz** to run the CWA State Council's phone banking. **List of CWA-endorsed candidates are here:** <https://actn.et/BFWbFTi0>

Laws and Rules about Excused and/or paid Voting Time per state: <https://aflcio.org/2016/11/5/know-your-rights-state-laws-employee-time-vote>

Minnesota: Voting Time Excused/PAID - No limits to time needed to vote. Employers may request notification of when you will be out for voting (at the AT&T Tower they are asking employees to put in their voting time by noon on Monday, November 7th 2022).

<https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/election-day-voting/time-off-work-to-vote/>

Wisconsin: Voting time Excused/NOT paid - Up to 3 hours. Employers may require notification

<https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/laborstandards/voting.htm>

Iowa: Voting Time PAID/Excused - Up to 3 hours. Employers may require written request for time.

Exception: An employer is not required to provide voting leave if an employee has three consecutive hours of non-working time while the polls are open.

<https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/voterinformation/edfaq.html#13>

Nebraska: Voting Time PAID/Excused - Up to 2 hours. Employees must be registered to vote and request voting time prior to Election Day.

Exception: An employer need only provide the employee a period of leave which, when added to any non-working time during which the polls are open, will meet the two-hour period. An employer is not required to provide voting leave if the employee has at least two successive hours of non-working time while the polls are open.

<https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=32-922>

North Dakota: NO paid or excused time; Employers only encouraged to set up voluntary voting programs for their employees

<https://www.ndlegis.gov/cencode/t16-1c01.pdf>

South Dakota: Voting Time PAID/Excused - Up to 2 hours. The employer can set the leave time to vote.

Exception: Applies to employees who do not have two consecutive hours when not required to be at work during the hours the polls are open.

https://sdlegislature.gov/Statutes/Codified_Laws/2040450



5. Retirement expert addresses big changes to AT&T pensions after November 30th

Mike Sullivan of Wealth Management Group, who has been working with AT&T employees through the Alliance and AT&T University for 15 years addressed CWA 7250 members from the AT&T Tower on a zoom call - about how, among other things, the AT&T pension lump sum pay-out changes could lose up to 30% of its value after 11/30/2022. Importantly annuity pay-outs are NOT affected by the changes to the pension. **So if you were thinking about retiring sometime in the next year or so - and taking the lump sum payout - you MAY want to consider leaving before the end of THIS month.** For more information get in touch with Mike mike.sullivan@investwithwmg.com and check out his presentation here: <https://youtu.be/iPKP6qdT8Z0>



6. Rounding the Bases: DirecTV, AT&T Technicians, AT&T Retail, AT&T Tower Call Center

As always, there's lots of activity in all of our work groups, here's our round-up:

DirecTV: On October 23rd, all our DirecTV members tied to the Eden Prairie Call Center got their contractual title update to the new Video Solution Specialist and the accompanying pay bump - even though the internal employee systems were not yet reflecting the new title. The new pay rate should be on the next pay check - this has been confirmed by DirecTV and CWA. We are still waiting to find out how many of the new permanent Video Solution Specialist (WFH) positions will be filled, and what the requirements will be. At the CWA joint Health & Safety meeting with DTV management, one safety concern was raised with a rug in the hall leading out to the parking lot outside. It is a potential trip hazard and we need to get some salt over near the door for the winter as well - DTV management has agreed to address these ASAP. CWA reps also raised the issue of management missing from the floor, and unavailable - particularly on weekends, again DTV management agreed there must always be one manager available, and that this will be addressed immediately. DTV is planning on putting out a new job rec for 5 new jobs - if you know anyone who might be interested - get in touch.

Open Grievances: None

CWA 7250 Area Vice-President Ann Jensen (DirecTV) is available for questions or concerns for our DTV members: ann.jensen@cwa7250.org 612-327-2653.

AT&T Techs: We continue to monitor AT&T's attempts to take work away from our Techs through various ticket vetting schemes. The main program - rolled out last year in North Dakota and New Mexico - took location ticket-vetting away from our technicians and gave them to a center in Ohio who don't know local geography or accuracy of maps. While the "test" program has ended in North Dakota, AT&T continues to introduce it in other states across the country - despite a huge reported rise in cut cables this year. Des Moines Network Tech and **CWA 7250 Steward Steve Wilson** has been following up on another interesting attempt by AT&T to pre-empt Techs work - a Tennessee-based manager created a "bot" that was closing FYI tickets for Techs in his group - a violation of the contract. While management has appeared to back off from this new infringement, an official Request for Information and grievance are pending. AT&T Mobility Tech & **CWA 7250 Steward Ray Welch** alerted the union to late delivery of new vehicles to some of the northern Minnesota crew - where snow and ice make safe, reliable equipment even more of a necessity. We have escalated the issue and while the company is pleading that there are delays and shortages in the supply chain, we got them to commit to delivery by the end of the year. The Local, alerted by Omaha Tech and CWA 7250 Steward Piero Sutti, opened up a new grievance for a co-worker who was injured by a workplace hazard (that is still not fixed) and so missed their contractual raise this Spring and opportunity to use carry-over vacation when they were out for surgery. Network Tech and **CWA 7250 AVP Sean McCawley** and Mobility Tech and **CWA 7250 Member-at-Large Dave Bennett** represented the Local at the CWA District 7 Conference in New Mexico; Sean will join South Dakota Network Tech and CWA 7250 union steward **Gabriel Perez** and two others to represent 7250 at the T&T Conference (the CWA Department over the AT&T Legacy T contract).

Open Grievances: One. Lost Pay, carry-over vacation days, and excused day (see above) - Nebraska.

Our Tech members can reach CWA 7250 **CWA 7250 Area Vice-President (Techs) Sean McCawley** here: sean.mccawley@cwa7250.org 612-245-7886

AT&T Retail/Virtual Call Center: There's a new boss over AT&T's retail stores in Minnesota, Tara Carlson is now the interim Director of Sales. Because of the new change, our meeting with AT&T Retail Leadership has been delayed but we will try and get it in before the end of the year. The big concerns of union RSC's remain consistent: Staffing shortages, the non-union "authorized retailers" and the escalation issues they cause our members - and several other specific issues as well. The end of excused/paid-COVID pay in retail is going to cause a real crisis. If AT&T wants to discipline people for calling out sick with COVID they are gonna have a real fight on their hands. While doing New-Hire orientations, **CWA 7250 Executive Vice-President Kasie Garcia** has discovered that some new members have not been getting their two contractual EWP days "upon hire". The company claims that this new benefit started on 10/27 and only applies to workers hired after the 27th - but that would punish those with *more* seniority. We are escalating this issue within CWA and preparing grievances. We recently won a grievance for AT&T Virtual Call Center Rep and **CWA 7250 union steward Thurston Wells**, after the company refused to pay him his contractual back pay because he was still getting commission-coverage as he was forced out of retail when his store in Rochester MN closed - we submitted a grievance and escalated to the lead CWA negotiator of the Orange Mobility contract, **Pat Telesco** - and the company folded.

Open Grievances: Two. Both for unjust discipline (Final Warning Letters), and both have been escalated to CWA District 7 for second step.

CWA 7250 Area Vice-President Retail/VCC Larry Thompson answers lighting quick: larry.thompson@cwa7250.org 651-328-9578

AT&T Tower Call Center: The mood at the Tower has never been grimmer - and it's no wonder. **CWA 7250 Area Vice-President (Call Center) Angie Bates** filed a Request for Information with the company that came back October 26th showing that there have been 9 positive cases of COVID in the Tower in just the first month since the forced RTO started (and we know there have been more since then); we know that we have lost 11 co-workers to quitting, retiring or death - and that several more will lose before the end of this month. In the RFI response the company admitted that between 9/19/22 and 10/26/22 there were a total of 347(!) call outs for sick days. That's an incredible number - and one that could have almost certainly been avoided if the company had not opted out of the 6-month WFH extension. The company has yet to approve a single WFH Job Accommodation for our members with serious physical or mental health conditions whose doctors have prescribed WFH accommodations. There are two members who've been allowed to continue working from home while their request is reviewed - and up to four members have filed legal complaints with the civil rights department over AT&T's violation of their ADA rights. Past and current AVPs for the Tower **Charli Haataja** and **Angie Bates** have argued two Job Accommodation grievances and two more have been filed. The Minneapolis Call Center and all of the Beek Organization has been placed back under Trish Renz's group - the **Work from Home Committee's Naomi Holmes** is taking advantage of this change to address Renz directly in a new letter asking for a consideration of the company's policy on WFH (if you'd like to sign, see one of the WFH Committee members or a CWA 7250 steward or officer). A member at the Tower brought forth a concern about an official mass email from AT&T's "Sales Execution Advisor" which instructed readers that "*Representatives can now use ExpressPay to complete payment arrangements for Wireline & Mobility accounts, including: Accounts that are Past Due/In Treatment & Accounts that are Current/Not In Treatment. Do not transfer the caller to Collections for payment arrangements.*" [Emphasis added]. We are confused about the company's policy on payments through Express Pay - and we are concerned about any directive that states customers should NOT be transferred to Collections for payment arrangements. We have submitted an RFI to Inda and Beek and are preparing grievances. Finally, the company rejected the union's demand that our members be paid for the time it took to return equipment to 901 Marquette - and so a grievance has been filed.

Open Grievances: Nine (Vaccine Mandate, Reporting Mandate, Pre-paid Alliance Funding, "Vacation Snatching" - are all at District 7 or T&T for 2nd or 3rd Step; Four Job Accommodation grievances have either just been heard or are scheduled to be heard; the grievance over pay for moving equipment; and a partridge in a pear tree)

CWA 7250 Area Vice-President (Call Center) Angie Bates can be reached at angie.bates@cwa7250.org 612-804-6601



Attention CWA Members:

APPLY NOW FOR JOE BEIRNE SCHOLARSHIPS

Apply now for college scholarships of \$4,000 each for the 2023-2024 school year, and another \$4,000 for 2024-2025. (2nd year award based on satisfactory academic record.)

Sixteen new scholarships will be awarded by CWA's Joe Beirne Scholarship Program.

Eligible are CWA members, their spouses, children and grandchildren (including dependents of laid-off, retired or deceased members) planning for college studies.

Final deadline for applications is 11:59 p.m., EDT, April 30, 2023.

Applications are easy to complete online at the Foundation's website (including submission of a short original essay).

Winners will be chosen in a lottery drawing.

The program honors CWA's founding president, who served for more than 30 years. Joe Beirne took great pride in the roles he played in furthering educational opportunity and working for social justice.

For more information, and to fill out and submit the application form, visit:

cwa.org/beirne

7. Scholarships

The CWA Joe Beirne Foundation's 2023-2024 Scholarship details are now out. The Foundation will be awarding sixteen (16) partial college scholarships of \$4,000 each for two years. Eligible for the scholarships are CWA members, their spouses, children, and grandchildren, including the dependents of retired, laid-off, or deceased members.

Applications will be available solely online for submission on the Foundation's website at: <http://cwa-union.org/beirne-application>

Full program details can be found on the website at: <https://cwa-union.org/pages/beirne>.



8. "Red November, Black November"

Poem by Ralph Chaplin, author of "Solidarity Forever", the anthem of the Labor Movement.

**Red November, black November,
Bleak November, black and red,
Hallowed month of Labor's martyrs,
Labor's heroes, Labor's dead.**

**Labor's hope and wrath and sorrow:
Red the promise; black the threat.
Who are we not to remember?
Who are we to dare forget?**

**Black and red, the colors blended,
Black and red the pledge we made:
Red until the fight is ended;
Black until the debt is paid.**

**Labor's hope and wrath and sorrow:
Red the promise; black the threat.
Who are we not to remember?
Who are we to dare forget?**

The poem commemorates the executions and murders of several key activists that built and pushed the labor movement:

The Haymarket Martyrs:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haymarket_affair

Joe Hill:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joe_Hill_\(activist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joe_Hill_(activist))

Buenaventura Durruti:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buenaventura_Durruti

**As always - thank you for all that you do for your families, community, co-workers, the union, and the working-class!
Solidarity Forever!**

CWA 7250 UNION UPDATE is sent out every month to all Local members and contacts, other CWA locals and other unions, and friends and allies in the labor movement and the community. The **UPDATE** is edited and produced by CWA 7250 Local 7250 President Kieran F. Knutson.

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