

**CWA 7250**

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**CWA 7250 Union Update - December 2022**Kieran Knutson <kieran.knutson@cwa7250.org>  
To: Union Officers <union@cwa7250.org>

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**CWA 7250 Union Update - December 2022**

Happy Holidays! Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukkah! Happy Kwanzaa!

**See below for Notes and/or Links on . . .**

The Big Picture: What the Elections Mean - OSHA & NLRB Look at AT&T Call Center - Layoffs Hit AT&T Workers "Red Wedding" for AT&T Retail Management - DirecTV Takes Away Life Happens - Techs Push Back Against Automation - Tech Workers Organize - Michelle Richardson Takes Over as Tower AVP - 7250 Pushes CWA T&T for Changes - AT&T Corruption Exposed - Nurses Win - Marcia Spring - Self-Defense Classes - Next Membership Meeting

**1. The Big Picture: What the Elections Meant****OPINION** by CWA Local 7250 President Kieran Knutson

With the 2022 elections finally behind us, we can take a moment to reflect on what they meant for working people. Many of us were relieved that the predicted "Red Wave" of massive GOP victories never materialized. The Unions worked very hard and gave a lot of money and people-power to help Democrats defeat right-wing Republicans. The MN CWA State Council - including several Local 7250 members - were part of that effort. But while the Democrats may not be as bad (or as dangerous) as Trump and the Republican Party - that does not mean they are our friends. Tim Walz looked sane and rational compared to the GOP's candidate for governor - but remember, it was Walz who sent military troops into our cities to quell the Uprisings against police brutality, while not managing to lift a finger (or send a simple Tweet) in support of the Minneapolis Teachers' Strike. **The election was barely over when Joe Biden took the extreme step of imposing a contract on railroad workers (that they had voted down) and outlawing any strike action by the railroad unions.** The grassroots cross-union **Railroad Workers United** stated, "This is a legacy defining moment for Joe Biden. He is going down as one of the biggest disappointments in labor history." As Nancy Pelosi once said, "We're capitalists, and that's just the way it is". **Malcolm X** described the two-party system in this country as one of the Wolf and the Fox . . . where the snarling Wolf (the conservatives) scares us into the jaws of the smiling Fox (the liberals). My view is that the unions and labor movement need to break from the corrupt political system entirely and build up our power outside of and against the system and both of its parties - instead of the rut of elections, lobbying, and campaign donations - we should strategize and plan strikes, occupations, and other direct action in defense of our jobs and our communities. Ultimately we need to organize to rip the power away from the 1% and their wolves and foxes, once and for all. **(Opinion above by CWA Local 7250 President Kieran Knutson - responses and different views are welcome)**

## 2. OSHA & NLRB Look at AT&T Call Center - But Will It Stop the Abuse?



The sharp fights between workers and management at the AT&T Call Center in downtown Minneapolis has garnered some attention from the government agencies tasked with protecting workers safety and rights. The Minnesota **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)** is looking at AT&T's policy of disciplining workers who miss work due to testing positive for COVID or having COVID-symptoms. Our Local Union has pointed out that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health are still directing people to quarantine after testing positive for COVID or experiencing COVID-symptoms. Our research also uncovered a pre-COVID Minnesota law that bars employers from disciplining or punishing in any way workers who must quarantine (**144.4196 EMPLOYEE PROTECTION** <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/144.4196>). Disciplining workers for quarantining with COVID will incentivize them to come to work *with* COVID. All of this has been shared with OSHA, as part of their review. AT&T, for their part, responded to OSHA's inquiries with blatant lies - claiming in writing that not only does AT&T not discipline employees absent with COVID, but the company doesn't discipline anyone for any kind of illness absence (!). AT&T had to backtrack from that ridiculousness - but not before it was posted on the 8th floor bulletin board for a couple of days. The Union will continue to demand that AT&T cease its unjust and unsafe discipline policy - and that OSHA do its job of enforcing safety in our workplaces.

When Laura Inda announced that management would be cancelling the traditional paid/excused half-day before Christmas, the Local filed a grievance and requests for information (RFI) to see what they were basing their "needs of the business" claims on. Well it turns out the "needs of the business" was just another falsehood. The Company refused to provide data going back five years - they would only provide data from this year - but then how could we compare it to the "needs of the business" from previous years to see if their claim was legitimate? The company also dragged their feet for two weeks to provide the call projection data they said went into their decision making - and when they did provide it, there was no indication of the methodology or process for making their predictions. What they did provide was a list of account categories that they claimed had significant backlogs of work that meant the Christmas Eve half-day must be cancelled. But when we reviewed the company's "data", **Area-Vice President Michelle Richardson** immediately noticed that their claims for the Refund team were **way, way off**. The company listed a backlog of 742 accounts - when in fact there was no backlog of refunds whatsoever. The "backlog" for Payment Investigations was also incorrect - and the company ultimately withdrew them from their backlog data list without any serious explanation about how they had been so wrong. While those two categories represented 11% of their claimed "backlog" - of their remaining categories, fully 52% are work tasks that are only worked by CSSS in our center, who account for only about 10% of the Center employees. Other categories - like Unapplied, for instance, include all unapplied credits - including accounts with very small credit amounts that would never be prioritized - but useful for building up the company's BS backlog list. The cherry on top of this hot mess though is that multiple members have reported that more than one manager (or recently retired manager) have confirmed that when the Christmas cancellation was announced in the managers meeting - no mention of backlogs, priority work, or numbers of any kind was mentioned. The only reason given was that supposedly no other center has the half-day tradition.

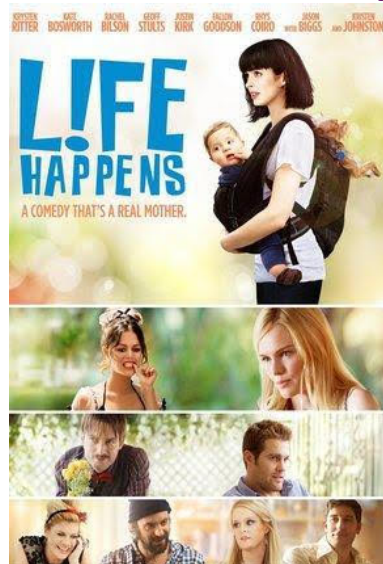
	A	B	C	D	E
1	<b>Backlog Area</b>	<b>Backlog Volume</b>	<b>Production Rate</b>	<b>Hrs Needed</b>	
2	72 Hour RRS Accounts	504	3.7	136	
3	Adjustments FARS Requests	1,082	5.9	183	
4	Finals Fars Request	971	2.5	388	
5	Flagged Accounts Not Work Within 30 days	2,379	3.8	626	
6	Franchise STarT Accounts	464	3.8	122	
7	Ordering RRS Request	4,277	5.4	792	
8	Ordering Team CFM Restrictions	333	5.4	62	
9	Payment Investigation RDS	235	6.2	38	
10	Refunds RDS	742	2.4	309	
11	STarT Worklist Accounts	1,421	4.6	309	
12	Unapplied Accounts	3,078	3.7	832	
13	<b>Total # of Hours Needed</b>			<b>3,090</b>	
14					

Under labor law, our long-standing Christmas Eve half-day is not just a tradition, it is a protected "Past Practice". A Past Practice, as defined by **labor lawyer and educator Robert Schwartz** is "any long-standing, frequent practice that is accepted and known about by both the union and management. **A practice that meets the standards of being a bona fide past practice is considered to be part of the contract.** Since it is part of the contract, grievances can be filed if management violates a past practice. In most cases management cannot end a past practice without first bargaining with the union. In some cases management must wait until contract negotiations to change a past practice."

( [ueunion.org/stwd\\_pastprac.html](http://ueunion.org/stwd_pastprac.html)) Because the Christmas Eve half-day goes back AT LEAST 31 years uninterrupted, has been accepted, known (even promoted) by upper management, and because the "backlog" reasons are so flimsy, we believe we have a strong case to win back the Christmas Eve half-day. In addition to the filed grievance - which we are pressuring CWA to meet on at the national level ASAP, we have also filed charges with the **National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)**, who have already interviewed three CWA 7250 members so far and are preparing further action.

**The NLRB and OSHA may help us pressure the company to do the right thing for workers - but we cannot rely on them. They are underfunded government agencies, who ultimately work for politicians, not workers. We need to develop our own strength through mobilization, direct action and solidarity with and from other unions and community organizations.**

### 3. DirecTV Takes Away "Life Happens" Tool - Union Fights Back



AT&T likes to pretend it doesn't own DirecTV anymore (even though it still owns 70% of the satellite TV/streaming company) - but when DTV acts like this, it's easy to see the family resemblance: At the beginning of November, members at DTV started noticing that their "Life Happens" attendance tool - similar to AT&T flex tardys or make-up time - had disappeared - and was no longer accessible. **CWA 7250 AVP Ann Jensen**, who was also on the CWA bargaining team, remembered that the issue of "Life Happens" had actually been touched on during negotiations and the company had pledged to keep "Life Happens" and make no unilateral changes to the attendance policy. But so far our official requests for information and our grievance meeting request have gone unanswered. The Union is escalating to get the RFI info in and the grievance meeting set - even if we have to file NLRB charges or organize a mobilization in Eden Prairie. We intend to win back this important tool, which never should have been taken away.

**AVP Ann Jensen** has also been moving to secure accurate records of pension contributions for DTV workers - and the union is escalating within CWA to establish as pro-worker frameworks as possible for the new permanent Work from Home titles. More to come . . .

### 4. CWA 7250 Dodges AT&T Layoffs

Layoffs hit AT&T workers - Mobility and Legacy T in succession. At the end of November, 15 Mobility Techs got hit with layoffs including in Wisconsin and South Dakota. On December 16th over 80 workers were laid off under the Legacy T contract - including Clerks in New Jersey and Account Representatives in Kansas City and Texas. AT&T is on a cutting frenzy, despite their obscene profits. The work done by these titles did not just disappear - it's just being farmed out to non-union contractors in this country and abroad or dumped on the backs of CWA members who already have their own work to do. CWA needs to step up and push back against these cuts. **An Injury to One is an Injury to All!**

### 5. "Red Wedding" for AT&T Retail Management



**Reminder to AT&T management - the company does NOT care about you either!** Soon after the arrival of new Wireless Retail honcho Amanda Seabaugh, the hatchet started swinging. First the non-union IHX (in-home sales department) was shut down, displacing about 20 "managers". Longtime Director of Sales Bryce Peterson was shuffled off, laterally, away from Retail - and he was soon followed by Area Retail Sales Manager for East Metro Joe Reichow who along with 3 store managers was surplused outright. Next West Metro ARSM Nikki Jensen was next, who was demoted to store manager. In a meeting with the union officers and **CWA 7250 AVP Larry Thompson**, Seabaugh made it clear that she was solely focussed on profits and **profits only**. AT&T Retail is "management by stress" - nothing is ever good enough. It is built to chew through people and burn people out. However we feel about these managers, these cuts are not a good sign for union workers. Whenever the ax is swinging we are in danger. **But CWA 7250 is committed to defending every one of our jobs, fighting store closings and job cuts and aiming to organize the non-union AT&T "authorized retailer" (AR) stores - or drive them out of business.**

## 6. AT&T Techs Push Back Against Job-Cutting Schemes



**(Picture: Holiday UNION Lunch with Twin Cities Legacy T & Wireless Techs)**

AT&T Techs like their union cousins in the Call Centers and Retail stores face constant attacks on their jobs. The most recent forms of attack have been instituting a ticket-vetting system through a center in Ohio - where non-techs are supposed to make decisions on ticket-locator jobs instead of the techs in the field. This system was "tested" in North Dakota and New Mexico last year and has since been trialed in a number of other states. The problems with this are many. First, the reps in Ohio do not know the sites first hand, and instead are relying on maps of varying accuracy. Word is that the number of cables cut doubled in 2022 - and no wonder why. Another issue for Techs that cover wide geographical turf is that they can see tickets that are still pending, they have to decide whether to wait til they're either approved or cleared - or head back to their home base - which could be hours away. This system is inefficient, inaccurate, and likely to cause cuts and other customer-impacting mistakes - but some pencil pusher has decided this will save AT&T money (props to **CWA 7250 Steward Gabriel Perez** in South Dakota for alerting us to this). The other new "innovation" from AT&T - first pointed out to us by Iowa **CWA 7250 Steward Steve Wilson** - is an automated bot, apparently created by David Medovich DM1732, a manager out of Brentwood TN that is clearing "FYI Tickets" from Tech's worklists before they can be reviewed by Techs. We are not taking this lying down - we are communicating with other CWA Locals whose members have been impacted by these measures. CWA Locals in Atlanta and Wilmington DE have filed grievances and 7250 will be doing so also. We are also pushing the CWA national T&T Office to take action against these moves to erode

our jobs. We need a major effort from CWA to organize the countless contractors that have become major players in Telecommunications. Without that, AT&T and the other big Telecom companies will continue to play us against the contractors - shrinking the influence of the union and the power of workers in the industry.

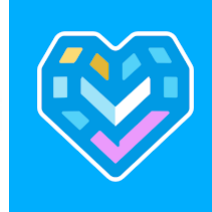
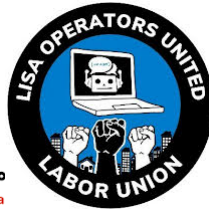
## 7. Tech Workers Organizing Updates

CWA 7250 has been working with three groups of tech workers organizing their (virtual) workplaces. Here are recent organizing reports from all three of the



**Campaign to  
Organize  
Digital  
Employees**

Communications Workers of America



**E-commerce Campaign by Genevieve, Anshu, and Sara:** "We are the staff of [redacted], a new e-commerce platform for political merchandise. We're really excited to have begun our organizing process with CWA! [Redacted] is effectively a tech startup, so **concerns about salary and severance pay in the event of layoffs have been front of mind for us for a while**. Since we all work remote, we've been brainstorming a lot about ways we can use our bargaining process to set boundaries/prevent overwork, disallow any future surveillance attempts, and set up compensation structures for at-home work expenses. It's been interesting to consider solutions for remote-specific issues. We're a small team so far, but we want to get organized before the company starts getting bigger to set the standard for how future employees are treated. Although we're ready for anything, we're hoping for voluntary recognition - and with 100% staff support, we're feeling optimistic. **We are so thankful and honored to be involved with CWA 7250!**"

**Lisa Operators United/AppFolio by Sierra Brown:** "Our last three bargaining sessions with AppFolio have been consumed by two of their proposals. First, they are bringing in five Sitel outsourcing agents for a "Pilot Program" where the agents would train and then work alongside Operators. The second proposal concerns management's intentions to rehire 28 seasonal operators from late December to early March, an unprecedented move for leasing's off season. **We were concerned that these changes would affect our working hours, a scarce resource, not to mention how it would affect our morale; we'll be working amongst potential scabs and potential replacements**. We negotiated a shift availability medium, priority drafting for permanent operators, and the ability to be matched with more shifts each week. They rejected our request to participate in training of Sitel agents, and they rejected our request for a holiday bonus, though they said they may be willing to include the bonus in a severance package. We have not yet submitted a counterproposal to management regarding outsourcing, and AppFolio's lawyers have continued to apply pressure. **We've been having conversations with our members and preparing for a media campaign**. We'll be putting the decision on how to respond to outsourcing to a vote. We're slotted to discuss it at our next bargaining session, January 11th."

**Activision, by Gabbi Pierce, CWA 7250 Organizer:** "Last week, a group of Quality Assurance (QA) testers at Activision delivered a letter (<https://actionnetwork.org/forms/a-letter-from-the-qa-employees>) to management signed by over 100 workers demanding an end to the practice of requiring QA workers to meet bug quotas under the threat of disciplinary action. Workers also demanded a meeting with management, and a progressive discipline policy that has at least 2 steps before termination. This action is part of an ongoing organizing effort at Activision Blizzard King (ABK) to win unionization, secure better working conditions, and demonstrate that QA workers are an integral part of the company who have a right to be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve."

## 8. Michelle Richardson Takes Over as Tower AVP



**Michelle Richardson**, long-time steward at the AT&T Call Center stepped up to be Area Vice-President after **Charli Haataja** and **Angela Bates** stepped down to leave the company. Michelle was nominated by Angie Bates and approved unanimously at the November Executive Board Meeting and then again unanimously at the November Membership meeting. Michelle has jumped right in and is coordinating grievances and standing up to the company's false "data" justifications for the cancelled Christmas Eve half-day. (Angie Bates has decided not to leave the company just yet - and will remain active as a steward and co-chair of the Local's Human Rights Committee. She joked that her reign as AVP was shorter than even the British Prime Ministers). **Michelle and local officers plan on convening monthly assemblies with info updates and Q&A on the first Tuesday of every month at the Call Center.** Michelle can be reached at [michelle.richardson@att.com](mailto:michelle.richardson@att.com).

## 9. Local 7250 Pushes CWA T&T for Changes



Our Local sent a strong delegation to the CWA T&T conference in early December. T&T is the Telecommunications and Technologies sector of CWA covering the smaller and independent Telecom contracts, including the AT&T Legacy T Contract covering a majority of CWA 7250 members. Our Local has been unimpressed with T&T's extension of the 2018 contract (we voted NO, overwhelmingly), lack of leadership on WFH, and long backlog of grievances to be heard. We went to the Conference not as a vacation, but on a mission to make connections with other Locals and activists and to push T&T for changes. Our delegation included Local President **Kieran Knutson**, the AVPs over our Legacy T groups **Sean McCawley** (Techs), and **Michelle Richardson** (Call Center), and South Dakota Network Tech and new Steward **Gabriel Perez**. **Shari Wojtowicz**, CWA 7250 Steward, CWA Minnesota State Council President, and Secretary-Treasurer of the CWA Ad hoc group was also at the conference. Our delegation made many good connections and helped get the T&T office to make several important commitments:

- to host a monthly call with Locals with T&T members
- to follow-up on WFH with CWA
- to get the Alliance joint education/program back on track
- to fully staff the T&T union committees that interface with the company
- to address the Techs issues of ticket-vetting/bot-clearing with the company

We will hold T&T to these commitments - and help the work along. In addition we participated in the on-going, member driven T&T **National Mobilization Committee** and helped convene a meeting of Techs present at the conference to strengthen communication and discuss ongoing issues

## 10. AT&T Corruption Exposed - One Law for Them and Another One for Us



In a major story that mostly passed under the radar, AT&T agreed to pay a \$23 million fine to resolve a federal probe into its illegal efforts to influence former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, who also faces new charges in the scheme. Under the agreement, the company admits that it arranged to make payments to an associate of Madigan, who was one of the state's most powerful political figures at the time, in exchange for Madigan's help in pushing through legislation favorable to the company. This isn't the first time AT&T's willingness to bribe officials has come to light. Back in 2018 AT&T was forced to admit that they had brought then Trump-lawyer Michael Cohen bags of cash on four occasions that totaled some \$200,000.00. No one from AT&T was ever charged or put on trial for these crimes. We wonder what Asset Protection thinks . . . SMDH.

**AT&T Illinois to pay \$23 million to settle corruption probe related to bribing former politician (10/14/2022)**

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/14/att-illinois-to-pay-23-million-to-settle-corruption-probe.html>

**AT&T confirms it paid Trump lawyer Michael Cohen for 'insights' on administration (05/18/2018)**

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/08/att-confirms-it-paid-trump-lawyer-michael-cohen-for-insights-on-administration.html>

## 11. MN Nurses Win - A Victory for the Working Class



This week, the Minnesota Nurses Association announced that their members had voted overwhelmingly to ratify an agreement covering 15 hospitals in the Twin Cities and Twin Ports. The new contracts provide raises of 18% over 3 years in the Cities (& 17% in the Ports) and new language giving nurses a say in staffing numbers. The agreement means that nurses will not have to walk the picket lines in December as they were prepared to do. The nurses won these contracts with DETERMINATION - 9 months of bargaining!; TRANSPARENCY (their **open bargaining means any member can come observe the negotiation sessions**); MILITANCY - **a 3-day strike this summer and members approving a 3-week strike for December**, incl Xmas & New Years; UNITY - holding bargaining groups together representing 15 hospitals across the state. CWA 7250 is proud of the part we played in bolstering the Nurses picket lines back in September. The Nurses willingness and ability to strike was key to winning what they did. If we are going to make real gains in Telecom and other industries represented by CWA, we will need to be able to mount serious strike threats - and shut down employers when necessary.

## 12. Solidarity Against Cancer



Our union sister - **Marcia Spring**, CWA 7250 member at DirecTV - is facing a battle with cancer. "On October 21st, 2022, Marcia was diagnosed with pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma. Despite the devastating news, early test results have been promising and the cancer does not appear to have spread beyond the pancreas. We are using this page to keep family and friends informed as Marcia begins chemotherapy and undergoes surgery. **If you would like to help Marcia and Stu financially, please consider donating to Marcia's Venmo: @Marcia-Spring.** We appreciate your support and words of hope and encouragement." You can visit Marcia's CaringBridge for Updates here: <https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/marciaspring15>

### 13. Union-Discounted Self-Defense Classes



Long-time CWA 7250 Member, and U.S. Air Force veteran **Daniel Hamilton** has been running a small business teaching firearm safety and skills. He is offering a generous discount for Local union members on introductory classes, permit to carry classes, and more advanced marksman classes. Daniel is State of Minnesota & DNR Certified for Instruction. Contact him directly for classes - and mention your CWA 7250 membership for the discount. **Hamilton Firearms Academy LLC: 612-202-1074 [hamiltond1172@gmail.com](mailto:hamiltond1172@gmail.com)** Thank you Daniel!

### 14. Next Membership Meeting



CWA Local 7250's next Membership Meeting is **Wednesday, January 18th at 7pm** via Zoom. All members may attend, speak, and vote. Please come and encourage your co-workers to attend as well. **Your Dues - Your Decisions - Your UNION**



**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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