

CWA 7250 Union Update - March 2023

Happy International Women's Day! Happy St. Patrick's Day! Ramadan Mubarak!

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

March Membership Meeting - Power Struggle in CWA? No Business As Usual - Candidates for CWA National Office Statements - New Units Join CWA 7250 - AT&T Union Store Closes in Fairmont, MN - AT&T Refuses to Bargain Weather Days - Mass Organizing Campaign Needed - Solidarity with Trans Community - Grievance Updates - Scholarship Deadline - **RED** Thursday

1. CWA 7250 Membership Meeting!



This Wednesday, March 15th 7:00pm
Union Hall Zoom (Short link <http://bit.ly/7250zoom>)
or Dial In:
1 312 626 6799
Meeting ID: 997 4252 9121
Passcode: 000794

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

2. Power Struggle in CWA? No More Business As Usual



The following motion will be brought to the Membership Meeting on Wednesday for discussion and vote:

Motion: *CWA 7250 will send the following draft statement to sympathetic friends and allies within the union to seek their feedback and co-signature; and that CWA 7250 will circulate the final statement (with as many co-signers as possible) after approval by the CWA 7250 Executive Board, no later than April 15th 2023.*

Draft Statement: **CWA Presidential Election - NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL**

Last month, CWA International President Chris Shelton announced his retirement from the union after more than 50 years of service. We thank Chris for all of his activity and wish him the best.

His departure offers an important opportunity for the members of CWA to take stock of where we are at and where we have to go. Already two notable union leaders, CWA District 6 Vice President Claude Cummings and CWA International Secretary-Treasurer Sara Steffens have announced their candidacies for next President - and others may join them in the race.

We believe that this election should be about ideas, plans, and program - not personalities. In that spirit, instead of endorsing a candidate, we are putting forward a list of priorities that we feel must be taken up to put our union on the right footing. We can't wait any longer - we have to rebuild our organization so that we can effectively fight for the interests of our members and the whole working-class. Half-measures will not cut it.

We look forward to the candidates' responses to these priorities - we want to hear specifically how they would address them. And just as importantly we want to hear what the Locals and members think - and what they would add to this list. If you would like to sign on to this list - let us know!

Our Urgent Priorities

1. Listen to the Members

Last year at the insistence of our members, our Local organized a campaign to keep the Work From Home (WFH) option at AT&T. Our members found that WFH was safer, saved them money on commuting and childcare, gave them more time with their families and more time for rest, and more control of their work space. With the support of a few dother Locals and some stewards and activist members from across the country we were able to organize actions, get major media attention (CBS Morning News, Fortune, The Guardian) and circulate a petition signed by more than 8,000 AT&T workers and their families - we did all of this without the help of our national union. The union has gotten so used to a top-down model where leaders tell the members what's important that it can't be of use when members are telling the leaders what's important. Listen to the Members!

2. Grievances Heard Within 60 Days

Our Local has grievances that have been waiting for months and months - even more than a year to be heard at the District or Sector level. This lack of movement stalls any momentum

from the local grievance and lets management know they can deny at first step and then it will effectively disappear. Other Locals tell us they have the same problem - or worse. It's not uncommon for workers to leave the job while waiting for grievances to be resolved. This only breeds frustration, distrust and cynicism among rank & file members towards the union. This tar pit is doing damage to our union - it must change ASAP or we need to stop pretending that the grievance process is a real way to protect our rights. The expectation should be that all escalated grievances are heard within 60 days at the District or Sector level.

3. Mass Organizing Campaign

AT&T has whittled down its unionized stores to around 20% of its retail presence - the other big wireless telecom companies' stores are nearly entirely non-union. This can't go on. CWA 7250 sounded the alarm that AT&T was attacking our membership with impunity and got the first CWA national day of action against AT&T's non-union A/R stores - but we need much more. The CWA-organized stores at AT&T were an important foothold for unions in retail - but instead of using that as a springboard to further organize retail - AT&T has attacked the union presence by setting up "authorized retailers" run by ex-AT&T management and directly answerable to AT&T. We need to take them on with money, staffing, resources, and a strategy - we need to organize AT&T's non-union "authorized retailers" and then organize Verizon, T-Mobile, Boost and every other wireless retail operation. We also have to start taking on and organizing the non-union sub-contracting of tech work happening all across the telecom industry. Organize all of Retail! Organize all the Techs!

4. Open Bargaining

Open bargaining means that contracts are negotiated with transparency for the membership that will have to live under them. Instead of being scared of open bargaining, the union should embrace it as a powerful mobilizing tool. Let the members see what we are fighting for at the bargaining table and what the companies are trying to low-ball or take away. Last year in Minnesota, the powerful nurses' union won significant gains for 15,000 members across a dozen hospitals using open bargaining. Nurses were able to directly follow the negotiations, there was tremendous trust between the members and the bargaining teams, and rank & file nurses mobilized at key times to put pressure on management at the table. Open Bargaining ensures transparency, builds trust, and exposes the companies.

5. Build Our Independent Power

CWA brags about its political work and influence, but much of it is just a blank check to the politicians. Both political parties are beholden to the corporations and the billionaires - neither one of them are loyal to working-class communities. Instead of tailing after politicians, giving them our money and energy, let's use our strength - combined with other unions and community groups, to fight for our interests. Look at what's happening in France where the government is trying to raise the retirement age - Unions aren't begging and lobbying - they are taking to the streets saying "No Business As Usual", and threatening a general strike. While here in the U.S., when the President attacked railroad workers' right to strike, CWA was silent. Let's use OUR power, not rely on the politicians.

6. Strike to Win - Defy Injustice

In 2021 our Local presented a motion to the CWA Convention for the union to create a committee that would study, plan, and prepare for a strike across AT&T. President Shelton and

his lawyer wrongly ruled our resolution out of order for being unconstitutional (it wasn't). Right now, the union has NO plan to overcome the division and legal obstacles that AT&T's dozen contracts with CWA create. If we are not to be forever divided (and weak) we need to be able to strike across contracts and expiration dates - we need to be able to shut down AT&T - and that takes organizing, planning and preparing. The Civil Rights movement in the U.S. took on legal injustice - we need to do so as well. It is the absolute responsibility of any union to be able to make plans and preparations to lead successful strikes if necessary.

3. CWA National Candidates' Statements **[Updated]**



With CWA International President **Chris Shelton** announcing his retirement, ~~two~~ 3 notable union leaders have announced their campaigns to replace him: CWA District 6 Vice President **Claude Cummings**, CWA International Secretary-Treasurer **Sara Steffens** and District 2-13 Vice-President **Ed Mooney**. ~~There are rumors that CWA District 2-13 Vice President Ed Mooney may also be running, but he has made no announcement yet.~~ For the first time ever - there is no Presidential candidate out of the powerful (and controlling) District 1 of CWA including NY, NJ and New England. This should make the race more wide open. Meanwhile, Assistant to the President, **Ameenah Salaam** has announced her candidacy for the Secretary-Treasurer position. **Lisa Bolton** has also announced her re-election campaign for Vice-President over the T&T (Telecommunications and Technologies) office, and Earnest Tilley, Executive Vice-President of Local 6215 in Dallas TX for the CWA Diversity At-Large Central Region seat on the Executive Board.

Claude Cummings for President campaign:

<https://claudeforpresident.com/>

Sara Steffens for President campaign:

<https://www.cwaworkerpower.org/>

Ed Mooney for President campaign:

https://actionnetwork.org/user_files/user_files/000/089/776/original/Mooney_for_President_Announcement.pdf

Ameenah Salaam for Secretary-Treasurer campaign:

<https://www.ameenahsalaam.com/>

Lisa Bolton for Vice President of Telecommunications and Technologies campaign:

https://actionnetwork.org/user_files/user_files/000/089/749/original/LBforVP_final_3.20.23.pdf

Earnest Tilley for CWA Diversity At-Large Central Region campaign:

https://actionnetwork.org/user_files/user_files/000/089/435/original/Earnest_Tilley_CWA_Diversity_At-Large_Central_Region.pdf

4. New Units Joining CWA 7250



Two new units have secured voluntary recognition agreements and are set to join CWA 7250 as soon as collective bargaining agreements are agreed to. **GoodStock** is a small e-commerce company supporting progressive political campaigns. Bargaining has already begun with the Iowa-based company and the GoodStock workers have made some exciting and innovative demands - including refusal to take on clients pushing racist and misogynist campaigns. The other forthcoming agreement is with **SassafraS** - a worker-owned technology cooperative specializing in web/app design and development for social justice organizations, non-profits, academics, artists, and others.

Bringing in two groups of work-from-home tech workers from outside our traditional Telecom/Satellite TV industry footprint is both exciting and a challenge. We will need to be creative and open in learning the ins and outs of these new jobs - and ensuring the participation of their members and representation within the union - while maintaining and strengthening our structures in AT&T and DirecTV. We are hopeful that the GoodStock and SassafraS groups will just be the beginning of a whole Technology Area in our Local.

Organizing also continues at the **Quality Assurance MN** department of the video game maker **Activision Blizzard** - whose workers are now facing a forced return to the office (sound familiar?). This is a very large group (approx 600 workers) with a more hostile employer, but the organizing is moving forward.

5. AT&T Union Store Closes in Fairmont, MN



On February 17th we were informed by CWA District 7 that AT&T would be announcing the closing of its retail store in Fairmont, MN - a small town near the Iowa border. The store will close at the end of this week, with all employees offered spots at the Mankato store. The company claims they will not flip this store to a non-union "authorized retailer" like they have with so many others like Apple Valley, West St. Paul, and Rochester.

The new corporate leadership over Minnesota wireless retail did not reach out to the union for any of the meetings about this closure - but they have been quick to fire four retail workers in the last few months - most on pretty dubious grounds. Requests for Information responses for

grievances have been arrogantly incomplete. It has not been a good start for this new corporate team in charge here. But we are not going to just hope and pray that they become nicer. We are fighting every injustice, and preparing for a wider struggle against store closings and to organize the A/R stores.

6. AT&T Refuses to Bargain Weather Days



With winter storms hitting the upper-Midwest as usual, and AT&T making illogical and inconsistent decisions from Dallas TX about what days would be excused as weather days - CWA 7250 requested that the AT&T Call Center in Minneapolis and the AT&T Retail Stores in Minnesota bargain some consistent, fair, common-sense rules about when work days could be excused because of weather. The union was going to request that school closures or delays make days eligible for unpaid/excused weather days and that when public transportation is suspended or cancelled that the days become paid/excused days - with paid-time-off credit for anyone that makes it into work.

Both the Call Center Director and the Retail Director of Sales sent our request off to AT&T Corporate and both forwarded the same reply: "**The Company has no interest in meeting and will continue to maintain its management rights in this regard.**" Just remember this when the company talks about "partnership" and "appreciation" . . .

7. CWA 7250 Will Propose Mass Organizing Drive to Wireless Conference



In April a delegation of Stewards and Officers from our Local will travel to Providence RI for CWA's national Wireless Conference. Local President **Kieran Knutson**, Area Vice-President for Retail and VCC **Larry Thompson**, Executive Board Member-at-Large (and Mobility

Tech) **Dave Bennett**, St. Cloud store steward **Traci Doll**, and Arbor Lakes store steward **Nick Stryker** (who won a national scholarship to attend) will represent the Local at the talks, forums, and formal and informal meetings. We will not be there as tourists - one of our goals is to win CWA to a commitment to a mass organizing campaign to unionize AT&T's "authorized/retailer" stores and non-union tech sub-contractors.

Only this kind of drive has the possibility of reversing the decline of CWA in wireless and becoming a springboard to organize in Verizon, T-Mobile, Boost and other companies' retail stores. Likewise, sub-contracting tech work across telecom is an ongoing threat to the union. It is time for the union to put its muscle (money, resources, staffing, strategy) into organizing these sectors. It's organize-or-go-home time!

8. Solidarity with Trans Community



The following statement was unanimously passed by the CWA 7250 Executive board on March 8th 2023:

"An Injury to One is An Injury to All - Solidarity Against Anti-Trans Attacks and Scapegoating

CWA 7250 stands strongly in solidarity with our Trans members and with all working-class Trans people and the Trans community generally.

Right-wing politicians and fascist thugs have been escalating a hate campaign against trans people - attacking their freedoms and right to exist. This has led to a growing environment of threats and violence - just last month there was a brutal attack on a Trans woman at the Lake Street light rail station in Minneapolis.

Just like CWA 7250 stands against racism, sexism, and homophobia - we will stand against all attempts to attack, scapegoat, and divide people against Trans people. We will have our Trans members' backs, encourage all members to stand up against transphobia, mobilize in defense of the Trans community and encourage other unions to do so as well."

9. Grievance Updates



As usual we continue to find violations of our members' rights at AT&T Legacy T, AT&T Mobility, and DirecTV - In 2023 we have opened grievances for:

- Diminishment of Tech work in Nebraska
- Unjust discipline in Baxter, MN Retail
- Unjust Termination in Minnetonka, MN Retail
- Past Practice Violation concerning "Weather Days" at the Minneapolis Call Center
- Incentive Changes at the Minneapolis Call Center

We have grievances from 2022 and 2023 at the T&T Office and District 7 Office, including:

DirectTV:

- Unilateral cancelling of Life Happens Attendance Tool (D7)

AT&T Retail:

- Termination - Drug Test (D7)
- Termination - COVID Absence/Skipped Discipline Steps (D7)

AT&T Call Center:

- Alliance Pre-Paid Tuition (T&T)
- Vaccine Mandate (T&T)
- Vacation Snatching (T&T)
- 6 Job Accommodation Denials (T&T)
- Unpaid Work Time for Moving Equipment (T&T)
- Unilateral Cancelling of Christmas Eve Half-Day (T&T)

In addition, we have a couple other grievances that we are waiting on responses from the company before escalating to District 7 or T&T including COVID absence discipline.

A couple other grievance notes:

- CWA Area Vice-President - AT&T Call Center **Michelle Richardson** and Local President **Kieran Knutson** were able to discuss the backlog of grievances with the T&T office
- and win a commitment from them to schedule grievance meetings with AT&T every

Wednesday until the backlog (our Local and others) are cleared. We will continue to follow-up on this.

- There was a screw up and we failed to appeal a grievance to the CWA President's office that had been denied by District 7 **Susie McAllister**. The grievance concerned privacy violation for requiring the member to share private medical information (vaccine) with management. Per the constitution, the member or the Local could appeal, but the member had asked the Local to do so - and there was a mistake with the timeframe and the Local failed to get it submitted in time. Local President Kieran Knutson has taken responsibility for this unintentional error and apologized to the member.

10. CWA National Scholarship Applications Due Soon!



Sixteen partial college scholarships of \$4,000 each are being offered for the 2023-2024 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 of the scholarship monies.

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

Please fill out the form below to be considered for a Beirne Foundation scholarship. Final deadline for applications is 11:59 p.m., EDT, April 30, 2023.

https://cwa-union.org/pages/beirne_scholarship_application

11. Wear **Red** and/or CWA Gear on Thursdays!



Remember to wear **red** and/or other union gear every Thursday. This is a great show of our strength and unity in the workplace. Please post pictures of you or your co-workers to our private facebook group "7250 mobilization"

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1569823289966612> or send to union@cwa7250.org

Every Thursday afternoon the Local does a drawing for a grocery gift card with the names of all those who have posted photos with red and/or union gear on.

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