

**CWA 7250**

Kieran Knutson &lt;kieran.knutson@cwa7250.org&gt;

**CWA 7250 Union Update - January 2023**Kieran Knutson <kieran.knutson@cwa7250.org>  
To: Union Officers <union@cwa7250.org>

Mon, Jan 23, 2023 at 8:51 PM

# CWA 7250 Union Update - January 2023

## Happy New Year! Remember Martin Luther King!

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

2023 & the Challenges Ahead - New Unit Joins CWA 7250! & More Organizing Updates - OSHA Snap Invespection - Grievance Report - Local Asks for Bargaining on Weather Days - Martin Luther King, Jr.: Labor Martyr - NFL Players' Work-Action Ends Game - Solidarity vs In-Fighting - **RED** Thursday - January Membership Meeting

### 1. 2023 and the Challenges Ahead



The new year brings new challenges big and small that we will have to collectively face together, if we are to keep our union jobs and continue to build working-class power. We have to be honest: in each of our represented Areas we face potential threats of job reductions: The AT&T Call Center has been shrinking since the forced return to the office, and management's attitude towards the union and our members shows that on purpose; our AT&T Techs face threats of automation and outsourcing to contractors; our retail stores are vulnerable to more closings/flipping to non-union Authorized Retailers; and DirecTV's pretend separation from AT&T makes our members more vulnerable. AT&T CEO John Stankey's comments to Wall Street investors that he worries wages for workers were going up too much - shows you what we're up against.

But it's not just the corporations who we face - too often the national CWA leadership hampers our ability to fight. CWA leaders were slow and ineffective to fight for WFH - same with the retail store closings, and now the effort to take tickets away from our Techs. CWA never should have accepted the fiction of the "sale" of DirecTV. Our grievances stall out too often at District 7 and the T&T office - stuck there for months without action. The Legacy T contract extension was an abdication of responsibility - a total failure to take advantage of the moment. The Orange Mobility contract would have been greatly strengthened by organizing a credible strike threat. Instead of organizing our own power, the union leaders are totally oriented towards the politicians.

The country is still divided and ruled by two bosses' parties who both work for the billionaires and defend their system. Women's freedom took a massive hit with the Supreme Court's attack on abortion rights and reproductive freedom. Killings by police actually reached a record high in 2022. The climate crisis has yet to be seriously addressed, and the results are apparent to all who have their eyes open. A significant section of the political class openly favors dictatorship and flirts with fascism, while another section works hard with words and false promises to co-opt labor and other movements to render us harmless. But not everything is grim . . .

The younger generation is the most pro-union ever, driving campaigns at Amazon, Starbucks, Apple, and other huge corporations. Powerful movements like Occupy and Black Lives Matter will continue to emerge. Strikes like at John Deere will become more common. More and more people see the system that we live under for what it is - exploitive, oppressive, and deadly. **Our Local has made some modest contributions towards building working-class power** - we have built strong steward networks in every area we represent. We have organized strong actions at DirecTV, the

Retail stores, and at the Tower. We got over 8K AT&T workers to sign our WFH petition - and gained significant media attention. We have spoken up, criticized, and brought constructive proposals to push CWA to stand up for our members. We are meeting more CWA Locals who see some things similarly as we do. And we have given unwavering solidarity to other unions standing up, like the teachers and the nurses.

In 2023 we will need to organize even stronger, get more people involved - we need everyone's ideas, energy, and commitment. We will need to push back hard when the bosses try to run over our rights and our future. We will need to build a stronger current within the CWA, with other Locals and members who are ready to fight. We need to develop stronger ties with other unions and community groups in the inner-cities, suburbs, and rural areas. We will need to try and re-orient workers away from putting our hopes in politicians, and towards our own power and direct action. We will need to study, strategize, discuss, and debate with as many workers as possible on the road forward. If you've got the time and energy - we need you - and we all need a strong union.

## 2. New Unit Joins CWA 7250! & More Organizing Updates



**GoodStock:** The full staff of three at the progressive e-commerce company Goodstock unanimously decided to unionize and ask their bosses for voluntary recognition. Last week, the workers, (**Anshu, Genevieve, and Sara**) sent a letter to management announcing their intention to join CWA, "We believe that a union is crucial for creating a workplace environment where all current and future employees of Goodstock feel heard and respected. . .". The company responded positively, stating that they support the workers right to unionize and "look forward to working through the voluntary recognition" with them. While this is a small unit - it is already growing and it represents our first solid toe-hold in the internet/e-commerce industry. These workers are dedicated and smart - we will have as much to learn from them as they will from us. **Welcome GoodStock Workers!**

**QAMN Report:** Quality Assurance workers at ABK (Activision-Blizzard-King) in Minnesota are gearing up to make 2023 a massive year for organizing. Management responded to their demand letter regarding bug quotas and performance improvement plans with dismissal and rejection, but it has only added more fuel to the fire of the campaign by moving more workers into agitation and a readiness to take action and grow an even bigger base of collective power. As that energy scales, things are gearing up to make 2023 the year that QAMN (Quality Assurance Minnesota) workers secure massive wins for their campaign, and add major milestones to the broader movement of workers organizing across the video game industry. - **Gabbi Pierce, CWA 7250 Staff Organizer**

**AppFolio/Lisa Operators United:** Lisa Operators United's membership has decided to move forward with bargaining on outsourcing. At our next bargaining session, Wednesday, January 11th, we'll ask questions about AppFolio's outsourcing timeline and the possibility for positions in other departments. We'll stress the necessity of pushing back the outsourcing month outlined in their proposal from April to sometime much later. We'll also request that they come back with an increased severance offer; we weren't happy with that part of their proposal either. It sucked! We will fight with AppFolio to make the best of their bad decision. We're continuing to strategize on how to bring our stories to the media so that other workers can learn from our experience. We want Lisa workers to feel as supported as possible and in as many ways as possible. We're also coordinating a panel of previous Lisa workers to learn how we can market our job experiences to other positions. - **Sierra Brown, LOU Bargaining Committee**

### 3. OSHA Snap Inspection at AT&T Tower



At about 10:00am on December 28th we got word that the Tower's management team had just been notified that a Minnesota OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) investigator had arrived for an inspection - and they were in panic mode. (The Director was out on vacation, so her immediate subordinates dealt with it). About 10:15am management notified the union that the OSHA inspector wanted to speak with the union officers and stewards in the 12th floor Conference Room. So ten CWA 7250 officers and stewards, and three B-band-level managers along with an AT&T EH&S manager from California (on the phone) met together with **MN OSHA inspector Riley Knox** in the conference room.

Mr. Knox, the safety inspector (and previously a safety inspector in the U.S. Navy) was straight-forward. OSHA had received a complaint that some employees were entering the workplace with COVID to avoid attendance discipline. He stated that inquiries to the company from OSHA had been met with inadequate responses from the company, and that's why he had come. He requested information from the company concerning the facility, employees, and company safety trainings including what he called a mandatory MN safety training, named AWARE - which management claimed they were unaware of. Inspector Knox stated that he would inspect the company's bulletin boards to see if the company's safety notifications and reporting obligations were in order. Accompanied by management and **CWA 7250 AVP Michelle Richardson**, Mr. Knox found several mandatory safety information posters that were out of date. He noted that the "DO NOT ENTER if you have a fever, coughing, etc" signs seemed hidden away, and that the sign posted at the entry on 9th floor had a QR code that did not lead you anywhere.

After the "walk-around" inspection, the union had an opportunity to talk to the inspector (without management present) and provided him information about the company's unwise, unsafe, and in some cases illegal policies regarding COVID-19 specifically. We especially zeroed in on the fact that absences due to quarantining with COVID-19 or COVID symptoms were being counted as chargeable absences and in several cases being disciplined. We stated that our research showed this was a violation of MN Statute 144.4196, and the Minnesota Department of Health's own public explanation of the law, "Employers should also be aware that Minnesota Statutes, section 144.4196 provides protections when people stay home during an isolation or quarantine period recommended by the Minnesota Department of Health, or who have responsibility for the care of a person (minor or certain adults) who is subject to isolation or quarantine. Employers are prohibited from taking adverse employment actions against employees covered by the statute, including discharge, discipline, threatening, or penalizing a qualifying employee, or otherwise discriminating in the work terms, conditions, location, or privileges of the employee."

Before meeting separately with management the OSHA inspector stated that after receiving and going through requested information from the Company (and any further information from the Union) that he would write up a report that could include recommendations, violation citations, or referrals to other Departments, such as the Minnesota Department of Health. All in all, we spent about 3.5 hours meeting with OSHA. We do not know what the company's representatives discussed with Mr. Knox in their private meeting - but we know in general, what the company's public positions are - basically that the MN state law does not apply to us and does not apply to them.

As always, we will keep fighting and pushing for the best interests of our members - safety and otherwise - because that is our job. But remember there is strength in numbers - your voice, your participation, your ideas matter. Bringing a strong steward force into that meeting was a strong sign to the company and OSHA that we are serious - but we have to keep pushing and keep building. That is our only real strength and the only thing the company is truly scared of. **UPDATE:** The OSHA investigator has indicated that he is writing up his report which may include recommendations, citations, and/or referrals to other agencies.

### 4. Grievance Report



Pending

Our Local ended the year with a flurry of grievances covering denials of WFH job accommodations, unjust terminations in retail, cancelling an attendance tool at DTV, failure to pay members for time moving work equipment, and the cancelling of past practice of half-day holiday on the last work day before Christmas . . . Here's the full Grievance Report:

### DirectTV

- Open Grievance: Past Practice - company cancelled Life Happens attendance tool after agreeing not to in bargaining. (1st Step)

### AT&T Retail/VCC

- Open Grievance: Unjust Termination - Positive Drug Test. Company not asserting member was impaired, and failed to provide key information in RFI response. (1st Step)
- Open Grievance: Unjust Termination - Attendance. Member was out with COVID symptoms that triggered termination. Company violating MN State law (1st Step)
- Appealed Grievance: Unjust Discipline for "customer mistreatment" - Member tried to help irate customer, was put on a Final Warning (Appealed to District 7 since 6/21/22)
- Closed Grievance: Unjust Discipline - Attendance. Member given Final written warning with no previous discipline steps. (Member quit AT&T after grievance appealed to D7 on 10/11/22)
- Grievance WIN: Missing Raise, retro pay, title bump. Company had tried to deny Retail worker forced into VCC, raise, retro pay, and title bump. Grievance settled after company relented.

### AT&T Techs

Company Refused to Meet: Recover missed raise, lost vacation. Member out on leave due to workplace injury when raises kicked in and carry-over vacation expired. Company claims timeframe.

Pending: Bargained work taken away. AT&T Tickets being closed out in Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota by bots and service center. (Hope to file 1st steps next week)

Reviewing: Claims of seniority violations in one area (Reviewing this week)

### AT&T Tower Call Center

6 Open Grievances: Discrimination; Mutual Respect - Job Accommodation Denials. WFH accommodations denied despite doctors order and medically certified by AT&T (1st & 2nd Step)

Open Grievance: Unjust and illegal discipline - Covid-related absence. Company violating MN State Law 144.4196 (1st Step - company out of compliance with timeframe; escalated)

Appealed Grievance: Past Practice - Unilateral cancelling Xmas eve half-day. Company cancelled traditional 30+ years past practice (Appealed to T&T Office 12/09/22)

Appealed Grievance: Unpaid Work Time. Company did not pay members for time taken to move work equipment back as part of RTO (Appealed to T&T Office 12/19/22)

Appealed Grievance: Article 20 & 22 Violations - Vacation snatching. Company using vacation days w/o permission to cover absences (Appealed to T&T Office since 05/10/22)

Appealed Grievance: Unjust Suspension - Medical Reporting. Vaccinated member did not want to share medical info re: vaccine (Grievance being appealed to national President/Convention)

2 Appealed Grievances: Access to Alliance - Pre-paid tuition. Company refusing to allow Alliance funds for pre-paid tuition and other previous programs (Appealed to T&T Office 10/22/21)

Appealed Grievance: Discrimination; Mutual Respect - Vaccine Mandate. (Appealed to T&T Office 03/17/22)

- Grievance Settled: Job Accommodation - Member accepted company's offer to move out to empty Bloomington Office

In addition: members have filed complaints with the MN Dept of Human Rights re: Job Accommodation Denials; with OSHA re: discipline for COVID-related absences; with NLRB for past practice violations.

## **5. Local Asks for Bargaining on Weather Days**



After multiple dangerous weather days in December and January - and AT&T's and DirecTV's inconsistent and chaotic responses, the CWA 7250 Executive Board voted to request bargaining with the employer(s) towards a Local agreement setting some standards in place to protect member safety and provide some common sense consistency in how "weather days" are called and covered. Yesterday, the following request was sent to AT&T and DirecTV management, from the Local President: "Hello - The CWA Local 7250 Executive Board has voted to direct me to request bargaining towards a local agreement regarding Weather Days - including agreed upon triggers for excused Weather Days, thresholds for closing the office, and access to paid options. We have a proposal ready and could meet any time to discuss. Would you be willing to meet and discuss? Thank you,"

We will share the responses from the employers as soon as we get them . . .

## 6. MLK: "I Have Been to the Mountaintop"



*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., marching with striking Memphis sanitation workers, 1968*

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is now a paid holiday for all AT&T and DTV workers, thanks to the Minneapolis Uprising and the Union. In honor of MLK, take 45 minutes from your day to hear King's last speech - and one of his greatest - given in Memphis in 1968 while supporting the militant sanitation workers strike there. King was assassinated the next day. "I Have Been to the Mountaintop", as it's come to be known, is a soaring call to understand our ability to make history and our obligation to always give solidarity to those cast away and struggling no matter the risks - and finally that living a life of solidarity and helping build the road to freedom, allows one to face death without fear or regret. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixfwGLxRJU8>

## 7. NFL Players Force Game to Stop After Heart Attack



Millions of football fans watched in shock as Damar Hamlin, a safety for the Buffalo Bills, collapsed on the field and had to be given CPR twice before being rushed away in an ambulance during a Monday Night Football game on January 2nd against the Cincinnati Bengals. Initially, the NFL attempted to rush the players back into re-starting the game - but players from both teams contacted their union, and with the backing of their coaches, told the NFL that after this traumatic event they would not continue to play that night. For more on this workers action - see "The NFL Just Showed the World What it Thinks of Its Players", by **the great pro-union sportswriter Dave Zirin**, in the Nation:

*"But the players and coaches on the Bengals and Bills had seen enough and they refused to "play." While the league was still twiddling its thumbs, coaches were meeting, players were getting dressed, and, at their behest, the game would be postponed. It's important to note that the league only called the game after player reps from both teams contacted the union, the **NFLPA**, which informed the league that the game was done. This was a workplace action. Participants exercised their collective power and demanded that their trauma, their grief, their very humanity be recognized."* <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/nfl-damar-hamlin-buffalo-bills-cincinnati-bengals/>

## 8. Infighting vs. Solidarity



An issue that always seems to come around is the issue of infighting among co-workers. So, look, we're not all gonna get along. We're not all gonna like each other. We're gonna argue and be rude at times. But we can't let that normal human interaction stuff turn into a toxic environment where workers are constantly fighting amongst each other, being petty, looking to get over on each other, or snitching. That dog-eat-dog stuff is everything that a union is supposed to stand against. When we fight like that - we divide up our power and make ourselves weaker and the boss stronger. We don't have to always like each other, but we have to respect each other. Respect each other as co-workers, fellow union members, working-class people struggling to take care of ourselves and our families, and just respect each other as human beings. This isn't something that the union can just make happen - we can't just pass a motion telling everyone to respect each other. It's something that each of us has to choose to do ourselves. We may need to model what it looks like for people that aren't used to looking out for others. But we have to have each others backs and each others respect - or else we've got nothing.

## 9. Remember to Wear **RED** (and/or CWA gear) on Union Thursday



On Thursdays, all members are encouraged to wear **RED** (and/or other CWA gear in workplaces where you can't wear union T-shirts, etc). The CWA wears red on Thursdays as an expression of unity, a show of strength, and in memory of the sacrifices of those that came before us. The tradition started as a sign of solidarity in 1989 when NYNEX employees were out on strike for 17 weeks. During the strike Gerry Horgan, CWA Chief Steward for Local 1103, in Westchester County, NY, was hit and killed by a car driven by a scab worker. 1103 wore red for the first time in Unity for Gerry. At his funeral, a line of thousands of CWA members wearing red stretched for more than a mile along the route to the church. For more information see: **Let's Talk - Why We Wear Red** <https://youtu.be/1lbnkxsxA1w>

To promote this tradition and to encourage our members to flaunt our union swag, CWA 7250 holds a prize-drawing every Thursday afternoon. All members who post a picture of themselves (or co-workers) wearing red or CWA gear by 3:00pm will be entered into the drawing. Pictures must be posted to the CWA 7250 facebook page; or the private 7250 Mobilization facebook group page, or by emailing the picture to [union@cwa7250.org](mailto:union@cwa7250.org).

## 10. January Membership Meeting



Please join us tomorrow evening, **Wednesday, January 18th at 7:00pm** for our bi-monthly CWA Local 7250 Membership Meeting via Zoom.

**Union Hall Zoom** (Short link <http://bit.ly/7250zoom> )

or Dial In:

1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 997 4252 9121

Passcode: 000794

Door Prizes at this Meeting: Three \$50.00 Cub Grocery cards and five \$10.00 Cub Grocery cards (or if no Cub in your area, another unionized grocery)

Meeting will include Old and New Business + Reports

DirectTV Call Center

AT&T Tower Call Center

AT&T Technicians

AT&T Retail Stores

CWA 7250 Organizing Projects

CWA 7250 Committees

Bring your questions, ideas, and proposals!

**Members Audit will take place IN-PERSON ONLY just prior to the Members Meeting at the Union Office 6pm:  
312 Central Ave SE STE 369, Minneapolis MN 55414**

## **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.*

--

[cwa7250.org](http://cwa7250.org) | [fb.com/CWA7250](https://fb.com/CWA7250) | [twitter.com/CWA7250](https://twitter.com/CWA7250)

**Text CWA7250 to 33339 | Union Strong App: <https://unionstrong.app.link/cwa7250>**