

*Apologies for the long delay, but here's the . . .*

## **CWA 7250 Union Update - June 2023**

**Happy Fathers' Day - Happy Juneteenth - Happy Pride!**

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

CWA Presidential Candidates Forum - What CWA 7250 is Looking for from the Candidates - Tower Bleeding Members, AT&T Wants More to Go - AT&T Call Center Move to Bloomington - Local Organizing Committee Gears Up - GoodStock Workers Close in on Contract - Reports from National Health & Safety and Wireless Conferences - Mayday March - Standing Up to Anti-Union Discrimination at the MN DOLI - Wins & Losses at the Capitol - Standing Up for Ukraine - Updates for DirecTV, AT&T Techs, AT&T Retail, and the AT&T Call Center . . .

### **1. CWA Presidential Candidates Forum - Watch Now!**



Our Local CWA 7250 recently partnered with several other CWA Locals to host a historic CWA Presidential Candidates Forum, featuring all of the announced candidates for the International union's top office: **Claude Cummings, Jr** (Vice-President of District 6), **Ed Mooney** (Vice President of District 2-13), and **Sara Steffens** (CWA Secretary-Treasurer) - the forum was hosted by our Local on zoom and filled up quickly with our members and CWA officers and activists from across the country. The CWA **T&T National Mobilization Committee** helped us out greatly by airing a LIVESTREAM of the forum on their website [cwamobilize.com](http://cwamobilize.com). Secretary-Treasurer **Chad Perkins** ran the zoom meeting, Exec. Vice-President **Kasie Garcia** was time-keeper, and Local President **Kieran Knutson** hosted/facilitated.

Initially CWA 7250 had proposed that the forum be sponsored and run by the CWA MN State Council, but the majority of Locals in the state, led by **CWA 7200**, opposed this idea without saying why and the motion was defeated. We changed tact and worked with the Minnesota Locals that supported the idea, **7203**, **7270**, and **7304** - to get the Forum going and all three candidates quickly signed on. We soon had more Locals signed on as sponsors: **7050** (AZ/NM), **7110** (IA), **7500** (ND/SD), and the **Guild/CWA 39521-Freelancers**

**Unit** - with several others around the country showing interest. Over 270 total viewers watched the Forum live.

Each of the candidates were able to give a short introduction, a longer stump speech, and closing remarks - but the heart of the event turned out to be the separate Question and Answer sessions where each candidate got questions from members of the sponsoring Locals (including each of our AVPs areas: **Ann Jensen** for DTV, **Michelle Richardson** for the AT&T Call Center, **Larry Thompson** for Retail, and **Sean McCawley** for the Techs). The questions ranged from lack of a Work from Home strategy, to fighting racism within the union, why DTV was cut up into multiple contracts, organizing the non-union "Authorized Retailers", the role of smaller Locals within the CWA, and much much more. We have received lots of thanks from across the union for helping make this Forum happen - we are grateful for everyone who helped out and participated. Our goal was to make sure rank & file workers got to hear directly from the candidates about their history, vision, and plans - and to press the candidates on the issues important to workers - we think this was a successful start towards that end.

**To watch the full Candidates forum go to: <https://cwamobilize.com/2023/05/31/cwa-national-presidential-candidates-forum/>**

## 2. What CWA 7250 is Looking for from the Candidates



Before the Forum we submitted these sets of questions to the Candidates, based on the issues we highlighted on our flyer at the CWA national Wireless Conference. So far we have received answers from two of the candidates, Sara Steffens and Claude Cummings, Jr. We will be publicizing their answers, the video of the Forum and each of the candidate's websites to our members and encourage them to participate in an advisory straw poll to measure support and enthusiasm for the candidates and help our Local choose which, if any, candidate to support.

### **Question #1:**

*Last year our Local organized a major campaign to keep the Work from Home (WFM) 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 help of a few other Locals we were able to organize actions, press conferences, a petition with over 8,000 signatures and major media attention. We didn't get much support from the CWA national or districts though and we were unable to win WFH for our Legacy T Call center Workers in Minneapolis.*

**What was with the disconnect between the Union and our members' urgent demand to keep WFH?**

**Going forward, how can we win good WFH jobs and maintain a strong internal union organization?**



**Question #2:**

*The experience of our Local and many others across the union is that we wait months and months - sometimes over a year - for grievances to be heard at District/National level. This lack of movement stalls any momentum and lets management know they can deny at first step and then it will effectively disappear. 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.*

**What can be done to aggressively expedite grievance movement?**

**Would you support an \*expectation\* that grievances are heard within 60 days at the higher levels?**



**Question #3:**

*We are bleeding members at AT&T and DirecTV. The company has whittled down union presence to only 20% of its retail stores, more and more tech work is being outsourced and our Legacy T and DirecTV Call Centers face heavy attrition with no new hiring.*

**What can we do to stop the bleeding?**

**What is your plan to organize the unorganized sectors of AT&T and DirecTV?**

**What is your overall plan to build the Union ?**



**Question #4:**

*Open bargaining means that contracts are negotiated with transparency for the membership that will have to live under them. Open bargaining lets the members see what we are fighting for at the bargaining table and what the companies are trying to low-ball or take away. In Minnesota, the Nurses union and the Minneapolis Teachers union are using open bargaining and have won major gains.*

**Will you support expanding open bargaining for CWA contracts?**

**What would you do to make Open Bargaining the "norm" in CWA?**



**Question #5:**

*CWA brags about its power and influence within the political system - especially the Democratic Party - but when politicians stab workers in the back (like Biden did with the railroad union workers) there is little said or done.*

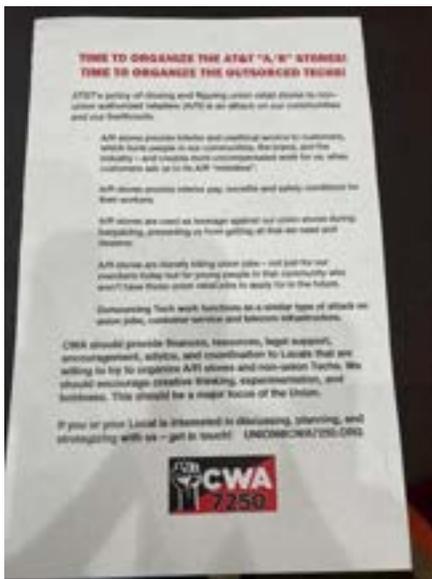
*Meanwhile Trump and the fascist right organize using fake-populist rhetoric and are a serious threat to unions and the community.*

**Do either party really represent working-class interests?**

**Are Corporate politicians any real protection against fascist threats?**

**Why should we continue to pour millions of dollars and time and energy into corporate-controlled politicians?**

**What percentage of movement building should be put into efforts outside of the political system?**



**Question #6:**

*The strike is the traditional weapon of the working-class - and the method where we have won most of our benefits and rights - but some union leaders seem afraid to use it, or even plan for it. At a time when striking workers were winning significant gains our AT&T Legacy T contract was extended without a strike vote, and the DTV and Mobility Orange contracts were settled without a strike vote, and at the 2021 CWA Convention a resolution to simply research and plan for a strike at AT&T was ruled unconstitutional. AT&T has CWA divided up into a dozen different contracts with different expiration dates - we are divided, they are ruling.*

**What would you do to overcome the division of AT&T and DirectTV workers into different contracts?**

**The Civil Rights movement often defied unjust laws to win justice for the community - would you be willing to challenge unjust labor laws that handcuff workers the same way?**

*Look for the received answers as well as other campaign information in our Special Convention edition next month*

### 3. AT&T Call Center Bleeding Members - And Company Wants More



Our members are leaving jobs at the AT&T Call Center like never before. It used to be very rare for members to quit these good-paying union office jobs - but those days are gone. The Company's forced Return to the Office, the office move to Bloomington, and various other insults and injuries like the recent reduction in incentive pay, have caused well over 10% of the workers at the AT&T Call Center to quit or retire. **Management insists that there is no new hiring coming down the pike - and that the corporate bosses actually expect *and budgeted* for even MORE attrition. If it feels like the company wants you to quit - at least you're not crazy - because that is LITERALLY true.** For those of us that can't or won't quit anytime soon - we need to stick together, have each other's backs, and build a fighting movement among AT&T workers across the country and across the globe. Start thinking about how you can help, what your ideas and questions are, and how they fit in. We're gonna need everyone's brains and muscles to go up against such a powerful and rich corporation - but just remember all their power and wealth comes from workers like us.

### 4. Bloomington - Here We Come



#### GETTING HERE

Several ingress / egress routes from Xerxes Avenue, American Boulevard, and W 79th Street

The move of the AT&T Collections Call Center out of Downtown Minneapolis and into the Wells Fargo Plaza at 79th & Xerxes in suburban Bloomington MN is upon us. For some members living south of the cities the commute will be easier - for others on the northside, the

north suburbs, or further north of the Cities - or those reliant on mass transit - this move may be very difficult. The new set-up puts our entire Center on one floor - and that means loooong rows of cubicles and tight spacing. We are going to need to have big hearts for each other during this transition, and patience with one another in this new set-up. As has been mentioned above, the company is looking to shed more workers - and making us uncomfortable, and getting us divided is one way for that to happen. Let's strive to practice unity - even with co-workers that aren't your favorites. COVID and other viruses are still a concern, so let's be smart and considerate - if you have a cold, flu or other respiratory illness, please consider staying home or wearing a mask.

Our Union is still here, still strong, and still fighting. Union reps that went over to Bloomington with the first phase include Local Executive Vice-President **Kasie Garcia**, Stewards **Hector Capote** and **Maggie Mulloy**, and Health & Safety Committee **Kathleen Lamb** and **Justin Gilbert-Whitfield** - please reach out if you need support or have a union question.

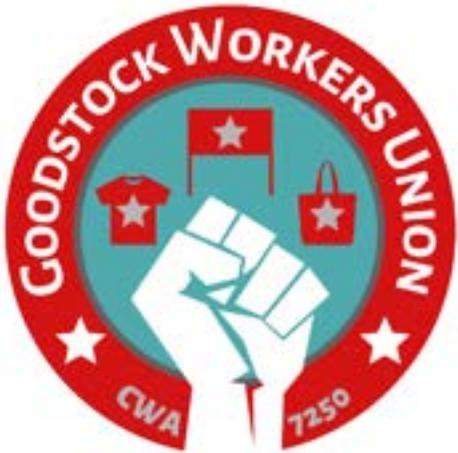
## 5. New Local Organizing Committee Readies to Make Moves



After many months of talking about it - our Local now has a new Organizing Committee up and running - thanks to members **Dave Bennett**, **Lewis Brown**, **Hector Capote**, **Traci Doll**, **Vince Opheim**, and **Larry Thompson** - if you're interested in joining up, please let us know. The first project of the Committee will be researching the non-union Authorized Retailers - the non-union AT&T stores that now represent over 70% of the outlets. If you know anyone working in these AT&T A/R stores, please put us in touch - we want to talk with them. Also if you know anyone else, anywhere in a telecom job or something completely different, who is interested in unionizing (and willing to put in the work) - let us know - we want to help.

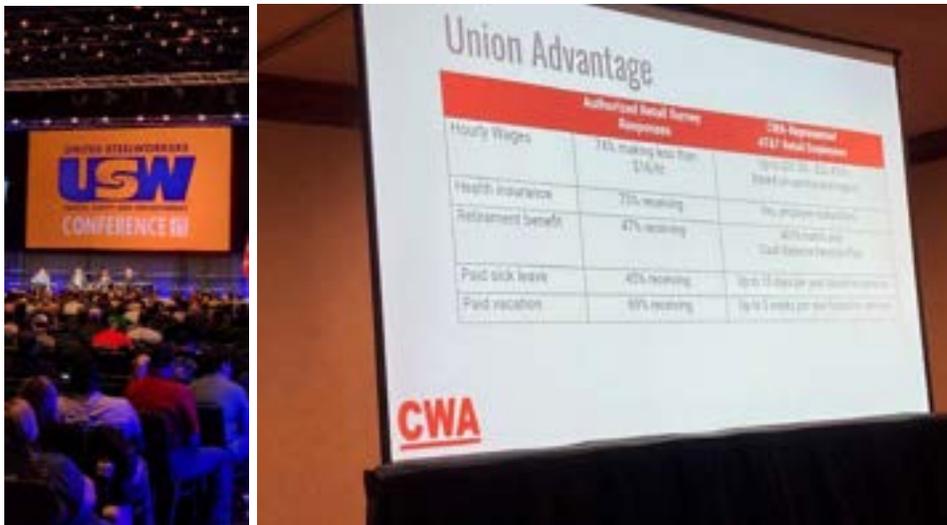
Contact: [union@cwa7250.org](mailto:union@cwa7250.org)

## 6. GoodStock Workers Close in on Contract



**Sara Chappell-Dick**, from the CWA 7250-affiliated **GoodStock Workers Union** gives a quick update on where things are at in bargaining their first ever union contract: *"The Goodstock Workers Union is hard at work bargaining for our first contract! We're thrilled to have already won unlimited PTO and a 20% increase in base salaries. We have yet to come to an agreement on parental leave, daily work hours, cost of living adjustments, severance, and salaries, among other things. We've also created our logo and started our new Twitter account to have on hand when the time comes to put public pressure on our boss. **Please give us a follow at @GoodstockWorker to help boost our numbers!**"*

## 7. Conference Reports: Health & Safety in Pittsburgh, PA and the CWA Wireless in Providence, RI



When members of CWA 7250 travel to conferences - it is not a vacation - it's an opportunity to learn, make contacts and spread our message. CWA 7250 Steward **Piero Sutti** (Omaha, NE)

attended the **2023 Health, Safety, and Environment Conference** in April in Pittsburgh, PA organized by the **United Steelworkers** union and co-sponsored by CWA - here's his report:

"Good afternoon, I wanted to take a moment to thank you for allowing me to go to this conference. I believe that it is worthwhile, and more safety managers need to attend. The philosophy this conference promotes, and I now believe in, is: **Stop blaming the employee when an accident happens, and find the root issues before it becomes an accident, and learn from near misses.** As we all know there are many hurdles to overcome here in AT&T, the ones that come to mind is the blame, but also the employees buy into this philosophy and report near misses without fear of retaliation. There are things I will bring to my safety manager, like starting a committee. Also dealt with a couple classes that were very heavy, like the need to promote mental health tools to our members, and their families. I called around and found our number: **1-866-263-9253**, this group called OPPUM, has 24/7 help for employees and their dependents, the line is staffed by counselors that can help in emergency or to look for counselors or psychologists, one being someone to help talk through issues and the other also able to prescribe medication. **I had a coworker commit suicide, and it hits hard and for a long time.** I recommend we get this number out in newsletters or other communications, because we never know who needs it, and the what ifs are haunting. I took many classes, for example, how to make OSHA reports/complaints. Made some good contacts. I have some links to share also. The links are for fellow CWA members, who have been on strike since October, they have not gotten a raise in over 16 years. When they cancelled in bad faith their medical coverage, the members voted to strike. They have started a publication in Pittsburgh (<https://www.unionprogress.com/subscribe/>). Here is the link to support their effort (<https://cwa-union.org/support-striking-pittsburgh-post-gazette-workers>) CWA members at the conference on Wednesday the 19th walked with striking members on the picket line, with a hope to disturb paper delivery to distributors. Here is the news story <https://www.wpxi.com/news/local/striking-post-gazette-workers-say-woman-was-batoned-by-police-officer-during-confrontation/DUGSHWSRRVBLVPVB5SZ3BMZZFY/> The issue that stuck with me was why the Police would block our demonstration path and make a entryway for the box trucks picking up the papers. I am also including a couple of pictures that I think point out the new philosophy of safety."

Meanwhile, CWA 7250 Retail stewards **Traci Doll** (St. Cloud, MN) and **Nick Stryker** (Osseo, MN) attended the **CWA Wireless Conference** in Providence RI. They each sent in a report . . .

**Traci Doll:** "I was fortunate enough to be chosen to attend the CWA Wireless Conference in Providence and am so grateful for the experience. This was my first, and not only did I learn an immense amount, I also met so many amazing people that I can relate to. I thoroughly enjoyed the breakout sessions we were able to attend, more specifically the one centered around unionizing authorized retailers. In that session, we were able to come forward with the issues we have with AR and how the company is more involved in their day to day than we realize. I do wish we were able to have more conversations around how we plan to unionize them, since that is our main goal. Hopefully at future conferences they can focus more on this aspect. One of my favorite parts of this conference was being able to meet and hear from all three CWA presidential candidates. I never would have had this experience had I not attended. It was very

*beneficial to be able to meet and even talk to the candidates one on one. We were able to really get a feel for who they are, what they believe in and what they plan to do for our union in the future. Overall, I'm so grateful I was able to have this experience. I would suggest any steward wanting to take a bigger role, gain more knowledge within the CWA and make a difference, to attend this conference in the future. I hope to be a part of many more as I continue with being a steward within my local, and hopefully grow into a bigger role in our overall union.*

**Nick Stryker:** *The CWA Wireless Workers Conference that I attended in Rhode Island was an inspiring and informative event. I loved that the conference brought together union members from various wireless industries and backgrounds to discuss important issues, share ideas and learn new information that I did not know before coming. The guest speakers were engaging and provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing wireless workers today. I really enjoyed the breakout sessions and I found them to be very informative and also gave me the chance to gain a new perspective on how to advocate for workers rights in my own store. Overall, the conference was a great way to meet other like-minded union members who hold the same job title that I do, which made it easier to relate to them when speaking of the challenges they were having within their local and their workplace.*

## 8. CWA 7250 Marches on May Day



On Monday, May 1st a contingent from CWA 7250 joined the annual May Day march of unions, community, and immigrant groups to honor International Workers Day. This year's march was on East Lake Street in south Minneapolis and highlighted the community' struggle around the "Roof Depot" location - the community wants for an Urban Farm and other Green space, instead of the planned high-pollution city works yard **[Update: the city has agreed to sell the site to the community Urban Farm project]**. Many different unions and immigrant rights speakers also addressed the crowd. Thanks to **Dave Bennett, Justin Gilbert-Whitfield, Kieran Knutson, Yolanda Olmo, Chad Perkins, and Michelle Richardson** - and to **Ryan T.** from IUE-CWA at Electric Machinery northeast for joining us at the march.

## 9. Confronting Anti-Union Discrimination at the MN Dept of Labor



Recently our officers and members have had multiple negative experiences of calling into the State of Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry's intake line only to be told by the representative taking the call that because we were union members they would not consider the violation we were reporting and would take no action on it. They stated that since we had union/contract avenues to pursue the grievance, and since the MN DOLI was stretched so thin that they could not help us. This is unacceptable - any labor laws in Minnesota are for ALL workers - the state cannot just sit by if they are being violated just because we are also union members. As you might guess, our Local did not take this lying down. We connected with **Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bernie Burnham**, who helped us get a meeting with **MN DOLI Director Nicole Blissenbach**. Director Blissenbach heard our concern, and agreed this was incorrect and an unacceptable answer we had been getting, and pledged to make sure their in-coming team is educated on how to take complaints from union members and officers going forward. She advised us to let her know when we next filed a complaint so that she could confirm it was being handled correctly. Thanks to sister Bernie for getting that meeting set-up and our issues addressed.

## 10. A Balance Sheet from the MN State Capitol



It was an active session at the Minnesota capitol with the State House, Senate, and Governor all under the **DFL party**. Many positive reforms for working people were passed including free meals for all school children, drivers licenses for immigrants, protections for reproductive and Trans healthcare, legalizing recreational marijuana, anti-union "captive audience meetings" will be banned (thank you **MN State Council President Shari Wojtowicz** and all the CWA volunteers who worked on this!) and paid sick and safe time (while protecting vacation time!). These reforms are in tune with what the big majority of Minnesota's working-class wants and needs. But on two important initiatives the DFL and **Governor Walz** failed Minnesota's workers - and we need to remember that. First the **Minnesota Nurses Association** was stabbed in the

back by the DFL, who first made them carve out language from their safer hospital staffing bill to appease the corporate giant **Mayo Clinic** - then even after that compromise, 4 DFLers sided with the GOP to kill the bill outright. Governor Walz then used his first veto on a bill that would have established minimum wages for **Lyft, Uber** and other rideshare workers, when Uber threatened to pull out of the state. While the rideshare companies had access to the Governor's office, Walz never even met with the workers groups that had been pushing for this law. All of this shows that we cannot count on any party to protect us from the big corporations and their blackmail threats. The nurses union won safer staffing rights at hospitals through mobilizing and striking - that is where workers strength ultimately is, not among the politicians, lobbyists, and PR flacks at the Capitol.

## 11. Standing with Ukraine



Members will remember that our Local passed a resolution last year in solidarity with Ukrainian workers' resistance to the Russian invasion:

<https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/2-uncategorised/185-cwa-7250-e-board-solidarity-with-ukrainian-resistance-russian-troops-out-now>

CWA 7250 **Local President Kieran Knutson** was recently quoted in the **StarTribune** about this issue, "The people of Ukraine have a right to independence and self-determination . . .":

<https://www.startribune.com/local-antiwar-groups-are-divided-over-u-s-military-aid-to-ukraine-in-the-war-with-russia/600280115/> and had a short essay published in the Minneapolis community newspaper **Southside Pride**: "The left's confusion harms the Ukrainian people" <https://southsidepride.com/2023/06/05/the-lefts-confusion-harms-the-ukrainian-people/>

Check it out and let us know what you think!

## 12. Small Victories on Every Front



Our Local fights very hard for our members - big issues and small. With some struggles, even when we do a hell of a job organizing, mobilizing and getting the word out on - we are still ultimately unsuccessful (like the fight against the forced Return to Office) - these issues are too big to be won by just one Local. But even in a context where our employers consciously and strategically make things worse for us - we have been able to win some smaller but important victories. A lot of credit goes to our AVP's, our steward force, and the concerned members who push for what's right and just.

**DirectTV:** AVP **Ann Jensen** was able to get the company to add another vacation slot to the vacation book to allow more members to actually use their bargained time off. Big win. The company has also now made all the Eden Prairie Call Center jobs eligible for permanent WFH status - previously the company had mandated that only 50% of the center could do WFH. DTV will also finally start hiring again.

**AT&T Call Center:** the Local was able to get the company to expand the number of workers who could wait to move to Bloomington with the 2nd phase - and also able to get a member without a vehicle into their needed shift tour - all without violating any of our members seniority.

**AT&T Retail:** New union stewards **Kaleb Madison** and **Casey Witts**, with back up from AVP **Larry Thompson** were finally able to get the company to agree to tint the large windows at the Duluth Central Entrance location, where workers had been complaining for months about headaches from the glare. We got AT&T to pay for a booth, and to pay for Larry Thompson to staff it at the annual **Union Job Fair** in St. Paul and to pay Larry Thompson to staff the booth for the day to talk to young folks looking for work about union jobs in AT&T retail.

**AT&T Techs:** AVP **Sean McCawley** got the company to agree to add CWA 7250 Techs to their annual build out for the **Sturgis SD motorcycle gathering**. Up to 3 Local Techs will now be involved - previously this work had gone to union techs sent up from Missouri. The Local was also able to torpedo company plans to institute mandatory weigh-ins for Technicians and put anyone over the weight limit on a performance plan.

**CODE/Digital Tech work:** The **Sassafras Tech collective**, which voted to affiliate with CWA Local 7250 is nearing a contract; Organizing continues at **Blizzard/Activision**.

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**Thanks for all that you do for your co-workers, community, the union and the working-class!**

**Remember to Wear RED (or Union Gear) on Thursdays!  
SOLIDARITY FOREVER!**

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