NABET-CWA WRAPS UP 2017 WITH ORGANIZING VICTORIES

Your Union became “CWA Stronger” this year. NABET-CWA added new members who will strengthen its efforts to build a more powerful workers’ voice at the bargaining table and in the legislative-political arena. Over the past two months, workers at NBC/NASCAR and AT&T/DirecTV in Los Angeles voted overwhelmingly for Union representation.

NBC/NASCAR Broadcast Technicians

NBC Sports Network technicians who cover NASCAR events around the country voted overwhelmingly for CWA representation. The election was conducted on Dec. 1 by the National Labor Relations Board’s New York region.

Local 11 President Emeritus Ed McEwan coordinated the organizing drive with assistance by Local 11 President Lou Marinaro. NBC/NASCAR camera operator Dean Kamienski was the lead and primary contact for the crew. The effort began two months ago when McEwan was on-site with a NASCAR crew in Florida when the crew expressed concerns about inconsistent work rules, terms and conditions on various NBC/NASCAR events. NBC Sports holds the broadcast rights to half of the NASCAR season. During that period, NBC televises NASCAR racing events on the main broadcast network (NBC-TV) as well as various non-broadcast cable outlets: NBC Sports Network (NBCSN), MSNBC and occasionally CNBC.

The work on NBC-TV is NABET-CWA jurisdiction, however the cable productions are not necessarily crewed pursuant to the union contract. On those occasions when NBC would crew non-union, they would often apply inferior work rules and conditions. The crews are seeking consistency and fairness in their working conditions and terms of engagement. The NASCAR technicians organized to achieve fair wages and benefits, and NABET-CWA – the leading union for workers in sports media production – said it is ready to begin negotiations with the NBC Sports Network.

Network Negotiating Committee Prepares for NBC Bargaining

NABET-CWA’s call for proposals and ideas from members at NBC locals wrapped up in September. The information gathered will aid the Network Negotiating Committee (NNC) as they prepare for early bargaining with NBC, which is set to begin January 3, 2018. Representatives on the NNC include: WMAQ-TV/NBC Steward Ed Dabrowski (Local 41), his alternate Local 41 President Don Villar, Local 53 President Steve Ross, his alternate Warren Stern, Michael Judge for Local 31 and his alternate Local 31 Vice President Bob Williams, Local 11 President Lou Marinaro, and his alternate Robert Weiss. The Chief Spokesperson is Sector President Charlie Braico and NABET-CWA General Counsel Judiann Charteris is providing advice and counsel to the union’s committee.

Locals 11, 31, 41 and 53 are gearing up for mobilization in support of the bargaining and urging members to wear red on Thursdays to show their solidarity. The mobilization committee will be holding other events and rallies in the coming weeks.

The current NABET-CWA/NBC Master Agreement expires on March 31, 2018. It covers all of the Union’s members at NBC, including approximately 2,700 Staff and Daily Hire employees working as broadcast technicians in the studios, as well as in the field for NBC News, NBC Sports and NBC Entertainment. Also covered under the Master Agreement are building maintenance, air conditioning and plant maintenance personnel, staging services personnel, and couriers at various Company Network and TV station operations in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.

Local 11 is CWA Strong

NABET-CWA Local 11 marched alongside a mobile billboard for the 2017 NYC Labor Day Parade to promote the CWA STRONG program. Under the CWA STRONG campaign, locals and activists have pledged to build the Union by talking with and signing up non-members, strengthen organizing committees, and recruit new stewards and activists. The plan also calls for CWA locals at or below 80 percent organized, with support from the districts and the national union, to increase membership by 10 percentage points this year; for all locals to have active and effective organizing, legislative-political, and human rights committees, participate in boot camps and other trainings, and to build and strengthen the workplace mobilization structure.
In appreciation of our Union Stewards

As we end this year of political turmoil and continuing assaults on our profession from both inside and outside the workplace, I want to acknowledge and encourage the tremendous efforts of our Union’s stewards who work every day for the benefit of their co-workers and all NABET-CWA members.

These are the people who arrange and organize union meetings and events, walk picket lines, stand up for their brothers and sisters in grievance procedures, and represent their co-workers in contract talks. They’ve helped members recover lost wages, fought for better wages and benefits, and stood up for those who’ve been wrongfully terminated, to name just a few of their duties.

Stewards accept the burdens of workplace leadership that, at times, can be frustrating and stressful, but that comes with the rewards of creating a happier, more secure workplace for their fellow workers. Most members look first to these leaders with questions, relying on them to understand the contract and offer guidance when dealing with workplace issues. It is a big responsibility that deserves appreciation.

Each year, NABET-CWA conducts Steward Training during the Regional Advisory Board meeting. This year, several volunteers stepped up to represent their locals, and thereby, offered to protect their co-workers’ interests on the job. They will be the day-to-day contact within their shops, giving of their time and energy to build group solidarity and strengthen the union.

The newest NABET-CWA local stewards include: Local 28 President Mike Prince, Local 48’s David Morales (Local 46), and Cameron Milbrot (Local 25). They all have the opportunity to positively influence the members of the bargaining unit, not just the few who encounter workplace problems. And, hopefully, their goodwill encourages others to participate in their union and support our initiatives.

It is especially important in today’s anti-worker environment to come together, to volunteer for a community event, support contract talks, or endorse labor-friendly political candidates. Only with member support can we accomplish our goals and bring power to working families.

People are our Union’s greatest resource, so I encourage all members to consider union service. The most important qualification is not knowledge, but courage... the courage to stand up for what’s right. Union service is an opportunity to use that courage to lead, and I thank all of those who have chosen to do just that.

Flying High: NABET-CWA continues drone training

NABET-CWA Local 41 is the latest local to bring drone training to its members. Eighteen members employed by NBC, FOX, Telemundo and Univision attended the Sept. 16 training taught by fellow Local 41 member Colin Hinkle, a Daily Hire at ABC and owner of Chicago-based drone production company Soaring Badger Productions. In 2015, Hinkle was the first person in Illinois to be granted an FAA license to fly drones.

Local 41 president Don Villar said his members had been asking about the training, so the local organized and created the curriculum themselves. They currently are working on supplemental training to assist members with taking the FAA exam, which requires a minimum grade of 90% to pass.

The training was held at the Workers United Hall, where NABET-CWA utilized classroom space for indoor instruction and the large parking lot outside for flight training.

Drones are currently being used in the Chicago news market, so Villar is hopeful that this training will enable NABET-CWA members to put their new skills to work at their stations.

“The training allows our members to be the first ones to step up and say they know how to do this, as opposed to the company possibly bringing a non-union member in to do the job,” explained Villar.

“As new technology rolls into our industry, and our members receive training and show initiative, we are poised to capture that work.”

CNN receives first waiver to fly drones over people

In a precedent-setting decision, the FAA granted CNN a waiver to operate an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) over crowds of people. The drone, known as Snap, will be provided by Vantage Robotics, which created it for the purpose of safely capturing aerial video over people. Vantage worked with both CNN and the FAA on development.

Earlier in 2017, CNN became the first news organization to receive FAA approval to fly a small drone over people for closed-set motion picture and television production. The Part 107 waiver to operate over people was considered the most difficult waiver to receive from the FAA, with implications for future drone use not just in film and media, but also for commercial drone operators.

The CNN waiver is not tied to a specific operation, allowing the company to fly over “authorized persons necessary to accomplish the work activity directly associated with the operation.”

In a statement, Vantage Robotics said, “This waiver gives Vantage the opportunity to pioneer new territory for the use of commercial drones near people. And we are thrilled for the opportunity to be useful for journalism... a host of other fields where the aerial perspective and remote presence is needed near people.”

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In comments submitted to the Federal Communications Commission on Aug. 29, NABET-CWA joined with CWA and The News Guild-CWA—as representatives of both broadcast/media workers and consumers of broadcast media—in urging the Commission to deny the Sinclair Broadcasting Group’s and Tribune Media Company’s application to transfer control of Tribune’s broadcast holdings to Sinclair.

The application calls for the control of Tribune’s 42 television stations in 33 markets, as well as WGN America, WGN Radio, and a 31 percent stake in Food Network to transfer to Sinclair, creating “a broadcasting behemoth” of 223 television stations in 108 markets, including 39 of the top 50.

Research Center, most U.S. adults get their news from television and of those, 46% get it from local TV. Fewer locally produced stories mean fewer jobs as well. Sinclair routinely duplicates the same programming at its stations through joint service and shared service agreements, which not only eliminates varying viewpoints, but also results in job loss in at least one of the stations involved in the agreement. “Over the past decade, Sinclair reduced the number of workers per station by more than eight percent,” the unions said.

On November 8, NABET-CWA and The News Guild sponsored a petition, “Don’t Let the FCC Crash Local News,” urging people to sign the petition and write letters telling the FCC to vote NO on FCC Chairman Ajit Pai’s proposal to eliminate longstanding rules that limit media ownership and protect local news coverage.

**FCC eliminates rule requiring local presence**

In what could be considered a huge coincidence, the FCC voted in October to dismantle its 80-year-old rule that required TV station groups to have a presence in the communities they serve, which will help move Sinclair’s application toward approval. The Republican-controlled FCC voted along party lines to further deregulate the broadcast industry and help media companies continue to consolidate their operations.

The National Association of Broadcasters pushed for the rule change as a cost savings and as a reflection of current trends toward how people interact with businesses: through the Internet. They even went so far as to suggest that the money saved could be spent on more staff and programming.

The two Democrats on the Commission—Mignon Clyburn and Jessica Rosenworcel—voted against the changing the rule, arguing that broadcasters can best serve their communities when they have a real presence, especially during disaster coverage.

In her dissenting opinion, Clyburn wrote, “Today is a solemn one, in the history of television and radio broadcasting. By eliminating the main studio rule in its entirety for all broadcast stations—regardless of size or location—the FCC signals that it no longer believes those awarded a license to use the public airwaves, should have a local presence in their community. Yes, the very same majority, that talks about embracing policies to promote job creation, is paving the way for broadcast station groups, large and small, to terminate studio staff and abandon the communities they are obligated to serve.”

Most of the benefits of the rule change will now “flow to broadcast station groups that are already experiencing record revenue returns,” she added.

Sinclair already is outsourcing at WNWO-TV (Toledo, OH), whose newscast is produced and anchored out of South Bend, Indiana. The move cost 80 percent of WNWO’s employees their jobs at the beginning of 2017. The same South Bend-based anchors that present the Toledo newscast also anchor the news for WOLF-TV in Scranton, PA.

The website FTVLive.com posts the bloopers and mistakes that have resulted from producing the WNWO “local” newscast 150 miles away: www.ftvlive.com

As part of the rule change, stations will still be required to maintain a toll-free local number so consumers can contact the station.

**Sinclair merger in the media**

Mother Jones (November/December 2017) published an in-depth article on Sinclair and its history, which describes Sinclair’s broadcasts as a “mix of terrorism alerts, right-wing commentary, and classic propaganda” that could soon reach three quarters of U.S. households. On his HBO show, Last Week Tonight, John Oliver excoriated the proposal in an episode that has been seen more than six million times on YouTube. In it, Oliver said, “Should this Tribune acquisition go through, there are going to be even more good journalists having to see their hard work placed alongside terror-desk nonsense.” (Stations are required to air terrorism alerts daily.)

“The FCC is gaming the rules to directly benefit Sinclair,” says Craig Aaron, the president of the public interest group Free Press in Mother Jones.

In addition to its future stranglehold on American airwaves, Sinclair uses its newscasts to serve viewers conservative political content in between its “local” stories and weather reports. New York University professor and media critic said Sinclair represents “a new kind of media company: a political empire with television stations.”

At several points, Baltimore, MD-based Sinclair seemed as though it wasn’t going to hang on and was inhibited from growth in 2013, the Democrat-controlled FCC changed the “UHF loophole” that allowed stations to avoid consolidation limits by dividing the audience figures of their UHF stations in half. However, U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) was then the chair of the Appropriations Committee and refused to allow the FCC to use any money to enforce the rule.

The Trump campaign reached an agreement with Sinclair to give it greater access to its campaign in exchange for interviews with candidate Trump without commentary. On the day after his election, Sinclair owner David Smith said it was “a really serious opportunity to seek complete deregulation” of broadcasting. “If Donald Trump is as deregulatory as he suggests he is,” he said, “we’re going to be the first industry in line.”

**Maryland Attorney General opposes merger**

On November 3, Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh filed comments with the Federal Communications Commission in opposition of the $3.9 billion deal, joining attorneys general in Illinois, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Frosh said the merger would likely increase costs and reduce programming choices for consumers. At the least, the attorneys general asked the FCC to delay merger consideration until a District of Columbia Circuit Court completes a rule on the calculation method used to determine national audience reach.

The U.S. Department of Justice also is reviewing the proposed deal, which is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Mother Jones is seeking testimonials from viewers.

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1 Mother Jones (November/December 2017)

If your TV station is owned or operated by Sinclair Broadcasting, tell us what you’re seeing. Mother Jones is seeking testimonials from viewers.
NABET-CWA Local 41 member takes part in CWA Minority Leadership Institute

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ABET-CWA Local 41 Alternate Steward and Political Organizer Raza Siddiqui spent two weeks in September and October participating in CWA’s Minority Leadership Institute (MLI), meeting colleagues in other sectors and learning the skills needed to be a leader in his union. Siddiqui will spend the third part of the training being mentored at the local office.

Sector President Charlie Braico nominated Siddiqui to attend the Institute, where he joined 11 others from different CWA sectors for the intensive leadership training program. Siddiqui was further encouraged by Local 41 President Don Villar, who is a 2010 graduate of the MLI program, which Villar described as “intensive, but worth it.”

Historically, the MLI grew out of the work of CWA’s Committee on Civil Rights and Equity (CCE), which recommended more training opportunities for minorities in order for them to find their place within the union. In 1983, the Executive Board established the MLI, which has been held annually ever since.

This year’s Institute was organized by Chris Kennedy, the Director of the Human Rights Department at CWA, and held at CWA’s Washington, D.C. headquarters. Attendees were exposed to a variety of resources within the organization, including Elise Bryant, Executive Director of the Labor Heritage Foundation and President of the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

Bryant led the group through a labor history exercise that asked participants to examine different times in history in which migration patterns or a changing workforce impacted policy making.

“We would think on the spot and dialogue with the class, which was very challenging, but rewarding as a learning experience,” said Siddiqui, who said they also were asked to relate books and movies that illustrated the points made in class.

CWA National Political Director Rafael Navar led the group through a “political bootcamp,” and CWA National Legislative Director Shane Larson spoke about Wall Street. The Social Media team taught the importance of how to present a message through images and effectively use the tools we have to send a cohesive, unified message. Jessica Newman, the Legislation, Policy, and Human Rights Coordinator for CWA, spoke about the “fight forward,” and Melissa Matos, Assistant to the Vice President for Public, Healthcare and Education Workers, spoke about oppressive myths/people power and how to overcome division.

Lizzie Howard, Strategic Research Associate, taught participants how to properly research an issue and asked them to write an op-ed about social issues, which she helped prepare for publication, and make a presentation to the class.

“I’ve spoken before, done panels on free press, and speeches on the challenges our industry faces; however, the short time frame to prepare this presentation really took me out of my comfort zone,” said Siddiqui, “but I received positive feedback and a video of my presentation is going to be shared with members of the News Guild.”

CWA President Chris Shelton, CWA Secretary-Treasurer Sara Steffens, and Claude Cummings, Vice President of CWA District 6, also spoke to participants, who were encouraged to engage with them and ask questions.

“The trainers and leaders we met made this experience absolutely engaging – at times overwhelming – but always beneficial,” Siddiqui enthused. “Most of all, we learned from each other in the different sectors that make up CWA; learned the challenges each of us in our various sectors face, and how we can overcome them together.”

During the week, the group used a lunch break to join the News Guild’s protest at The Washington Post. Siddiqui described an “empowering experience,” in which they joined with fellow CWA members to demand a fair contract. The Post wants the union to accept contract language that would require employees to sign away their right to sue in order to receive severance.

While taking part in the MLI, Siddiqui was encouraged by former Local 53 president Leroy Jackson, who reached out to him after Siddiqui posted a message on Facebook. Jackson, who was the first member of NABET-CWA to attend MLI, said the experience led him to run successfully for Local 53 president in 2004.

“That’s what MLI does: it encourages participants, current and former to share life experiences,” Siddiqui said. “Leroy gave me guidance on who to meet while there, and what opportunities to take advantage of to have a more fulfilling experience.”

The Institute culminates with an “mentoring” component, where participants work alongside union leaders in their home districts. Siddiqui will shadow Local 41 President Don Villar. He said he looks forward to the opportunity to understand the union from a different perspective.

On the whole, Siddiqui said he most appreciated the opportunity to join with people from different sectors – public workers, flight attendants, mobility workers – to gain a broader perspective and learn how to work together. The group regularly texts each other to inform each other about different challenges they’re facing, to mobilize and support each other.

“Every day at the MLI, I was challenged and floored by how much I learned and all of the connection I made,” he said.

$3,000 College Scholarships Available from your Union – Apply Today!!

Apply now for the 2018 NABET-CWA Memorial Scholarship Awards. Preliminary applications must be received by February 12, 2018. Members may obtain an application from any NABET-CWA or Sector office.

The scholarship contest is open to sons and daughters of active, retired or deceased NABET-CWA members. The award provides $750 annually for four years – a total of $3,000! – toward their tuition or other expenses to the school designated by the winner.

The scholarship conditions are as follows:

- Applicants must be students in a high school class graduating in 2018.
- Winners must maintain at least a C+ average or equivalent during their four years in college and must attend full-time.
- All applications must be verified by the Local President before mailing to the Sector Office at NABET-CWA Attn: Scholarships, 501 Third Street, N.W., 6th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001.

For more information, contact your local president or the Sector office at (202) 434-1254. To access the application online, please Visit: https://www.nabetcwa.org/news/first-application-nabet-cwa-memorial-scholarship-awards

This is a merit-based scholarship. Once the first application has been received in the NABET-CWA office, a second application is mailed to the student. The student must complete the forms and submit a 500-1000 word essay, transcripts, and other supporting materials.

For more than 20 years, NABET-CWA has awarded over 100 scholarships to deserving students. Scholarships are funded by grants from the NABET-CWA Sector Executive Council and from donor gifts. Many NABET-CWA members and their families have made donations in honor of loved ones. If you would like to make a funding donation contact Jodi Fabrizio-Clontz at 202-434-1254 or e-mail us at nabet-cwa@cwa-union.org.

Scholarship Application can be found at: https://www.nabetcwa.org/news/first-application-nabet-cwa-memorial-scholarship-awards
NABET-CWA Local 18

Christmas Party

On December 4, 38 members of Local 411 celebrated the holidays at Mancini’s Char House in St. Paul, MN.

NABET-CWA Retirements

Local 18 Vice President Jim Nolan (at right) congratulates Don Faithfull on his retirement on December 1. Don worked his entire career — 31 years — in the audio maintenance department at the ABC TV Network in New York City. He retired as the Supervisor in Charge. “As all of his colleagues will attest, he was a great person to work for and with,” said Nolan. “He truly was and is an unparalleled professional in every way. I know he will be missed by all.”

NABET-CWA Local 18 members, family and friends picnicked at Kimball Farms in Westford, MA, on October 1. Local 18 held a picnic once before, two years ago, but since this year proved so popular with members’ families, Local President Mike Wilkins said they are thinking about making it an annual event.

Local 18 Secretary John Parker and Local 18 President Mike Wilkins on the bumper boats.

(Left to right): Local 18 President Mike Wilkins, Local 18 Secretary John Parker and RVP2 Roy Schrodt.

Local 16 Vice President Jim Nolan (at right) congratulates Don Faithfull on his retirement on December 1. Don worked his entire career — 31 years — in the audio maintenance department at the ABC TV Network in New York City. He retired as the Supervisor in Charge. “As all of his colleagues will attest, he was a great person to work for and with,” said Nolan. “He truly was and is an unparalleled professional in every way. I know he will be missed by all.”

Retired Treasurer Benny Krol (at right) and incoming Local 18 Treasurer Bob Martin.

Local 411 Christmas Party

On December 4, 38 members of Local 411 celebrated the holidays at Mancini’s Char House in St. Paul, MN.

Photo credit: Jodi Fabrizio-Clontz
Many times, the reporters and crews were doing exactly what they were warning viewers not to do: going out in the middle of the storm. On social media, viewers questioned whether CNN and MSNBC reporters were using sound judgment as they stood in knee-deep water, with blowing winds and falling trees. The New York Times reported that the news value of dangerous winds and falling trees is under more scrutiny today, reported that the news value of dangerous winds and falling trees.

Broadcasting live from hurricanes began with Dan Rather in 1961, when he worked for KHOU in Houston, which broadcast the first live radar image of Hurricane Carla. Rather’s coverage is credited with propelling him to fame and, eventually, the anchor desk at CBS. He calls it his “big break.”

While network reporters often have more resources and manpower to cover these events, local reporters often must go it alone. Jacque Masse, a reporter for 12News in Beaumont, TX, covered Harvey as an M MJ, which prompted criticism from the blog FTVLive.com, which wrote of the situation, “Sending a single MMJ to cover a hurricane is not only one of the cheapest moves we’ve ever seen, it’s dangerous.”

Hayley Minogue, a reporter for WKRG-TV in Mobile, Ala., said you have to know when to say “no”. “Somewhere it’s been ingrained in our minds that there’s a million calls on the ground as we see fit. "W e get full support to make all the calls on the ground as we see fit."

If you won’t do it, someone else will”.

NBC News anchor Lester Holt, who has covered seven major storms on the ground, was in both Texas and Florida. Holt said training for these types of storms is helpful, and many of those at NBC who do overseas assignments have gone through special hostile environment training. Most often, however, they rely on their own experience. According to Holt, NBC encourages safety and relies on the best judgment of their employees: “We get full support to make all the calls on the ground as we see fit."

Many of those who covered the storms not only documented the news, they also provided safety tips and assisted in rescues. Though most new s reporters try to stay out of stories, CBS News reporter David Begnaud explained, “I’m a journalist, but I’m also a human being.” He guided residents out of a flooded house in Houston to a rescue boat. The Weather Channel’s Jim Cantore was asked by a man to deliver a message over the air. Cantore told the man’s family members to evacuate because they might not get another chance. Sixty people eventually evacuated, with some telling Cantore it was because they watched him on TV. Cantore explained, “When people are in trouble, you just do what you can to help. I could give a crap about TV at that point.”

While most of our typical broadcast jobs are not directly impacted by NAFTA like our brothers and sisters in manufacturing, it does impact the communities that we come from and call home. In the Chicago area, many members have friends, neighbors and maybe even family members who worked in a factory that picked up and went to Mexico because of NAFTA. The loss of those good paying jobs leaves a void in these communities as those left behind struggle to find gainful employment.”

Organizers also called for making it easier for workers to form unions. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the hostility toward unions in the U.S. creates unfair competition between the two countries. In 28 U.S. states, “right-to-work” laws inhibit the ability of workers to unionize and also lowers wages. In September, Senators Elizabeth Warren, Sherrod Brown, and Kirsten Gillibrand introduced legislation to ban “right-to-work” laws throughout the U.S. The participants hope to build on the transnational labor solidarity they’ve created, believing it is more powerful for workers from other unions to collaborate than for individual unions to fight alone.
Danielle Cotterman, and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi.

The bargaining committee includes Matt Stone, Kate Keller, John DeTolla, LEC President Roy Schrodt, Dan Neaverth, and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi.

FOX LV Hub – Burbank, CA (Local 53)
The two sides met for two days with FOX in Las Vegas, during which the company presented the Union’s committee with a “last, best, and final” proposal. The company proposal provides no guaranteed wage increases, elimination of dental and vision insurance, and participation in the 401K plan. Their proposal does not include just cause for discipline and discharge. No new bargaining dates have been scheduled at this time.

WDIV-TV – Detroit, MI (Local 43)
One two-day session and another day of negotiations moved the parties a little closer to settlement, though no agreement has been reached on economics, layoff/seniority, or the no strike/no lockout provision. No new dates are scheduled at this time. The bargaining committee includes Local 43 President Dorethea Brown-Maxey, Jim Delavastas, and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi.

FOX LV Hub – Burbank, CA (Local 53)
The tw o sides met for tw o days w ith FO X in Las Vegas, during w hich the company presented the Un ion’s committee w ith a “last, best, and final” proposal. The company proposal provides no guaranteed wage increases, elimination of dental and vision insurance, and participation in the 401K plan. Their proposal does not include just cause for discipline and discharge. No new bargaining dates have been scheduled at this time.

W FJ-TV – Youngstown, OH (Local 47)
The tw o sides m et for tw o days w ith FO X in Las Vegas, during w hich the company presented the Un ion’s committee w ith a “last, best, and final” proposal. The company proposal provides no guaranteed wage increases, elimination of dental and vision insurance, and participation in the 401K plan. Their proposal does not include just cause for discipline and discharge. No new bargaining dates have been scheduled at this time.

NABET-CWA Calendar

NABET-CWA Scholarship
1st Scholarship Deadline: Feb. 12, 2018
2nd Scholarship Deadline: April 30, 2018
Judging Deadline: May 31, 2018

Sector Executive Council Meeting – Winter
Feb. 27-28, March 1, 2018

Regional Advisory Board Meeting
Cincinnati, OH
April 20-21, 2018

Sector Executive Council Meeting – Spring
May 22-23-24, 2018

CWA Presidents Meeting – Washington, D.C.
June 11, 2018

CWA Legislative/Political Conference
Washington, D.C.
June 12-13, 2018

Sector Executive Council Meeting – Fall
Oct. 23-24-25, 2018

http://www.nabetcwa.org/jobs

NABET-CWA Election Notice: Regions 1, 3 and 5

NABET-CWA members seeking to run for election as Regional Vice President in NABET-CWA Regions 1, 3 and 5 may obtain nominating petitions from their Local after January 2, 2018. Original petitions must be filed by April 13, 2018, in the Sector Office in Washington, D.C.

Candidates must be active NABET-CWA members in good standing, in their regions, for at least three consecutive years immediately preceding their nomination. Election procedures are specified in Article VII of the NABET-CWA Sector By-Laws.

Voting for these offices will be conducted by mail. Ballots will be mailed May 4, 2018, to all active members in good standing, in each of the three Regions, to the address on file with the Sector Office.

If you do not receive a ballot within a reasonable time after May 4, 2018, and believe you are eligible to vote, notify your Local so that an inquiry may be made to the Washington office, or call the office directly to request a duplicate ballot. The phone number is (202) 434-1254.

Ballots must reach the post office by 10 a.m., Eastern Daylight Time, on June 4, 2018, and will be counted that day. Elected candidates will begin terms on the Sector Executive Council commencing on July 1, 2018.
SERPs: The real entitlements in this country

In a previous issue of NABET News, I made reference to SERPs, a Supplementary Executive Retirement Plan. Brothers and sisters, these are the real entitlements in this country, not Social Security and Medicare.

These SERPs are non-contributory and unfunded. Non-contributory is self-explanatory; unfunded may require an explanation. Unfunded means that there is no Pension Trust to fund it. Our GE pension is funded by the GE Pension Trust, to which we contributed, and that currently has more than $40 billion in assets. Who pays for the SERPs? We, the shareowners do. That’s right. SERP payments come directly from the shareowners’ pockets. Jack Welch once said that the largest group of GE shareowners is retirees, so we, GE retirees/shareowners have our retiree medical benefits terminated, and simultaneously, pay the supplementary pensions of the very same people that terminated our benefits.

Let’s examine the situation surrounding the SERP for GE executives. As of 2016, GE’s total obligation for the SERPs for both current and former GE executives is more than $6 billion. Out of approximately 300,000 GE employees worldwide, only about 4,000-5,000 executives are eligible for SERPs.

Now, let’s consider former GE Chairman and CEO Jeff Immelt’s pension payment. As of the end of 2016, his pension would amount to approximately $5.3 million dollars annually. That quite possibly will increase by the end of 2017, his final year as CEO. About 2.5% comes from the GE Pension Plan, which of course is the plan for the average GE retiree, so 97.5% comes from us, the shareowners.

I think it is important to point out that most of the SERP recipients, the executives, are likely not to have ever produced, designed, created, made, or sold any of GE’s products. That made me begin to think, are these kings and queens of GE actually “the unskilled labor” at GE? Just sayin’!!!

I have a friend who is very good at numbers, and he was able to calculate this amazing statistic. If on the last day that Jack Welch was GE’s CEO (Sept. 6, 2001), you purchased $100 worth of GE stock, reinvested all of the dividends, and held the stock until Jeff Immelt’s last day as CEO (July 31, 2017), that investment would be worth $106.35. That to me is a breathtaking statistic. A return on investment of $6.25 for each $100 invested, over 16 years. Now we know that Immelt felt it necessary not only to travel by corporate jet, but also to have a spare jet accompany him on some overseas trips. If we have learned anything in the last few years, it is that some people are “shameless.” Next to the word “entitlement” in the dictionary should be Jeff Immelt’s picture.

Lawsuits

As most of you know by now, both lawsuits regarding GE’s termination of retiree post-65 health benefits, disappointingy have been dismissed. The lawsuit filed by the Coordinated Bargaining Committee (CBC) will be appealed. Their briefs were due on October 10, 2017.

Another lawsuit has been filed against GE. This one involves their Savings & Security Plan (SkSP). As I understand it, the lawsuit cites five mutual funds managed by GE. To be included in this class action, you needed to own one of these five funds between January 1, 2011, and June 3, 2016. The law firm handling this suit is Sanford Heisler Sharp, in San Diego, CA.

October 12, 2017 Meeting

GE retirees held our annual meeting with the GE Human Resources team in Schenectady, NY. In addition to the union representatives at the meeting, there were two representatives from OneExchange. GE was represented by Butch Ruedy and Marybeth Stevens-Carlihe, who chaired the meeting. GE did commit to the $1,000 RRA for 2018, but they would not commit to anything beyond that. Even if they did, why would we believe them?

There was some discussion about the changes occurring at GE. Jeff Immelt is out, and John Flannery is in. Mr. Flannery has stopped most, if not all, use of corporate jets and ended the program that leased cars for top level executives. There was much discussion regarding the service offered by OneExchange (not all of it positive – LOL).

2018 Medicare Part D Coverage Gap (Donut Hole):

$3,750-$5,000

If Congress doesn’t screw things up, the “donut hole” will disappear in 2020.

Letter to the Readers of the NABET/CWA News

I read Bill Freeda’s column titled “After the Show” in the fall issue of the NABET/CWA News. Mr. Freeda started his remarks by explaining how various companies and their CEO’s try to marginalize retirees. He laments the ridiculous amounts of money paid to some CEO’s and suggests they be identified as “entitlements,” unlike the Social Security and Medicare benefits that retirees work to earn their entire lives.

All of these things I absolutely agree with, but then Freeda decides to attack his union CWA and lump CWA in with this list of companies that have unquestionably harmed retirees. Mr. Freeda’s attack on CWA is fraught with ‘alternative facts.’

The first alternative fact is that the CWA Growth Fund for retirees was created for anything but helping our retirees organize to become a more powerful and cohesive organization. The next alternative fact is that CWA unilaterally decided to limit the number of meetings and participants in these meetings with the Retired Members Council officers. The truth is the RMC Executive Board agreed to those changes.

Mr. Freeda then deciess that an online newsletter is not enough, but someone should ask how he knows that since after creating “Grey Matters,” it was only published twice. It was abandoned because no one, including Mr. Freeda, wanted to create content for it. Mr. Freeda states in his diatribe that I treated his insistence that the Retired Members Council be given the back page of the CWA News with indifference. This is just another alternative fact since I offered Mr. Freeda the back page of the CWA News one time to try it out and see if it could work. When it came to the Retired Members Council on the back page, Mr. Freeda did not like the fact that it was a trial and refused. At this year’s Convention, Mr. Freeda asked me to set up a meeting with our Communications Director, which I did. So I must ask how me agreeing to everything Mr. Freeda requested makes me indifferent.

Mr. Freeda insists that seniors are not computer savvy and an online newsletter would not work. Pew Research Center report of May 17, 2017, states two-thirds of Americans over age 65 go online (up from 12 percent in 2000), 42 percent over age 65 own smartphones, (18 percent in 2013), 51 percent have broadband internet access (was 1 percent in 2000), and 34 percent use social media (was 2 percent in 2008). These numbers certainly show that older Americans are more and more computer savvy.

In part of the heading in Mr. Freeda’s article he wrote, “We must speak up politely if possible, or not so politely, if necessary.” Speaking up either politely or impolitely is a union trait and I am the first one to applaud it, but attacking the very people who support you, is a very grave error. Since Freeda’s column is entitled “After the Show,” he must believe that this is all a show and that he is the star. His star status gives him a pass on paying attention to the opinions of others and the right to reject any idea that is not his own. An online newsletter written and produced by retirees could be an effective form of communication and should be tried. To sum it up “Bill,” maybe it’s time to take “Yes” for an answer.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Shelton
CWA President