

**CWA**

# NEWSLETTER

Communications Workers of America  
AFL-CIO, CLC  
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March 25, 2010

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## Health Care Reform Moves Us Forward



CWA played a big part in getting health care reform through Congress, and President Obama invited CWA President Larry Cohen to the White House for the official bill signing to recognize that hard work.

"After decades of working for quality health care for all, this bill moves us forward and provides a framework for

future improvements," Cohen said.

Through CWA's Health Care SIF campaign, thousands of CWAers called, wrote, participated in town hall meetings and visited their members of Congress. They told their senators and representatives how they worried about skyrocketing health care costs and whether they would be able to maintain their health care benefits.

They talked about how being laid off meant losing affordable health care. Retired workers wondered how they would pay sky-high premiums until they were eligible for Medicare, or how they would afford their prescription drugs when they reached the "donut" hole in Medicare's drug coverage.

Health care reform takes away a lot of these worries for working families. How? Keep reading.

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## **What Does Health Care Reform Do For Me? And When?**

1. Children can continue to be covered by their parents' health insurance until their 26th birthday, instead of being forced off the plan by age 19. When? IN SIX MONTHS.
2. Insurance companies cannot exclude children under age 19 from health care coverage because of pre-existing conditions. When? IN SIX MONTHS.
3. Insurance companies cannot charge higher rates for women, whether they're covered by an employer's plan or have individual coverage. When? IN SIX MONTHS.
4. Adults who can't get insurance because of a preexisting condition can buy into a national pool until the exchanges start operating in 2014. When? IN 90 DAYS.
5. Insurance companies can't cancel your policy because you get sick. When? IN SIX MONTHS.
6. Insurance companies can't put a lifetime limit on your medical coverage. When? IN SIX MONTHS.
7. Retired workers who have hit the Medicare "donut hole," the gap in benefits that hurts millions of seniors, will receive a \$250 rebate. When? THIS YEAR.
8. "Donut hole" completely gone in 2016.

## **Tell Congress: A Working NLRB is a Top CWA Priority**

CWAers are on the phone to their members of Congress, urging them to sign on to Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard's letter that calls on President Obama to make recess appointments of Craig Becker and Mark Pearce to the National Labor Relations Board.

So far, more than 100 U.S. representatives have signed on. With a March 25 deadline, CWA activists are working the phones, to let their representatives know that this is a top priority for CWA.

What's our message to Congress? Workers need a fully functioning NLRB. There are just two members now and that has delayed justice for workers and made a huge backlog of cases even worse.

With Senate Republicans continuing a campaign to stall these nominations, the only way to get a functioning majority on the NLRB is for President Obama to make appointments over the Easter congressional recess.

## **CWA Campaign Produces House Ban on Tax Loophole**

Thanks to CWA's successful Verizon Strategic Industry Fund campaign, the House of Representatives voted to close the Reverse Morris Trust tax loophole that has allowed

Verizon and other companies to spin off parts of their operations tax-free.

The tax loophole ban was sponsored by Rep. Paul Hodes (D-N.H.) and included co-sponsors Reps. Alan Mollohan and Nick Rahall (D-WVa.) and Louise M. Slaughter (D-N.Y.).

Verizon took advantage of this tax loophole to sell landlines to FairPoint Communications, a much smaller company that just couldn't meet service requirements and later declared bankruptcy, costing jobs and resulting in deteriorating customer service.

The Small Business and Infrastructure Jobs Act, passed by a vote of 246-178, now heads to the Senate. Verizon wants to sell 4.8 million landlines in 14 states to Frontier Communications, but Frontier will be forced to borrow \$3.3 billion to pay for the deal. Verizon would realize \$600 million in tax savings.

"The Reserve Morris Trust was designed by Wall Street, not West Virginians," said District 2 Vice President Ron Collins. "We're happy that Congress shares our view that the Reverse Morris Trust is a tax break for corporations, not a job-creating tool. Without this tax provision, I don't believe Verizon would be so eager to sell to Frontier."

## **CWA Members Vote Strike Authorization at Verizon West**

By an overwhelming margin, CWA members at Verizon West voted last week to authorize a strike if a fair contract cannot be reached during negotiations. Bargaining is continuing; the contract expired March 13.

More than 90 percent of members approved the strike authorization, with nearly 80 percent of members voting. The contract covers about 5,500 workers mostly in Southern California.

"The strike vote demonstrates members' solid support for their bargaining team and their determination to achieve a fair settlement," said District 9 Vice President Jim Weitkamp. "Verizon can well afford to treat its workers fairly."

CWA and Verizon remain far apart on key issues, including pay, health care cost-shifting, and off-shoring of work. Verizon angered CWA workers when it moved some customer service work from California to Tijuana, Mexico. The company also has relocated some 911 jobs there.

Members are continuing to mobilize and are gearing up for a rally in Long Beach to protest offshoring and other unfair Verizon moves. Elected officials, including several Long Beach City Council members who are concerned about Verizon's decision to move jobs out of the community, will be joining CWAers at the rally.

## **Cornell Launches Web Seminar on Handling Grievances**

Cornell University will begin a comprehensive four-part online "webinar" on March 31 to train union stewards, officers and staff on how to investigate and handle private and public sector grievances.

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Sitting at your desk, you can learn the basics of grievance handling, then advance to more complicated situations involving investigation, meeting with management and dealing with difficult supervisors.

Cornell's Industrial and Labor Relations School is offering the first seminar at no cost. It will be held Wednesday, March 31, from 1 pm to 2:15 pm EDT, and will cover the basics: types of grievances, rights and responsibilities of grievance handlers, the basics of arbitration and more.

There is a \$50 charge for each of the next three sessions, which will provide lots of specific information for union reps dealing with tough grievance and arbitration situations.

[Click here](#) to register or learn more about the webinar. For information about other Cornell labor studies opportunities, go to [www.ilr.cornell.edu](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu).

## **Dow Jones Local Wins Contract at Murdoch-Owned Company**

In the first round of bargaining with Dow Jones since it was acquired by the notoriously anti-union Rupert Murdoch, the Independent Association of Publishing Employees Local 1096, an affiliate of TNG-CWA, "beat back each and every one" of the company's assaults on core contract provisions and won some improvements.

The tentative four-year agreement freezes wages the first year, but provides for a 2 percent raise in each subsequent year, plus keeps cost-of-living protection. Starting July 1, a new health care plan that maintains current benefits but lowers premiums goes effect.

The IAPE negotiating team also defeated the company's effort to gut seniority rights and improved severance pay.

The IAPE bargaining team has endorsed the tentative settlement, and President Stephen Yount is meeting with Dow Jones workers nationwide to answer questions before the ratification vote. A vote is expected to be complete by May 1.

## **Solidarity Update!**

Flight attendants at British Airways who are members of the British union Unite are ready for a four day strike March 27-30, said AFA-CWA. During last week's three-day strike, more than 80 percent of crew supported the action.

If the crew does strike, any British Airways flight operating March 27-30 will be crewed by scab labor. So mark your calendars and don't fly British Airways on those dates.

Unite flight attendants are fighting back against management's demand to cut 1,700 jobs, impose a two-year wage freeze and set up a two-tier job system. Unite has been working hard to reach a settlement with management and has done everything possible to avoid the strike, but so far, management refuses to seriously consider the cabin crew's offer.

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## Last Chance to Apply for Beirne Scholarships

Don't miss the March 31 deadline to apply for CWA's Beirne scholarships, which can help you attend college or pursue an online distance-learning degree in the 2010-11 academic year.

The annual scholarships from the Joe Beirne Foundation, named for CWA's founding president, provide 15 students up to \$3,000 toward their college tuition. The award can be renewed for a second year if winners have a satisfactory academic record.

CWA members, spouses, children, grandchildren and dependents of retired, laid-off or deceased members are eligible. Winners will be chosen from a lottery of eligible applicants.

The applications are available online only at: [www.cwa-union.org/members/beirne](http://www.cwa-union.org/members/beirne), where you'll also find more information. Applications must be submitted electronically no later than midnight Wednesday, March 31.



**Attention CWA Members:**

### APPLY NOW FOR JOE BEIRNE SCHOLARSHIPS

**A**pply now for college scholarships of \$3,000 each for the 2010-2011 school year, and another \$3,000 for 2011-2012. (2nd year award based on satisfactory academic record.)

Eligible are CWA members, their spouses, children and grandchildren (including those of laid-off, retired or deceased members) planning for college studies.

Final deadline for applications is March 31, 2010.

Applications are easy to make online at the Foundation's website (including submission of a short original essay).

Winners will be chosen in a lottery drawing.

The program honors CWA's founding president, who served for more than 30 years. Joe Beirne took great pride in the roles he played in furthering educational opportunity and working for social justice.

For more information, and to fill out and submit the application form, visit:

<http://cwa-union.org/members/beirne/>

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**Working Families  
e-Activist Network**

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