

CWA 7250 Union Update



Winter 2023/2024



Membership Meeting: THIS Wednesday, January 17th 2024 at 7:00pm via Zoom

Union Hall Zoom: XXXXXXXXXX

or Dial In: XXXXXXXXXX **Meeting ID:** XXXXXXXXXX **Passcode:** XXXXXXXXXX

Ballots for Member at Large due by 01/24/2024 – Get Your Ballots in Today!

There were issues with the Post Office – If your ballot was returned, PLEASE send it in again!

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

A/R Store Blitz – Local 7250 Elections – MN Sick & Safe Time – Infor Disaster + Save 15 Min Flex! – Rove Bargaining – Sassafras Tech Contract – Organizing – Palestine Solidarity – Mobility WRC – Big WINS – Twin Cities Techs Luncheon – DTV Stewards Meet – Vince Opheim – Martin Luther King Jr.

CWA 7250 Blitzes AT&T's Non-Union Retail Stores!



In early November 2024, CWA Local 7250 activists “blitzed” through all of the 40+ AT&T-branded non-union “Authorized Retailers” in Minnesota from Thief River Falls to Winona in one weekend. The effort was led by **CWA 7250 Retail Stewards** and supported by **CWA District 7**, and collected over 30 worker contacts employed in these non-union stores.

CWA Local 7250 has been sounding the alarm for some time over AT&T's strategy of shutting down unionized retail stores, only to open them back up the next day, supposedly with new outsourced ownership (but the same AT&T branding) and no union. Our Local has organized protests against the closings of union stores in West St. Paul, downtown Minneapolis, and Rochester – and fought for a CWA National Day of Action against AT&T's union-busting.

Across the “blitz” we found appalling conditions in these non-union stores: workers making only \$12/hour; frequently getting their commission reduced or rescinded for not hitting sales goals; often unsafely working by themselves; lack of basic training and support. CWA 7250 will continue to push back at AT&T's attacks on Retail Workers - and fight to expand the union to these non-union stores.

Michelle Richardson Elected CWA 7250 Vice President Vince Opheim Elected AVP for AT&T Call Center - Member at Large in Run-Off



EVP Michelle Richardson & Call Center AVP Vince Opheim

CWA Local 7250 members mainly chose to give the Executive Board three more years of responsibility for carrying out their decisions. Incumbents President **Kieran F. Knutson**, Secretary-Treasurer **Chad Perkins**, Area Vice-President (Technicians) **Sean McCawley**, and Area Vice-President (Retail) **Larry Thompson** were all elected by acclamation.

But there are some changes as well – **Michelle Richardson** won election as the new Executive Vice President for the Local over steward **Hector Capote**, and replacing **Kasie Garcia** who did not run again. Michelle is in her 25th year working at the AT&T Call Center. She is a long-time steward and most recently served as Area Vice-President in the Call Center. **Vince Opheim** is taking over as AVP for the AT&T Call Center – currently our biggest single unit. Vince who is in his 24th year working for AT&T, with over 15 years as a steward, was elected by acclamation.

The “Member at Large” on the Executive Board went to run-off, as incumbent **Dave Bennett** (Mobility Tech) and **Ann Jensen** (former AVP for DTV) were neck-and-neck (Ann 54; Dave 53), with neither quite achieving majority support on the first ballot. **Run-off Votes are due by January 24th, 2024. Send yours in now!** With the DirecTV Call Center in Eden Prairie shrinking in head-count, the Local by-laws no longer supported an Area Vice President there. (Thank you for your service, Ann!)

For Full Results see: <https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/11-news/237-2023-tentative-election-results-runoff-election-calendar> **For questions or issues, contact the Election Committee:** election@cwa7250.org

Minnesota Sick & Safe Time Goes into Effect

Hallelujah! For once, a new law actually helps working people survive, at least in a small way. The new Minnesota Earned Sick & Safe Time (ESST) brings the right to paid sick time out from just a few cities to the full state. The law enables all workers to accrue up to 48 hours of excused, paid sick time a year, with the ability to roll over unused time for up to 80 hours total in future years. Accrual is one-hour ESST for every 30 hours worked – but some companies including AT&T and DirecTV are front-loading the 48 hours, accessible as of 01/01/2024.

For most of our members, this law will bring an immediate benefit: sick time that has been previously paid but chargeable under the AT&T Legacy T contract, the Orange Mobility Contract, and DirecTV Call Center contract will now be excused, non-chargeable time.

We are still unhappy with the hoops the company is trying to put up to access this right, and their attempt to make us use vacation time (instead of sick days) when the time is taken for care of a family member. Nonetheless this will greatly help our members. Questions? Ask a Steward or see: <https://www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave>

Infor Disaster + “SAVE 15 MIN FLEX!”

When the company tells us “Don’t worry, it will all be fine”, we’ve come to know to reach for our helmets. After assuring our members in the Call Center that the new payroll system Infor would just be a simple change, similar to punching in and out of our phones, we’ve now seen the reality is quite different. Dozens of our members had significant issues on our first pay checks under this new system – many with unpaid vacation or sick time - others got double-paid for time worked (which the company will be coming back for, with a quickness). This is even after reps and managers spent hours over the last couple weeks trying to update, edit, and correct timesheets. All issues should be resolved this week.

This system is a symptom of AT&T’s drive to slash headcount (in this case among payroll staff), and centralize all workers under the same systems – to make the company less dependent on local management and systems. The problem is that the local systems were far superior (think of the difference between Mpls RAM EVP and Millennium), and local HR management could be impacted by our members in ways that are hard or impossible when the managers are hundreds of miles away, see us as only numbers on a spreadsheet, and cannot be easily marched on or lobbied.

Similar issues are popping up with the new vacation tool Millennium. Workers are unable to self-submit for Excused Work Days’ (Flex) time of less than 8 hours – this is a violation of the contract which mandates increments of 1 hour. This leads to the next problem – the company is also denying us the 15-minute increments that have been regular past-practice of well over a decade.

The Union immediately showed the company where the new systems infringe on our pay, our contract rights, or on long-standing established past practice. We will pursue grievances, labor charges, and mobilizations to defend our rights and benefits. Thanks to all who are participating in the “SAVE 15 MIN FLEX” actions at the AT&T Call Center. They continue until we win!



Wear RED (and/or CWA Union gear) on Thursdays!

Show your union pride, unity, and power every Thursday. Enter the weekly drawing for \$25 gift card to Cub Foods (or another union grocery) by posting a picture of you (or you and your co-workers) to the [REDACTED] private facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/XXXXXXXXXX>

Rove Bargaining



CWA 7250's Rove Bargaining Team

The CWA Local 7250 Bargaining team (**Bruce Nielsen** and **Shari Wojtowicz**, co-chairs, and **Greg Bute** and **Hector Capote**, with **Zach Sager** as alternate) have been meeting with the company to negotiate a contract since early December. There have been agreements reached on four separate Articles, but many big subjects like seniority, wage tables, and medical benefits remain to be bargained. We will have to stand by ready to mobilize and put pressure on Rove to do the right thing.

Read the Rove Bargaining reports here:

<https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/component/tags/tag/rove-pest-control>

Sassafras Contract

In October the Local finalized our first contract – an industry leading contract - with Sassafras Tech collective, “a web/app design and development company for social justice organizations, non-profits, academics, artists, and others”. The contract establishes a minimum annual salary of \$88,000, and “100% of health insurance, dental insurance, and vision insurance premiums for workers and their dependents.” The contract protects our members rights to refuse work “received from or destined for offices where a strike is in progress”, or any work conducted with “institutions and companies on the Palestinian BDS National Committee’s Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) list.” These two protections were priorities for the members covered by the contract. See full contract here:

<https://www.cwa7250.org/images/Contracts/2023.SASSAFRAS-CWA7250-CONTRACT.pdf>

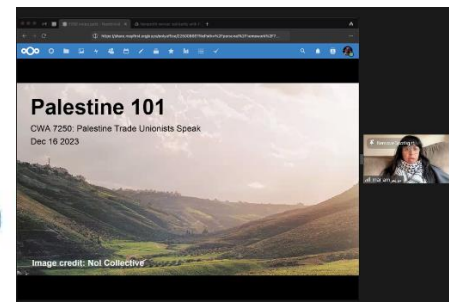
Organizing Committee



CWA 7250 has fully become an **Organizing Local** with ongoing unionization projects at 8 different companies employing over 1200 workers. Each group of workers is at a different phase of organizing – and there is no guarantee that all (or any) of these committees or campaigns will get to the finish line. But our Organizing Committee is working hard and we are optimistic that this organizing will mean significant growth for our Local in 2024. There is strength in numbers! To get involved in the Organizing Committee or if you have leads on workers who want help organizing, get in touch: oc@cwa7250.org

Solidarity with Palestinian Workers

On Saturday, December 16th, Communications Workers of America Local 7250 hosted a zoom forum featuring **Imad Temiza**, officer and international spokesperson for the **Palestinian Postal Service Workers Union** (and affiliate to the **Communication Workers Union - Palestine**) who talked about his history in the trade unions, the impact of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian workers, and the current brutal assault against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.



Brother Temiza ended his presentation with a harrowing video showing the impact of the Israeli bombing on the people of Gaza - especially on the children. UNICEF reports that over 10,000 infants, children and youth have been killed by Israel during this current onslaught.

Following Brother Temiza's talk, new CWA 7250 member **Mariam Asad** from **Sassafras Tech** presented a brief but thorough presentation of the history of Palestine and Israeli colonization - including its impact on her own family.

Olivia Katbi spoke next on the **Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS)** movement - a non-violent Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality opposing Israeli occupation and apartheid. Sister Katbi is a **National Education Association** union member and North American coordinator of the BDS Movement.

The event finished with a Q&A and discussion period. CWA 7250 Steward Hector Capote thanked the participants and said that the event touched him and opened his mind to the Palestinian experience. We were pleased to have approximately 50 attendees on the zoom, including members of our Local, several other CWA Locals, and CWA District 7 Vice President Susie McAllister. Activists from several other unions also attended including **Minneapolis Federation of Teachers**, **Teamsters**, **UFCW**, and the **Nonprofit Professional Employees Union**.

Previously the membership of CWA Local 7250 had voted overwhelmingly at the November membership meeting to sign on to and endorse a petition initiated by the **United Electrical (UE)** workers and **UFCW Local 3000** calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Dozens of unions including the national **United Auto Workers (UAW)** and the **Chicago Teachers Union (CTU)** have also signed on to this call. CWA 7250 will be forwarding this call to the higher bodies within CWA for review and action. This followed a statement approved by the CWA Local 7250 Executive Board (by a vote of 4 For, 0 Against, 4 Abstentions) in solidarity with Palestinian unions and their call to end international support for Israel's apartheid regime, occupation of Palestinian lands, and war against Gaza. Ceasefire Resolution: <https://secure.everyaction.com/w1qW7B3pek2rTtv9ny5bgw2>

BIG WINS!



In the last couple months CWA Local 7250 was able to win some substantial victories worth thousands of dollars for our members – here's some highlights:

- We won a 5-figure settlement for an RSC who had been unjustly (and probably illegally) terminated for a first-time failed drug test (Under MN State law, employers must offer workers rehab on their first failed test – they cannot fire them).
 - We won 8 hours pay for three Duluth RSC's who were denied a fifth shift on a week with a holiday.
 - We were able to bargain from 8 to 18 weeks of severance pay for our last member at Goodstock Co.
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- We got DirecTV to pay out the increased incentive bonus of \$900 to every DTV member when that company didn't provide metrics status or coaching during the new incentive roll out.
 - We won backpay for a DTV member who had been denied pay for intermittent microbreaks under their job accommodation.
 - We settled a grievance with the company agreeing to remove an unjust Final Written Warning against an Executive Officer of the Local.
 - With the help of the Minnesota Department of Labor, we got AT&T to back off on their illegal policy of requiring signed forms from school administrators in order to use our School Time rights.

Our only strength is the solidarity of our members, our unwillingness to accept injustice, our commitment to each other and for fighting for what's right.

WRC Mobility Meeting Goes from Hopeful to Same Old Sh*t

On December 7th CWA Local 7250 held our semi-annual meeting with upper management over Minnesota’s AT&T Mobility Retail stores. These meetings are supposed to serve as a means for “discussing broad concerns of mutual interest to the parties”. AT&T was represented by Director of Sales Kris Logue, AT&T Mobility Labor Relations Manager Trent Schott, and Area Retail Sales Managers Tara Carlson, Sean Mitchell, and Demetrius Stovall. The union was represented by Local President Kieran Knutson, Vice President Kasie Garcia, Secretary-Treasurer Chad Perkins, Area Vice-President for Retail Larry Thompson, and Retail steward Ellie Mondragon.



Kieran, Larry, Ellie at WRC Meeting

The Union identified AT&T’s non-union shops where workers are paid only \$12/hour and often work alone as our most serious point of contention. We made it clear that AT&T had decisions to make about the future of A/R stores which would determine our actions. But we also had what seemed productive conversations about the new MN Sick & Safe law, broadband build out, getting bilingual RSC’s a pay differential, staffing and scheduling.

Unfortunately, soon after the WRC meeting, AT&T Mobility management rolled out new, later hours for 9 stores adversely effecting our members who work there – and refusing our request to negotiate this change. AT&T Mobility management has now also backed away from specific commitments to look at 4x10 schedules and bilingual pay differential. Management also failed to train and educate their store managers on implementing the new Sick & Safe Time law in Minnesota. This is a good reminder that promises and friendly talk are just words until they are put into writing and then put into action.

In response, the union sent out a “Know Your Rights” primer highlighting Minnesota Sick & Safe Time, Minnesota School Time rights, and Drug Testing Rights to all of the RSC’s across the state. We will continue to hold the company accountable and fight for what our members need to survive and thrive.

Twin Cities Techs & DTV Stewards Hold Holiday Lunches



Thanks to AVP **Sean McCawley** for organizing the 2nd annual Techs Holiday Lunch (featuring Marla’s Caribbean menu).

Thank you to DTV Stewards **Ann Jensen, Nick Boerboom, and Arion Walker** for all that they do for DTV workers and the Local.

Vince Opheim Solidarity Fund



On Friday, December 15th, our union brother Vince Opheim had a heart attack while driving, causing an accident that left Vince with a fractured sternum and ribs, concussion, and two brain bleeds.

After a week at HCMC, a couple more weeks at a physical rehab facility, Vince is now working to complete his rehabilitation at home.

Vince will need help with major medical bills and getting a new car. Vince is a great friend, long-term volunteer at Children's Hospital, a union brother and Area Vice-President-elect for CWA Local 7250, and a fixture at the Coon Rapids VFW.

Vince is always there for his family, community, and co-workers - LETS BE THERE FOR HIM!

Donations accepted here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/vince-opheim-solidarity-fund>

We Remember Martin Luther King, Jr: Civil Rights and Labor Martyr



One day we must ask the question, 'Why are there forty million poor people in America?' And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising questions about the economic system, about broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question you begin to question the capitalistic economy.

—MLK (1967)

Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed while supporting a strike of sanitation workers in Memphis TN. King sought to connect the Civil Rights struggle with the struggle of all working-class and poor people.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Final Speech:
"I've Been to the Mountain Top"

Text: <https://www.afscme.org/about/history/mlk/mountaintop>

Sound: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmZvkHpX_Q4

Martin Luther King Union Documentary:

"I Am A Man" The Memphis Sanitation Strike

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vTqVspySE4>



Thanks Kasie Garcia! After 6 years as Executive Vice President Kasie has stepped down. Thank you for all that you do and have done for our union. We are glad you are remaining a steward and active union member.

CWA 7250 UNION UPDATE is sent out every QUARTER 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 Local 7250 President Kieran F. Knutson. To contact: union@cwa7250.org