

Bargaining Report #1

CWA Local 7250 opens negotiations for a historic first collective bargaining agreement in the private pest control industry call center at Rove Pest Control in Minnesota.

Negotiations opened with statements from the CWA bargaining team and CWA Local 7250 President Kieran F. Knutson below.

We were able to reach a tentative agreement on two of the proposals passed by the Union team on Mutual Respect and Union Representation.

The Company did not offer any proposals today.

Additional sessions with the company are scheduled starting next week.

Respectfully Submitted,

CWA 7250 Bargaining team at Rove
Co-Chairs: Bruce Nielsen & Shari Wojtowicz
Members: Greg Bute, Hector Capote
Alternate: Zach Sager

CWA Bargaining Team Opening Statement

Groundbreaking. Epic. Historic. Inspirational. These are just a few of the words that come to mind when we think of what we are doing today. We sit here collectively with One of the first groups of workers at a private pest control company to form a Union, remarkably, the first group of call center workers in private pest control.

CWA Members spoke when they boldly stood together to form a Union at work. Dignity, working conditions and economics remain the priorities of the membership. Rove has been a revolving door of employees. We want to make this a better, more desirable place to work. We both need Rove to be successful and we are willing to work together to accomplish that.

Rove is a successful, fast growing company who has the ability to create good paying, middle class jobs. By providing good, living wages for workers it creates local economic growth and rebuilds the middle class.

There has been a resurgence of public support for workers' rights and benefits. It is not acceptable for Rove to provide inadequate benefits and continue to pay wages that make it impossible for workers to sustain a family household.

We sit at the table to make history as we negotiate the first CWA contract in the pest control industry with Rove.

Our membership is strong, mobilized and determined. We have an opportunity to negotiate a contract we will all be proud of, and to help continue and grow the success of Rove Pest Control. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Message from the President of CWA Local 7250

My name is Kieran Frazier Knutson, President of Communications Workers of America Local 7250. I want to thank the union bargaining committee for inviting me to say a few words – and thank the Rove management group for listening to them. I'll be brief.

The Bargaining Committee

I'm the elected presiding officer of our Local union – but I'm not part of our negotiating committee – because the people that are on the committee: Bruce, Greg, Hector, and Shari have more knowledge and experience than me. They will be the group that Rove will have to reach an agreement with.

Shari Wojtowicz has been a union activist for three decades; she has held multiple union positions at the Local and State level and currently serves as President of CWA Minnesota State Council and represents CWA on the Minnesota AFL-CIO executive board. She has been an organizer, she has been a strike leader, she has been elected to a national CWA bargaining committee – and she is widely recognized as an expert on CWA's contracts with AT&T and DirecTV.

She is as smart and sharp as they come and has no time for foolishness.

Hector Capote is a long-term CWA member with a history of activism in both sunny south Florida and up here in cold Minnesota. Besides his work on grievances, mobilizations, and human rights issues for the union – Hector is also an experienced negotiator who participated in the committee that bargained the 2019 AT&T Orange Mobility contract that covered 22,000 workers, and took 14 months to finish – including the largest strike in the retail industry in US history. Hector's been through a thing or two – and so is not easily impressed by anything less than what's serious and real.

Bruce Nielsen and **Greg Bute** have less experience in the union, but simply put the reason they are here – is because without them, none of us would be in this room. They have showed courage, resilience, discipline, and hope in bringing the union to the Rove Call Center. Really, they made history. And they, along with Zach and Adam have something that the rest of us in this room don't have – they know the job better than anyone. How it actually works (and doesn't work), and how it could work and pay better. These guys – more than anyone else here on either side of the table - are the experts. Understanding and respecting that will do all of us well.

This is our bargaining committee; this is who you will be doing business with and reaching agreements with. They speak with one voice and with the full confidence of CWA Local 7250, CWA District 7, and the Communications Workers of America.

Rove Pest Control

Now we understand from talking to Mr. Greer, hearing stories from those that have worked here, and doing our own research that you all have a great stake in this company – it has been and will be a big part of your lives. We respect your ideas, your knowledge, your work, your sacrifice, your ambition, your concerns, and even your fears. We've said this before and we'll say it again

here – our goal is not to harm or damage Rove or to cause anxiety or worry for management, ownership, or any other stakeholders. That would not be in our interest - we want to see Rove grow and thrive in Minnesota and around the country with good, solid union jobs – where workers can thrive, raise families, have input into the job, and grow as people. We want Rove to be a beacon for a different way of doing business in this industry – and one that draws interest and attention (and customers) like moths to a light.

What we want to win

To get there we will be making direct, realistic proposals aimed at raising the standard of living of our members, ensuring their health and well-being – and that of their families, protecting their dignity and rights on the job. Those that do the work, that make the company run, must share in its success.

This cannot be company where those that work hard just scrape by, a place with chaos instead of clear process, where expectations change willy-nilly and only certain individuals come under the microscope. This cant be a place where the most senior and dedicated employees are paid the least. Because that is not a workplace, it's a revolving door. And that's is ultimately not good for anyone.

Living Wages with Regular Raises. Real Benefits. Rights on the Job.

What we are willing to do

These are not simply aspirations - they will be the new reality, because our Local is focused and committed to bringing justice to our members. Our Local has many friends across this city and state who have our back – the unions, the labor movement, and many community organizations will be carefully following the progress of these negotiations. Over the years our members have become skillful at organizing and mobilizing and rallying and press conferences. Our Local has organized 4 different strikes in recent years during contract campaigns at AT&T and DirecTV. We've shut down work at call centers; at retail stores, and among technicians. We know how to do that.

We understand that bargaining will have a give and take but we don't want any confusion – we will not accept anything less than what our members deserve. We will do what it takes.

What the future could look like

We are extremely hopeful that these talks will be positive and productive. There is every reason they should be (For one thing, I won't be here). Rove has an interest in a dedicated workforce with accumulated skills and knowledge and a low-turn over; the union workers have an interest in a growing workforce with great pay and benefits; clear process and policies; and a culture of fairness, empathy, and growth.

We believe that the union can play a big role in bringing a fair process to the workplace – so workers and management both have a common sense of goals, expectations, and responsibilities.

We believe that Rove – as union represented company - has an opening for growth that won't exist for your non-union competitors. Herse's an example – **Minneapolis Labor Review**, circulation mailed to 50,000 union homes in Minneapolis and the western suburbs every month. Union homes mean working-class people with better wages, extra spending money, and some loyalty to union products. **The Union Advocate** – circulation 38,000 to union homes in St. Paul

and the eastern suburbs; and the Labor World out of Duluth and going to 17,000 union homes in northern Minnesota bi-weekly.

Spending a few hundred dollars in advertising every month or every few months brings you an audience that no one else in your industry is getting. This is not to mention the schools, hospitals, and government facilities that would open up to a Pest Control company with union credentials. Being able to say Rove is a proud union company will set you a part.

If Rove is serious about growth, it's not a union that's standing in the way.

Meanwhile our members will have great pay, great benefits, great work-life balance, feel respected and part of the team – not in a phony, fake, company field trip way but because they've signed a contract with you for a strong and fair deal.

Good luck to all of you – we're expecting big things.

