



# The Sentinel

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Official quarterly  
newsletter of the  
Communications  
Workers of America  
Local 2100

Communications Workers of America  
Local 2100  
Box F, Chase, MD 21027  
March 2008—May 2008

410-335-2100

## March Meeting Dates

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800-445-0242

### Baltimore

410-335-0414 (fax)

March 4, 2008 (Tuesday)  
Knights of Columbus Hall  
Frederick Rd.—Catonsville

410-335-2796 (info)

### Belair

mail@cwa2100.org

March 5, 2008 (Wednesday)  
Vitali's—Edgewood  
1709 Edgewood Rd.

www.cwa2100.org

### Officers

### Westminster/Frederick

#### President

Steve Holland

March 6, 2008 (Thursday)

#### Ex. Vice President

Mark Balsamo

VPW Post #467

519 Poole Rd.

#### Sec./Treasurer

Tom Ward

**All meetings begin at 7:30 PM**

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#### District 1 VP

Milt Lanier

#### District 2 VP Election Results

At a meeting held at the Local office on October 25, 2007, for the purpose of nominations for District 2 Vice President, Gary Kelso was elected as an unopposed candidate. The Officers and Executive Board congratulate Gary and wish him luck in the coming year. Gary will serve out the remaining term vacated by Jeff Sellman.

#### Planned Social Functions

On June 13th this year we have two functions planned. Again the AFL/CIO Night at Camden Yards. This year the Orioles take on the Pittsburgh Pirates. Game time is 7:05 pm and tickets are \$5 a piece.

Also on June 13th we will be co-sponsoring a golf tournament with Locals 2101 and 2107. The tournament will be held at Compass Pointe Golf Course in Pasadena, MD, with

a shotgun start at 8:30 am. Format will be a Captains Choice, with prizes awarded to the three best teams, long drive and par 3's. All players will receive a 3 Pay 4 Play certificate. Breakfast and lunch with beverages will be provided. Entry fee is \$380 per team (\$95 per person). Check our website in the coming weeks for entry forms and start getting your teams together now. All proceeds will be donated to ALS.

#### District 2 VP

Gary Kelso

#### District 3 VP

Kevin Miller

#### District 4 VP

Mike Dean

#### District 5 VP

Jason Chesney

## 2008, A Year To Remember ?

by Steve Holland



First of all let me wish everyone a happy, healthy and profitable 2008.

I truly mean it when I say 2008 will be a year to remember. The Labor Contracts with Verizon Communications and VCSI expire on August 2 of this year.

As most of you already know, there was an attempt made to come to an early agreement with these companies and avoid a possible work stoppage this summer. As the Maryland Representative on the Bargaining Committee, I can tell you the Unions (CWA and IBEW) took this opportunity very seriously. I can also tell you Verizon's retrogressive proposals on Healthcare were an absolute embarrassment. As the CWA and IBEW Bargaining Committees walked away from the table, we informed Verizon's mouthpieces that when they're serious, we're ready to talk. If not, we're prepared to take you on this summer. Verizon's mentality is to ride the wave of greedy corporate America and attempt to diminish, and in some cases discontinue, our hard fought gains of the last fifty years.

It is CWA's belief that in order to provide high quality services for our present and future customers, at a competitive price, we must

employ the best available men and women. And it's a fact that our members are far superior than anything the competition can muster. In order to maintain this superiority over our competitors, our Union will insist on a fair compensation package. Anything less is unacceptable.

By the time you read this article, you should have had a "Dog and Pony" show by one of the Verizon Directors. Remember these Directors were forced by their superiors (now there's an oxymoron) to perform these comedy shows. They told you "THEIR" vision for the future. Not "YOURS" but "THEIRS". If Ivan and Denny had half a brain, they'd have their underlings ask "YOU" about "YOUR" vision for the future. I even heard that one young Director told our members that Verizon isn't making any money on FIOS. To add insult to injury, he stated that only a productivity increase will make FIOS profitable. Let me

just say that statement is "BS". Hey, Verizon, your gloom and doom approach is getting quite old and it certainly isn't correct. Verizon is a very profitable company and you know it. You stating otherwise is even beneath your corporate greed. Verizon's untrue statements are just another bargaining ploy by Ivan and the boys, to steal your future. They've already stolen the pensions and retiree healthcare from their management folks. Don't allow them to steal yours.

So I say again, 2008 will be a year to remember. Don't allow the carpetbaggers from GTE rob you of your dignity so they can get bigger bonuses. Always remember that (mis)management and that gang are only guests here. You'll be here long after the robber-barons are gone. I say to these carpetbaggers, don't crap in our house. Go home and do it.

Stick together and we will be successful in this struggle against corporate greed.



## Union Dinosaurs

by Wayne Ciampaglia

A Verizon management person recently mocked the majority of Verizon employees by calling us, "Union Dinosaurs". Being as he is in his twenties, he probably has no perspective of the work done by us to keep neglected facilities, both central office and outside plant, in working condition. This young man, who probably spent at least four years sponging off his parents to get a college education, which hasn't prepared him for the real world, apparently believes that padding a resume and changing careers a zillion times is more important than such old fashioned ideas as dedication, competence, loyalty and respect. Typical of people who have never done a technical job, he views what we do as easy, and regards us as a drain on the company bottom line. I'd like to say that his attitude is unusual or an aberration, but we all know I can't. In fact, as more

and more unqualified people fill the management ranks, their disrespect and disregard for the workers who have devoted years and decades to build, improve and maintain Verizon's business is even more widespread. Obviously since he can't bully people with impunity because of the solidarity and protection of the union, he feels frustrated and lashes out at the employees and their union.

But this "Union Dinosaur" and the rest of us have some pretty important things he doesn't, and seeing the way upper management looks upon their low level flunkies, (i.e. management), never will. We have a pension. Now, I know an invulnerable twenty-something doesn't need a pension, but I'm glad I've got one. Of course, a healthy young person won't need medical benefits, and it's a good thing he won't, because they don't want

to give him any. I'm glad that our families have had medical coverage. You would think a young person would appreciate vacation, holidays and other time off, but management has seen theirs cut back the last few years. Safety only seems to be a concern when there's a chance to flex muscles and discipline workers rather than when a clear need exists. Many in management wish that CWA and the membership would emulate dinosaurs and go away. Bad news for you, we're still here, and you need us more than ever since you've allowed conditions, customer relations, PSC hearings and common sense to go the way of the dinosaurs.

I'm glad that you and I are "Union Dinosaurs" because I'd hate for us to become self-centered brats who mindlessly suck up for the sake of a job rather than a career.

## VCSI Health Care

Some VCSI members have had deductions taken from their paychecks for health benefit coverage. Many of these members have complained that they were not notified, and hence did not realize there was a change, (or the accompanying charge).

The Union had several discussions with Labor Relations about the problem and has

requested that VCSI allow the members to have an "open enrollment." The company agreed and will notify all VCSI members.

VCSI will be sending a letter to all VCSI members allowing them to make a change in their benefits if they choose to do so. The letter will compare health plans and cost, if any. The initial letter VCSI sent out for 2008

"open enrollment" was a passive communication with no comparisons or cost for the plans.

Members will have two (2) weeks to make any changes. The changes will be retroactive to January 1st, 2008. The company has committed to provide the Union a copy of the letter.

## Same Old, Same Old

by The Subversive Scribbler

Well, the more things change, the more they stay the same. The calendar might read 2008, but it may as well be any year since the creation of Verizon. We're still losing access lines, we're still in hot water with the PSC, we still have inexperienced and incompetent management, unrealistic performance goals, understaffed work forces and the same six Steps to Success, only this year they're entitled, Key Imperatives. Looks like I was wrong, things are entirely different this year.

It's plain that the company wants to get its new message out to the troops. Just ask the workers who convened at the Fountain Green garage on January 14<sup>th</sup>. Since the new director from old GTE seems to think that the workers are illiterate, the print is too small to read or they are sight impaired, she favored them with a dramatic reading of the 2007 Accomplishments, Company Improvement Opportunities and the 2008 Key Imperatives (as opposed to the Steps to Success from last year that apparently didn't succeed last year). After this exciting display of reading and speaking skills, she opened the floor for questions. A tech asked about the rapidly deteriorating plant. "I can't answer that" was the intelligent and well-informed answer. Who

says ex-GTE management types don't have expertise and people skills? She then invited the workers to e-mail any inquiries to her, so that their concerns can be ignored (oops) addressed later. The priority of these objectives was obvious by the less than fifteen minutes she devoted to them. She must have been double parked or taken a taxi with the meter running. Other techs were treated to a thoughtful, interesting and more informative presentation given by a different director. This director actually answered questions and expressed some honest opinions on them. This meeting took nearly an hour and a half. While many things are still unsettled, these people had some idea of the progress made and the problems faced by a company with changing technologies and requirements. He even agreed that many of these "imperatives" won't be given more than lip service. Apparently some imperatives are more imperative than others.

Some highlights for the Key Imperatives include: **Grow Revenues.** Verizon plans to do this by having customers go to FIOS as soon as it's available. If they stay on the old copper cables, we won't give them dependable voice or high speed internet service. **Take Share From The Competition.**

We're supposed to tell customers who've braved the repair or new service voice response menu mazes, then waited two weeks for a response, that our service is superior to the competition. We'll also push the Triple Play, VOICE, DSL and FIOS TV, even in areas where the company refuses to provide it. We'll win and retain customers using short cuts in providing and maintaining their lines. **Improve Profitability and Increase Margins.** Especially the margin between our salaries and Ivan's pay. Use every dollar like it's your own, so when you see central office equipment that chronically fails, ignore it rather than take the time and expense to eliminate the cause. Or when you run into corroded splices or terminals just cut around or repair your specific line so that dozens of other techs can take the time to find the trouble spot and clear their own rather than do it right the first time, which will be addressed in the next item. We'll also look for innovative ways to reduce our costs, which will encompass expecting more jobs per day or covering more CO's per day while ignoring work that should be done because it'll take too

## Same Old, Same Old continued

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long to be done, but isn't due to costs. Our fourth item is a winner; **Increase Productivity**. Bullet Point #1; Whatever you do, get it right the first time! As long as it doesn't take too long or cost too much. Work smarter, use resources and tools efficiently, if you can get them. Finally, eliminate non-productive activities. Everything we do should grow revenue, take share or improve customer service. If this item seems at odds with do it right the first time, it is! The company insists on pushing service commitments further out and denying techs the time to eliminate costly trouble conditions. This next one is one we see in action every day. **Follow the Golden Rule**. Make sure that those in the upper echelon get all the gold they want. No, that's not right, treat customers how you would like to be treated. In other words, ignore their service requests for weeks on end, whip the troops to work faster and sloppier, refuse to provide DSL to many areas and continue to allow service levels to decline. After giving them the "Golden Rule" treatment, thrill the customer and make them brag about their service to friends. "I only had to wait 15 days for a service call, luckily my heart monitor didn't fail!", "It only took six tries and ten wrong guesses to get through the confusing call-in menu." "The

tech finally came after only two weeks and was so nice. He stood there and listened to my complaints for twenty minutes before he told me that there are no more facilities available and maybe my service will be in after another two weeks." The last way to provide the Best Customer Experience, is to create a great first impression. Verizon believes torturing customers with a baffling call procedure and an excessive wait time to speak to a person who was specifically hired for a lack of language skills or comprehension, and a service call after several phases of the moon have passed will delight customers. Last and maybe least. **Strengthen Our Culture**. As we asked before, what is our culture? We are to work together as a team to win in the market. The people paying for service now are apparently not as important as those future FIOS customers since money is being milked from the present plant to fund a gamble. A good gamble, but it's still a gamble. Participate in "Sell One More" and be a Verizon advocate. We've all been frustrated by the unavailability of services to every area, and artificial roadblocks to giving customers the services they want to get from Verizon. Over the years, we've seen a drop in morale and pride in our company due mainly to self destructive Verizon policies. People who

aren't brimming with pride and confidence make poor advocates. Last bullet point: Own the customer experience. We do whenever we, a family member, friends or neighbors have a service request that we try to get resolved and we'd like to trade in this lemon. Being a customer is not an enjoyable experience anymore because of the reasons already enumerated. Finally at the bottom of the handout, it says; We are proud to be Verizon Telecom. Working **smarter**. Acting **bolder**. Winning **faster**. How has Verizon made us proud? By telling us our work doesn't matter in the long run and that technology will make us obsolete doesn't exactly instill pride. Verizon staffing of inexperienced and unqualified management only makes things worse for the customers, stockholders and employees. We have to work **smarter** every day because the plant isn't getting any better. Putting up a **bolder** front won't create new facilities or new technology. Winning **faster** is tough. We're really not sure what that is, and it wasn't fully explained how to accomplish that. So as the calendar changes, some things don't. As the Scribbler wrote before, incompetence and ignorance are renewable resources. Now we can add inexperience, apathy and corporate double talk to the list. The Scribbler can't wait to see what this year brings.

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## Stewards Army Beats Verizon Deregulation Drive in Virginia

Action by the Stewards Army produced a big win in Virginia for Verizon consumers. In response to CWA's campaign to safeguard Verizon consumers and quality service and keep oversight of a critical public utility, Verizon has dropped its efforts in the state legislature to end the regulation of the sale of a telephone company.

District 2 staff, CWA locals throughout the state and the

Virginia AFL-CIO are continuing to fight Verizon's attempt to end regulation of basic telephone service rates across the board for residential and business customers. Bills pending in both houses of the legislature would permit the total price deregulation of Verizon's operations; last year the State Corporation Commission had established a competitive test to assess whether prices could be deregulated.

In testimony to regulators and other public officials, CWA members have cited numerous examples of Verizon's failure to maintain basic telephone service across the state; the company is focusing attention on the build-out of FiOS – fiber optic Internet, television and phone service – in select areas but isn't building these next-generation networks in most communities in the state.

### New Stewards

The following members have completed Basic Steward Training. The Officers and Executive Board would like to thank these members for volunteering to become Stewards of Local 2100. They will need the support of everyone in their efforts to represent our Local in the upcoming negotiations with Verizon and local management in the years to come.

Chris Biggart	Dogwood Rd.	Brandon Savoy	Pikesville
Brian Greer	Dogwood Rd	Scott Young	Harmans
Dan Goetz	Washington Rd.	Jeff Davis	Harmans
Rob Mezzadra	Shawan Rd	Henry Stemler	Harmans
Bob O'Hara	Shawan Rd.	Joe Zapf	Harmans
Keith Powers	North East	Mike Bragg	Ellicott City
Craig Woods	Wolfe St.	Donte Christian	Ellicott City—VCSI
Daphney Kelly	Vero Rd.	Robert Player	Ellicott City—VCSI
Junior Moe	Vero Rd	Mike Semke	Ellicott City—VCSI

### Local 2100 Files MOSH Complaint

In November 2007, Local 2100 was made aware of some changes to the first aid training the company is required to provide to all outside technicians. At issue was whether or not the company was required to provide hands on training for first aid **Re-certification**. The company insisted that when an employee is first hired they must have hands on training and anything after that was considered refresher, even though at the end of their own CBT training it clearly stated, "the employee must within 30 days receive the hands on portion of this training for complete

certification" After much discussion and a whole lot of tap dancing by both local company officials and Verizon Corporate Safety, the company finally responded by saying "we believe that we are in compliance with the law".

Local 2100 officials contacted the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Administration for an interpretation and subsequently filed the formal complaint in December 2007. After a review of the issue, a Md. Mosh official responded, " he believed that Verizon would be in violation of the law."

Not to anyone's surprise in January 2008 Verizon suddenly changed its position and not only agreed to include hands on training for all first aid training in Maryland but agreed to expand this effort in all of the Potomac Area. It is a shame that this company forced this union to take this action when in fact they knew they were wrong the entire time. So much for honesty, integrity and doing the right thing. Isn't it interesting that in the company's key imperatives for 2008, Safety doesn't even get a mention!!!