

# CWA LOCAL 2107

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## Knowing Your Contract

By Shannon Opfer

We all know there are limitations to working for a company with a Collective Bargaining Agreement. In my opinion, we are still better off than the majority of non-union covered employees. We have benefits, pension, 401K, reasonable wages, vacation, holidays, a grievance procedure. People not covered by CBAs really don't understand what we have, and when they hear about it, they tend to get angry.

This is not to say it's a perfect system. Our contract has limitations. I know right now most of you don't want to hear about our limitations, you want the union to "do something about it". According to our contract, *Overtime Administration Letter of Understanding, page 235*, the company can force up to eight hours a week.

They can stipulate how you work those 8 hours. They can't make you work two 6 day work weeks in a row, but they can force you to do 8 hours in the evenings one week and then force a 6th day the following week.

I'm not saying I agree with it. Please understand, I agree calling the 8 hour overtime on a Friday is B.S. But as long as they follow the procedures laid out in our contract, they can do it. So far, they have followed that procedure.

Obviously we lost quite a few people to the last buy out. So far the company claims the overtime is due to storms or service issues. I doubt that, but can't prove otherwise, so it is what it is.

Changing the schedule because of snow is not

*(Contract on page 3)*

## WHAT IS THE UNION DOING?

by Shannon Opfer

I swear to God, every time I hear that I want to punch someone. The union is not some far off entity run by nameless faceless people sitting in an office playing Angry Birds. The union is a living breathing thing we are all a part of.

We can't tell the company the best way to run their business into the ground. They seem to have the handle on that and need no help from the union.

Guys, we don't have to like any of this, we just need to know how to abide by it. Yes, the contract says they can force you 8 hours a week. It doesn't say how much you have to accomplish in those 8 hours. They would prefer to force you the 6th day because they know they get 4 jobs out of you on that day instead of taking some extra time on each day through the week. They are supposed to accept "reasonable excuses", *Overtime Administration Letter of Understanding, page 235*. This LOU doesn't say anything about a monetary excuse. It says reasonable. If a supervisor gives you a hard

time, contact the hall or grab a steward. I can't really think of a time where I have had an excuse denied for anyone.

I have heard from most of the Fios techs that you are being loaded with 12 to 14 hours worth of work in a day. Are you doing it all? In 8 hours? You know the reward the company gives for making your numbers? They make them higher. If you don't want to stay and work overtime, when it isn't being forced, do you follow the policy? If you do follow that policy have you ever had a problem? The company can load you with 24 hours of work if they want. Whether you chose to do it is another story.

So here is "what the union is doing about it".

We support our members. We will support any action you want to take. We ask you to stand together. We ask if you are doing your daily safety checks on your vehicles? Are you taking your time and making sure all your safety

*(Union page 3)*

## President's point of view

### *State of the Union*

As we enter our third year as your officers, WE THE UNION, want to keep you advised on a few of the major things going on with the local. Lets get started with the part nobody likes talking about, POLITICS. The Maryland session is off and running and we have interest in a couple of bills.

Senate Bill 343 and its house mate House Bill 447 were sponsored by Senator Middleton and Mitchell respectively. This bill puts a one year moratorium on the use of Voice Link ( a wireless non-regulated service) as an alternative to repairing the traditional landline service. We all know more wireless means less good paying union jobs. Verizon and AT&T came with the big guns and had 17 folks testify against these bills. Stay tuned, we'll see if we can get our bills through the session.

On a national level, the big push is to stop fast track of the TPP. Fast track would allow this bill to skip through the house and senate without a full review by the people we elect to watch out for our wellbeing. If it goes through Fast Track, they would give up their right to vote on this bill. The TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership) is being referred to as NAFTA on steroids. We all know what great things have come from NAFTA— stagnant wages, lost jobs, and pushing the proud working middle class closer to the poverty level. Keep an eye on this, and contact the hall for ways you can help fight TPP.

New subject. For those of you who attended the first Holiday party in years for this local, I hope you enjoyed it. Thanks for coming out. We are planning on a 2014 Holiday party, so watch for that later this year.

This year will also be election year for the officers in the local, so if you like what we have done, let us know. If you think changes are necessary any member in good standing has the right to run for office and affect change here within the local. Elections will take place in the fall.

Next subject. We have started something new this year, and are visiting our AT&T Mobility stores on a regular basis. We hope to see our members more regularly and make sure everyone is

signed up and knows what a union is all about. So far we are hearing some good things from that, and I would like to thank my officers who have helped with that process. For those not familiar with our local charter, we handle the entire state of Maryland for the Mobility folks. It makes it hard to see everyone, but we are doing our best to change that.

I would also like to thanks some new retirees who have started coming to the retiree meetings. These meetings take place the second Monday of every month at the Union hall at 10 am. Recent retirees— you need to stay involved! Your health care coverage is a bargained for item every contract. I am sure it will continue to be a hot topic in August 2015 when we go back to the bargaining table with Verizon. Health care everywhere is being done away with, especially retiree health care. Look at Patriot Coal or Duke Electric. So it would be very smart to stay involved and help us fight for both you and our active members. The last thing I want to do is have to explain to anyone why they no longer have health care.

Next subject. If you read the first line, yes that was sarcasm. I am so tired of hearing *what's the union doing about it*. The union is all of us together, not just the loyal bunch that show for the monthly meetings. It is every worker, past and present that work or worked for Verizon, AT&T, or Carl Cox Photography.

I know this group of officers goes above and beyond what is necessary for the betterment of this local. We all give our time above the hours we are paid for. The goal we fight for is simple. We want our members to have a great career with good pay and benefits. A career with dignity and blessed with a good retirement for the so called golden years.

So in the end what I am asking is for every member retired or active to find time and take in a meeting. Get involved. We have tons of things we could use some help with. But most of all, STAND UP FIGHT BACK when things aren't right. After all, that is what being in a union is all about.

In solidarity,

Daryl Winter

## CWA Joe Beirne Foundation Scholarship Program

The CWA Joe Beirne Foundation was established in October 1974 by the Communications Workers of America Executive Board to honor the name and memory of the founding President of CWA, who served for more than thirty years. In his capacity as the first CWA President, Joe Beirne took great pride in the roles he played in the fields of education and learning and other areas or social concern.

Fifteen partial college scholarship of \$3,000 each are being offered for the 2014-2015 school year. Winners, selected in a lottery drawing, also will receive second year scholarships of the same amount contingent upon satisfactory academic accomplishment. Part time students, less than 12 credits will receive half the scholarship monies.

Eligible for the awards are CWA members and their spouses, children and grandchildren, including those of retired or deceased members.

Applications are accepted during the months of November through April. Final deadline for the 2014-2015 school year is April 30, 2014. To apply online, go to: [http://www.cwa-union.org/pages/beirne\\_scholarship\\_application](http://www.cwa-union.org/pages/beirne_scholarship_application)

*(Contract from page 1)*

unheard of. They have done it before. Again, as long as they follow the procedure laid out in the contract, *Article 25- Work Schedules and Changes in Scheduled Work Time, page 50*, they can force a day off in exchange for another. Again, not saying I agree, but from the company's stand point, they don't want to let their trucks on the road, and don't want to pay us to sit around doing nothing. They don't care about our safety as far as coming into work, or leaving work, but they worry about their property.

So here is the problem I have. They haven't hired anyone in what? Eight years? That means most of us have been working under this contract for a minimum of 8 years, most of us much longer. Why are we still unsure what they can and cannot do? We were all given our own copy of the contract last year. Familiarize yourselves with it!! This collective bargaining agreement is the governing law over what the company can and cannot do.

I'm not saying you need to memorize it, trust me. Legalese is hard to decipher much less memorize. But you should all have a basic understanding of what is said or where to find the information you might need. Do you know what family members you

get bereavement leave for? Article 33-Excused Time, Section b. Differential? Article 19 Page 35.

That being said, the contract is a fluid thing. If you read the overtime administration letter of understanding, you will see originally it was ten hours of overtime a week. We have fought and struggled for everything in that book. We have to give in on some things because it is a give and take. That sucks! I would love to be able to dictate to the company what they can and can't do. That's not reality. The only people who can do that work for themselves. This is corporate America. We're lucky to have the protections we have!

With the conditions of unions right now, we need to prepare ourselves for the reality of losing some of the protections we have. I hate to say it, but it is the reality we face. Without the strength of the unions supporting us, we'll lose what we currently have.

This is the reason behind some of the alliances we make. They may not always seem to make sense but we need all the help we can get. If we can get the AARP or the Sierra Club to assist us in our issues we have more of a voice. And believe me, at this point we need all the help we can get.

*(Union from page 1)*

equipment is up to date and in good working order? Are you doing all the checks and requirements the company claims they want you to do every day?

I don't work in the Fios side of the business. Never have. I know my understanding of what you do everyday is limited. But I also know no one has even been disciplined in this company for having excessive safety. Or for checking the oil in their vehicle. Or for doing a complete walk around of their vehicle before leaving the garage. Or for checking every last thing around them that could conduct electricity.

I hate to refer to it like this because this is our livelihood, but in the end, it's a game. **PLAY THE GAME!** If they are forcing you basically every weekend, tell your supervisor how exhausted you are. If you are a danger on the road, they can't put you in a vehicle. Not saying everyone should rush their supervisor claiming exhaustion, but there are ways.

You have an issue with your tablet, or blackberry, or the center?

Make it your supervisor's problem. Drop it back in their lap and make them tell you what to do. Not sure where to drill? Make them come out and show you exactly where to drill. It puts the responsibility right back on them. I've sat in too many grievances lately that could have been a non-issue if a single phone call to a supervisor had been made.

You don't want to spend every hour of your life here? Turn work back. As long as you follow the policy THEY have laid out, you are covered. Supervisor gives you a hard time, come find me and I will personally talk to them.

They want you to take the time to put in your timesheets for any day off? Ok, do it. You are getting paid to do so. But make sure you take the time for doing it. Whether its in the garage at the end of the day or in your truck on the last job, make sure its done. Don't do it on your time.

End of the day guys, for the millionth time **"YOU ARE THE UNION"**. Your officers and stewards can't do it for you. We can support you, we can represent you, we can talk to supervisors and try to intervene, but the power lies in your hands. Use it!

## Calling All AT&T Members

AT&T members, we are making an effort to come visit every location we have, which is the entire state of Maryland. If you know anyone in your stores who haven't signed with the union yet, watch for us. We are pushing to get everyone signed up as soon as possible.

Also we will be hosting some classes to introduce you to the benefits of being in a union. We do pay your lost wages for the day. If you are interested, please contact us here at the hall or speak to us when we come to your store. You are the only Union represented wireless company. We would love to see you get more

involved and understand all of the benefits to being union.

We have lots of different committees we could use help with. If you have a passion for community service or entertainment, we could use your assistance. If there is something you would like to see us do more of, let us know. You guys make up half of our local and we rarely hear from you.

Get involved and learn why its so important to not only be union, but to live union. The more we support other unions through our purchases the more strength we have when its time for us to bargain our contracts.

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We're on the web at  
[cwa-2107.org](http://cwa-2107.org)

*Check out our Facebook Page*

## Calendar

3/12/14 Membership meeting, North 4:30 p.m.

4/9/14 Membership meeting south 4:30 p.m.

If you have moved recently, please let the hall know our new address. We are constantly mailing out information and things you may need, and if your address isn't current, we won't be able to get it to you.

### AT&T Mobility members:

We would love for more of you to get involved. If you are interested in any part of what we do here, please let us know. We have many different committees that could always use more help. Let us put your talents to work!