

CWA VOICE



Editor's Appeal

It's Not Over!

The November election has come and gone. No, the endorsed candidate for working persons will not occupy the White House, however, as unionists and *more importantly* as citizens of this country—we must hold those elected into public office (regardless of their party affiliation) accountable. *It's not over!*

It's far from being over. My fellow brothers and sisters, we have work to do. We must continue to be legislatively aware of what is going on in this country. We must **make time** to be informed of what decisions are being made and debated at all levels of government. And then, we must ensure that we express our legitimate concerns and dissatisfaction of legislative activities in our government.

With so many means of communication at our disposal there is simply no reason why the average citizen cannot let their voices be heard. Most legislators now accept e-mail messages and faxes—and our brothers and sisters with the NALC are still in the business of delivering the mail. Let's make a conscious decision today to become legislatively aware and to begin (or continue) to be actively involved in the legislative process that will effect our families livelihood and well-being for many days to come.

Congratulations to CWA'ers and unionists everywhere for a record turnout at the polls of 27 million according to the AFL-CIO poll. It is because of you, who believe in the fight to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions—that allowed so many persons who were not registered to vote or took on a nonchalant attitude to become active participants in November's election. And it is because of you that in spite of strategic barriers against unionism—we remain **STRONG and UNITED!**

It's not over ...

*Hold those elected into public office
accountable.*

*...become legislatively aware and
become actively involved in the
legislative process...*

FMLA 1250 Hour Settlement for Chronic Health Conditions BY PAULA TERVEER

A settlement agreement has now been negotiated with Verizon in reference to the FMLA 1250 hour interpretation. In the past, the company made a new FMLA determination each time someone with a chronic serious health condition was absent. If the employee's worked hours dropped below 1250, then the absence would be denied even if their case was approved for that particular time period.

CWA challenged the company's interpretation and let them know we were considering a lawsuit. Thankfully, we were able to convince the company to change their practice. Effective November 1st, the company began to make the 1250 hour eligibility determination only once for a twelve month period—at the time the employee is first absent due to such a condition.

The agreement also provides relief for those employees who have already been harmed in some manner by Verizon's old interpretations and who have filed grievances and/or DOL complaints about their situation at any time between May 19, 2001 and November 1, 2004, or whose cases have been referred to CWA's FMLA Specialist. Anyone who was stepped on the Absence Control Policy between May 19, 2001 and November 1, 2004 will have that step corrected in the future at any point that it causes them to suffer any harm covered by the contract (e.g., discipline, promotion or transfer limitations)

Employees who were suspended will be made whole. They will receive any back pay lost and have their files corrected to remove the disciplinary action and correct all records. They will also be credited with any lost work hours due to the suspension for purposes of future 1250 hour eligibility determinations.

Employees who were terminated will be eligible for financial relief and/or reinstatement, as appropriate. These employees will have an opportunity to participate in a binding review process. This process will be handled by a neutral mediator who will use both FMLA case law and just cause principles to resolve each case.

Grievances in our Local have been researched and a number of cases are being referred. If you think that you meet this criterion and would like to be considered for relief, please call the Union Office on (757) 456-2202.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Dear Union Brothers and Sisters,

With the presidential election over, my hope is that our country can heal from the division that we all feel. As a Union, we had a responsibility to explain the issues to you and to try to elect the candidate that would best serve our interest.

President Bahr said about the election, "I want to thank you for taking part in this great cause. Together, we fulfilled a sacred trust reserved to those who serve others. And the others we serve include the next generation of young workers as well as a generation yet unborn. What we do will affect their lives". Union members overall voted 65 percent for Senator Kerry and 68 percent in battleground states. But enough of that. The election may be over, but the struggles with the company are not.

In dealing with Verizon, one District Manager seems to stand out. Before FTTP began in Northern Virginia, Walter Jones met with all the local presidents in the state. We worked out rules that we could all agree on; some benefited the company and some our members. Walter has re-written the rules several times since that meeting without requesting any input from the Union. From being able to volunteer for a two week rotation, it's now a minimum of one month, and in January it will change again to two months. The reasoning behind this is that Walter claims he can't get the work done with shorter rotations.

Another change is that he is now capping the overtime to nine hours per week, and seventeen hours on weeks that techs do not come home for the weekend. The excuse Walter gave was that it now gets dark early and he was concerned with his employees' safety after dark. Does this mean that the installation and maintenance organization only has to work during daylight hours? What about their safety after dark? Is that not just as important?

Another issue that we had worked out was that on the weekend that our techs travel home they could leave, depending on their destination, between 4 and 8 hours before the end of their tour. That one has just changed on November 10th. Before traveling home the techs must complete their eight-hour tour. That means driving 4 to 5 hours to Virginia Beach or 8 to 10 hours to Norton after working 8 hours. Whoops, what happened to safety? I want to thank Walter for his great leadership and his ability to motivate workers!

With the holiday season approaching, I wish for each of you and your families happy, healthy and safe holidays and a prosperous new year. I also want to thank our Executive Board and Stewards for all of the hard work that they do to represent this membership. And I especially want to thank you for being members of this great Union.

**In Unity,
Louie**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Alex Long
and
Richard Burnett
who won the \$5.00 door prizes
at the November 8th
Membership Meeting.

Billy Scott Jr.'s name was
drawn for the Pot-of-Gold
worth \$242.22 at the
November 8th Membership
Meeting.
He was not present to claim his
prize.
The Pot-of-Gold has grown to
\$264.24.

**JOIN US AT THE NEXT
MEMBERSHIP MEETING ON
MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2005
7:30 P.M.
IRONWORKERS HALL
5307 E. VIRGINIA BEACH BLVD
NORFOLK, VA**



**Vz Working Retirees
Extended**

Effective January 2005, Verizon may utilize the working retirees for a total of 220 days annually. Currently, retirees on the Verizon payroll are permitted to work for no more than 120 days annually.



Congratulations to

Ruby M. Cullins-Carter

*who located her name in the
September/October newsletter.*

*Locate your name hidden in
ALL CAPS in this issue—just
call the Union Office at (757)
456-2202 & we'll put \$10.00 in
your pocket too!*

**Read it in the
CWA VOICE**

*The Executive Board and Members of
CWA Local 2202
Wish you a Happy, Healthy, & Safe
Holiday Season!*

On Community Services

Vz United Way Campaign "Made Simple"

BY BYRON "CHUCK" TAYLOR

If you were employed by Bell roughly six years ago, then you probably remember the office meetings with the tear jerker videos along with speakers who came out from the United Way of South Hampton Roads to encourage giving through payroll deduction. "Yes, it was a big thing back then", echoes several Verizon employees during a recent reintroduction at several Verizon Southside work sites. During the week of September 20th, our Local's Community Services Committee was instrumental in a re-acquaintance of the giving program at Verizon providing information on the United Way and various human service agencies at major job locations in South Hampton Roads. The campaign, which was "Made Simple" for employees, provided information and a method to initiate giving without accessing the corporate intranet, and since most visits occurred either early in the day or during the traditional lunch hour it did not take away from employees productivity.

The campaign afforded Verizon employees within our Local the opportunity to become more familiar with Verizon's giving programs such as the payroll incentive program (PIP), the matching incentive program (MIP), and the disaster relief incentive program (DRIP)—which was activated to assist victims of hurricane damage in Florida. The campaign also opened the door to provide one-on-one contact with someone from the United Way, our Local, and Verizon in order to have specific questions answered about the giving program. On hand at most sites were Byron "Chuck" Taylor, CSC Chair, Desi Nichols, Director-Labor Participation United Way, and Laura Barnes, Area Manager-Verizon.

Sites that were visited during the week included 1st Colonial Rd, Rugby St, Cleveland St, Chesapeake NMC, Elmhurst Ln, and Suffolk's Holland Rd shops.

Although the number of completed pledge forms were proportionately low compared to the number of persons who work in Verizon Southside locations—it was certainly an enormous beginning in that people are now educated on the various giving programs and can make an informed philanthropic decision in the future. The total payroll deduction initiated through this awareness program to be effective in January 2005 is \$3,451.00. The total funds received along with a qualifying corporate match were \$225.00. Special thanks go out to everyone who gave of their time to listen and to provide assistance monetarily to those in need.

Clari fication on Working Spouse Same-sex Domestic Partner Surcharge

It was brought to our attention that Verizon had issued a bulletin to employees with incorrect information regarding the working spouse same-sex domestic partner surcharge. The company mistakenly indicated that the surcharge would apply if only one of the conditions applied. If the surcharge is to apply then both of the following conditions must be met:

- the spouse/domestic partner is eligible for medical coverage with his or her employer and does not elect it, and who has an annual salary of more than \$25,000,

AND

- Is required to make an annual individual premium contribution of less than \$900

FMLA Changes at Verizon

Effective November 1st, Verizon will no longer require employees to submit a personal certification form for each period of intermittent absence covered by a certification.

Also, the ARC (Absence Reporting Center) will begin tracking the duration of all FMLA absences, in addition to its current practice of tracking the frequency of intermittent absences. Should an employee be absent in excess of the frequency or duration already certified for, the employee will be required to submit a one-page recertification form in order to be certified for the time not initially covered.

Additionally; the 25-day timeframe for returning FMLA certification forms now begins as of the day that the absence is reported to the ARC, rather than as of the first day of the absence. This particular change was effective on August 30, 2004.

Verizon to Offer PEDS On-line

We have been notified by Verizon that employee staffing intends to offer PEDS on-line beginning November 29, 2004. According to the company, the on-line version of the PED form will follow all existing RAMP rules. Employees will continue to have the option of WILBUR submitting PEDS manually via L the mail JONES.

The company expects that the on-line process will reduce turn-around time and reduce errors.

Are You...
...tired of working in the hot sun?
...tired of tall grass?
...tired of pulling weeds?

Call
Affordable Lawn Care
Today!

757 724-1144
Rob Rollins (VCSI)

We will take care of your
landscaping needs
CWA Members Get 15% discount



Customer Service Professional Week BY CAROL CASTILLO

Local 2202 joined CWA members from around the world to celebrate Customer Service Professional Week October 4th through October 8th. On Thursday, October 7th, hundreds of union customer service professionals wore global solidarity stickers to symbolize solidarity and pride in their jobs. Because being “customer focused” is important, the need for customer service professionals is growing. Nationally, more than 3.3 million women and men work as customer service and sales representatives in virtually every industry. Unfortunately, only 7% of customer service employees are represented by a union. CWA re-

presents 60% of all organized customer service professionals.

The work of a customer service professional is fast-paced, demanding, constantly changing and very stressful. Customer service professionals are skilled communicators and problem solvers. They know a vast amount of information about the products they sell and service, and are very good about maneuvering about in various systems in order to secure what information they require to service their customer.

Our Local sought to honor our own customer service professionals on Thursday, October 7th by letting them know that they truly are appreciated even if they feel otherwise by their employer. Cake was served at two of our major Verizon work locations where the majority of our customer service professionals are employed—at 5701 Cleveland Street in Virginia Beach and at 505 Independence Parkway in Chesapeake.

I-9 Requirement at Verizon

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 require that all individuals (citizens and non-citizens) hired for employment in the U.S. on or after November 7, 1986 complete an I-9 form for Employment Eligibility Verification. In 2002, Verizon determined that I-9 forms were not on file for all active employees as required by law. At that time, Verizon embarked on a major effort to obtain completed I-9 forms for all active employees. While the company was successful in obtaining most of these forms, there remain a significant number of employees in District 2 that did not complete the form.

We have been advised by the company that those employees who do not have an I-9 on file will be notified of the need to complete the form. Because employers are subject to civil and criminal penalties if they do not comply with the act, the company has sought assistance from the union to encourage employees to comply with this request. The company has indicated that completing the I-9 form is a job assignment and should be completed on company time.

Change in Vz Payroll Vacation Advance Requests

The union has been notified that Verizon intends to collect vacation advances from employees in their second paycheck after the advance rather than collect in an employee’s next paycheck. The company indicated that this process will bring the former C&P area in line with all other bargaining units in the company. The target date for this change will be December 5, 2004.



CONDOLENCES

*To our members, retirees, and their families who
were known to have lost loved ones*

Nicola Ayars	(Self)
Jim Sheipe	(Aunt)
Ronald Norton	(Uncle)
Cecilia Farmer-Selthun	(Father-in-law)
Kim Weddle	(Grandmother)
Sam Cotton	(Father)
Inez Little	(Father)
Shirley Bynum	(Mother)
Vicki Faust	(Stepfather)
Adam Perry	(Father)
Cheksha Johnson	(Grandmother)
Fred Johnson	(Mother)
Daniel McNamara	(Grandmother)
Ross Owen	(Father-in-law)
Tommy Tucker	(Mother-in-law)
Andrea Jones	(Grandfather)
Charles Van Dusen	(Father)

Local 2202 Wants You Safe
Holiday Safety Tips

The year-end holidays are an exciting time of year for everyone, and to help ensure you have a safe holiday season, here are some holiday safety tips.

Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label “Fire Resistant.”
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness because a fresh tree is less of a fire hazard. The tree should be green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break.
- When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and don’t allow it to block doorways.
- Be sure to keep the stand filled with water, because heated rooms can dry live trees out rapidly.

Lights

- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

Food Safety

- Bacteria are often present in raw foods. Fully cook meats and poultry, and thoroughly wash raw vegetables and fruits.
A Good Rule of Thumb: Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- Always keep raw foods and cooked foods separate, and use separate utensils when preparing them.
- Always thaw meat in the refrigerator, never on the countertop.
- Foods that require refrigeration should never be left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Never put a spoon used to taste food back into food without washing it.

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Have a safe and happy holiday!

The **CWA VOICE** encourages newsworthy article submissions by our members that will benefit the readers of this publication. Your article submissions may be edited for printing in this newsletter and items sent become the property of CWA, unless other arrangements are made prior to submission. Forward all newsletter submissions to:

CWA Local 2202
Attn: Editor, **CWA VOICE**
154 Newtown Rd., Suite B-1
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
or you may e-mail your submission to:
cwa2202.exis.net

On Mobilization

Wearing Red on Thursdays

“Don’t forget, wear red on Thursday”, echoes one of our Local’s shop stewards. Well, what is the point? The point is that it does make a tremendous difference to those who support positive change and improvements for working persons. It shows our employers that as a union—we’re together! It shows that we will take a stand on issues that will improve or have an adverse impact on our wages, benefits and working conditions.

As a mobilization tool, CWA members have long wore red on Thursdays to show their unity and solidarity. In order to confirm our mobilization action on Thursdays, a resolution was officially adopted at the 62nd Annual CWA Convention in 2000 to wear solidarity colors on Thursdays. The resolution urges all CWA members to wear “red” as “a symbol of our solidarity”.

In a time of weakening labor laws protecting workers and anti-union legislators, we urge all of our members to continue to show the strength of our union within our Local and “**Wear Red on Thursdays**”.



Don't Forget...

Wear RED on Thursdays!

Welcome New Members

A BIG WELCOME to our new member into our Local!

Michael Pierce

