Members at ABC/Disney ratify new Master Agreement

Package includes increased benefits for Daily Hires

On April 14, eligible NABET-CWA members employed by ABC/Disney ratified the Master Agreement, which was reached between Union and Company negotiators on March 8. The agreement was the result of more than five months of bargaining and represents the first time in decades a tentative agreement has been reached before the expiration of the current contract. The previous Master Agreement expired on March 31, 2017. Prior to the ratification vote, NABET-CWA Locals 16 (New York), 31 (Washington, D.C.), 41 (Chicago), and 51 (San Francisco and Los Angeles) conducted membership meetings and provided further information on the contract offer.

The new four-year contract covers more than 2,700 Staff and Daily Hire employees working as broadcast technicians, telecommunications specialists, newswriters, producers, desk assistants, publicists, and plant maintenance personnel at ABC Network News, Sports and Entertainment divisions as well as Owned-and-Operated television stations in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. The parties negotiated across-the-board wage increases – totaling 9% over the next four years – as follows:

- 2.5% – upon ratification
- 2.0% – second year
- 2.0% – third year
- 2.0% – fourth year

For the first time, Daily Hire employees are eligible to receive short turnaround pay. Other improvements for Daily Hires include a paid sick leave provision, an increase in the travel day stipend, annual vacation pay improvements, and enhancements to various health and retirement benefit plans.

Improvements for full-time Staff employees include a significant increase in the accrual rate (the retroactive “pop-up”) for current participants in the ABC-NABET pension plan, Disney Main Entrance Passes, and a Company offer or solicitation of interest for Sidleletter EZ buyouts for Staff employees in the A, B, E, F, K, and O Units. The Company said it would not make any commitments as to the numbers of people (if any at all) who might be accepted into the program in each division or operating group.

The new agreement also anticipates future job opportunities in “New Media” for all covered employees. The first annual wage increase of 2.5% and most of the new contract’s terms and conditions were retrospective to April 1, 2017, unless otherwise stated in any individual proposal contained in the March 8, 2017 contract offer. Members may review the summary document prepared by the Network Negotiating Committee, as well as the complete Tentative Agreement, by visiting your Local website or the Sector website at www.nabetcwa.org.

Local 25 President Roy Schrodt elected Vice President of Region 2

In a Special Election, Roy Schrodt, President of Local 25 in Buffalo, NY, was elected by acclamation and sworn in as Vice President of Region 2 on June 6. Schrodt takes over for Fred Saburro, who had served as RV/P for 14 terms since 1979. “After turning 90, Freddie finally decided to retire and focus on his health,” said Schrodt, who promised Saburro that he would run for the position whenever he decided to retire.

Regional Vice Presidents serve a three-year term and are a bridge between Locals and the Sector office. Schrodt will take up any issues that the Region 2 Locals need advice or help with to the national office. Schrodt now has a seat on the Sector Executive Council, which meets three times a year and deals with all of the Union’s issues. He also will help conduct the annual Regional Advisory Board meeting for Regions 2 and 6. The two regions hold the meetings jointly because they represent most of the Union’s independent locals. For two days, they meet to discuss Union business and to teach new officers about their role as representatives. Schrodt said this education component is especially important for the independent locals to make their union duties a little bit easier because most officers hold full-time jobs in addition to their part-time Union work.

Having just completed his first SEC meeting in Cincinnati in June, Schrodt said it is humbling to follow in Saburro’s footsteps: “He’s a living legend in our Union. It’s a very big challenge to think I could do as good a job as he has for all this time.”

Years ago, Saburro imparted this wisdom to Schrodt, which he has never forgotten: “He said when I became an officer in the Union, I pledged to leave it in better shape than I found it,” Schrodt shared. “I will model my service after this advice. Freddie’s always been a mentor to me and all of the Local officers. I will do my best.”

Region 2 represents more than 1,000 members in the following locals:

- Local 14 (New Haven, CT)
- Local 17 (Hartford, CT)
- Local 18 (Boston, MA)
- Local 21 (Schenectady, NY)
- Local 22 (Rochester, NY)
- Local 24 (Watertown-Massena, NY)
- Local 25 (Buffalo, NY)
- Local 26 (Binghampton, NY)
- Local 28 (Erie, PA)
- Local 211 (Syracuse, NY)
- Local 212 (Wheeling, WV)

“Godfather” of NABET-CWA Retires

On March 31, the Vice President of NABET-CWA Region 2 Fred “Freddie” Saburro officially retired from his beloved Union. Saburro, a member of NABET-CWA for 63 years, celebrated his 90th birthday in February.

“Freddie has served NABET-CWA with distinction and dedication for more than 60 years,” stated Sector President Charlie Braico in a letter to Union colleagues. “Over these many years, Freddie has been a rugged leader, a trusted mentor, a source of inspiration and true friend to countless members, officers and staff. His unmatched congeniality and his enduring charm will be deeply missed.”

The entire NABET-CWA family wishes Freddie, known as the “Godfather of NABET-CWA,” all the best in his retirement and thanks him for his unconditional commitment and stellar service to the Union.

Retired RV/P Fred Saburro
The “flexibility” to not be paid.

Do employees want time off or money for their work?

That is at the crux of a bill passed by the House of Representatives that proposes to allow private-sector employees the option to receive compensatory time off instead of overtime pay. The provision, which already is available to government workers, would extend the law to the private sector.

“The Working Families Flexibility Act,” sponsored by Rep. Martha Roby (R-Ala.), changes current federal overtime rules that require eligible employees to receive time-and-a-half pay when they work over 40 hours a week. The new law allows employees to voluntarily choose to receive comp time instead of overtime pay, creating “flexibility for working moms and dads who need more time to spend taking care of their family responsibilities,” Roby explained during debate on the House floor.

If an employee chooses to receive comp time, they must give “reasonable notice” in order to not “unduly disrupt” the workplace with requests for leave. Time off would therefore be at the employer’s discretion—who has a year to schedule it—and not when the employee actually needs or wants it. And instead of getting paid immediately for your work, this “banked” comp time means you don’t get paid for comp time or those who want to be paid?

Many workers rely on overtime as an essential part of their paycheck. Under this “flexibility for working moms and dads who need more time to spend taking care of their family responsibilities,” Roby explained during debate on the House floor.

The bill will now go to the Senate, where similar legislation has been introduced.

NABET-CWA employee Buoy officially becomes an American

NABET-CWA Social Media Coordinator Toni Buoy became a naturalized citizen of the United States on February 22 during a ceremony in Baltimore. Originally from England, Buoy and her “Mum” Caroline first arrived in America in 1982 when Buoy was six years old.

As she entered the room where she would take the Oath of Allegiance and receive her citizenship certificate, Neil Diamond’s “Coming to America” played over the speaker system and a touching “Faces of America” video was displayed.

Buoy then handed over the green cards she’d been collecting for 35 years.

“They chuckled at my first green card: a beaming six-year-old with two huge front teeth,” Buoy recalled.

Buoy began the application process in June 2016—two months after her mother became a citizen. She was required to take speaking, reading and writing tests in order to show her ability to complete these tasks in English, as well as a civics test.

Citizenship candidates are given a list of 100 civics questions to study, and are asked up to 10 of those during the test. To pass, you must answer six of the 10 questions correctly. One of the questions posed to her: “Why did the columbists leave Britain?”

Despite having her name pronounced (Booo—yayyy) during the ceremony, she said that becoming an American citizen was “an absolutely amazing feeling.” Buoy (pronounced like the flotation device) was sworn-in alongside 69 others from 33 different countries. Immediately following the naturalization ceremony, Buoy was asked if she would like to register to vote.

Buoy came to the U.S. from England after her mother got remarried to a U.S. Air Force officer. The family first settled in Mississippi, and later ended up in the Washington, D.C. area where her father was stationed at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. Buoy currently resides in Maryland with her two boys, ages 17 and 6, who she said are proud of her “legal” status.

She doesn’t get back to England often; her last visit was in 2002 when her grandfather passed.

Buoy has been with NABET-CWA since 1997, when she assisted Patricia Dix, who was the Secretary to President Emeritus John Clark.

Local 53’s Leslie Gersicoff was a “legendary activist”

Leslie J. Gersicoff, who passed away on April 17, began her career with the labor movement working for the National Captioning Institute (NCI) in June of 1986, where she was instrumental in organizing workers at NCI. From there, she became a Local 53 Shop Steward, Executive Board Member, Grievance Committee Chairperson, as well as a member of the bargaining committee during the NABET-CWA negotiations.

“Leslie was a legendary activist,” said NABET-CWA Local 53 President Steve Ross.

“She was always there at every rally, and picket line no matter the weather, and she always had a big smile and warm hugs for her union brothers and sisters.”

In 2007, Gersicoff became the Executive Director of the Jewish Labor Committee Western Region, which works to maintain and strengthen the ties between the American Jewish community and the trade union movement. She continued in this role until her death.

The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor called Leslie “one of our most generous and kindest labor sisters.”

“Leslie was a wonderful person with a heart of gold. Her contributions to the labor movement, her fight against human trafficking, and social injustice will never be forgotten,” Ross said. “She will truly be missed.”

Network Coordinating Committee Meeting

In April, NABET-CWA’s Network Coordinating Committee—a group of network local presidents—met for two days in Las Vegas. The full agenda included 2017 Master Agreement negotiations at ABC, Daily Hires at ABC and NBC, and reports from Locals at FOX stations in Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles/Las Vegas and CBS stations in Denver and Minneapolis. The group also discussed NBC Sports and Remote Servicing of major NBC sporting events such as the NFL, golf, and the 2018 Winter Olympics. The Union’s work on organizing campaigns, training programs, political action and upcoming conventions rounded out the meeting.

The members of the NCC include Lou Marinaro (Local 11), who presided over the meeting; Arthur Mazza (Local 16), Rich McDermott (Local 31), Don Villar (Local 41), Dorethea Brown-Maxey (Local 43), Joe Kaczynski (Local 411), Kevin Wilson (Local 51), Gil Maestas II (Local 52) and Steve Ross (Local 53).
THE CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE: CITIZENS AS JOURNALISTS?

Apps bring everyday people into newsroom

First, there were bloggers. Now, citizens as journalists have arrived in television newsrooms, who have apps such as StringR and Fresco—the “Uber of electronic newsgathering”—that turn everyday people into news gatherers. In yet another technological turn in broadcasting, companies are showing increased interest in incorporating these applications into their news coverage—and, in some places, letting them take over.

NABET-CWA was first confronted with this technology during its talks with ABC/Disney this year. The Company proposed to use these services to gather content, and even revealed that it had been using them on a trial basis at KABC-TV and KGO-TV. While the original Company proposal was withdrawn, the parties agreed to the following language for bargaining history in the Master Agreement’s Sideletter 5 (New): “On November 18, 2016, the Company stated that services like StringR may gather news or other programming material on iPhones, iPads, Samsung phones, and other personal communication devices. In those instances where such devices are used to gather material, the parties agreed the Company can request specific video to be provided to the Company by outside services like StringR, and such material may be used on broadcast, without violating any provision of the Master Agreement.”

NABET-CWA expressed concern over the integrity of such content, as well as the implications for ENG crews’ jobs. Local 41 Alternate Steward Raza Siddiqui, who got his start as a professional stringer, said that even though the Company regards these shooters as “stringers” in the contract, these services are different. “There is an obvious threat to our jurisdiction of work and, in a broader sense, the credibility of our industry,” said Siddiqui, who works as a Daily Hire photographer at NBC/Telemundo.

When NABET-CWA members encounter Fresco shooters in the field, Siddiqui recommends they tell them how much they could be getting for their video as a professional stringer. In addition, he thinks it’s a good idea to remind the businesses where news events are held that these people are not insured or bonded, unlike the journalists who are covered through their employers.

Fresco contracts with Fox

In March, Fox television stations in New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Austin, Atlanta, Houston, Phoenix, Tampa, Charlotte and Orlando contracted with Fresco News to use the service. Any iPhone or Android user with the Fresco app can take photos or videos and submit them to Fresco, which then posts them online or sends them directly to news outlets. Alternatively, “active Fresco users” near a news event can be asked by a Fresco client to take photos or videos—much like a person calling for an Uber.

Photos earn these “journalists” $20 and videos approximately $50. In touting the success of his service in Philadelphia, Fresco founder John Meyer told Business Insider, “We’ve seen droves of our citizen journalist users become a part of the news.”

Trained journalists are taught to cover the news and not to become the news. When Guardian reporter Ben Jacobs was attacked during an interview with Montana Republican congressional candidate Greg Gianforte in May, he called the incident “strange and mortifying” because “I’m terribly uncomfortable being part of a story.” The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) cautions journalists “to avoid making themselves part of the stories they are reporting. Even in crises, journalists have a responsibility to their audiences to gather news objectively and to report facts.” SPJ’s code of ethics lists “compassion,” “sensitivity,” “good taste,” “caution,” and “balance” when covering news. But, who is checking to be sure these “citizen journalists” are “active”? Who are they accountable to? How do news organizations verify that what they’re putting on the air is “true”? One could also wonder whether a person’s pursuit of news—and money—will supplant concerns for standards and ethics.

Alaska news station replaces journalists

People in the broadcast area of Coastal Television’s ABC/Fox affiliate in Anchorage, Alaska—KTBV—will get a ringside seat to this experiment. In April, the station announced it is handing over nearly all of its news coverage—except for live content—to its viewers via the Fresco app. At this year’s National Association of Broadcasters Convention, Fresco pronounced KTBV “the first station fully powered by citizen journalism.” The move came after the station tried the service for 10 months.

KTBV will save 35%-40% in costs over the coming year, according to its Chief Operating Officer. The savings will come through a 40% cut in staff—mostly MJJs—and equipment. The COO said Fresco is not a “turnkey solution, but it will be about 60%-65% of the newscast.”

Local 11 Members Meet Off-Site Over Concerns with WNBC Management

An overwhelming majority of the local WNBC EJ field crews forfeited a beautiful day off to attend a meeting at the Local 11 office. It had been several years since the last off-site meeting and the initiative was taken by members themselves and organized by Steward Calvin Tyler.

Many concerns about workflow, company animosity and managerial incompetence were discussed. Remarkably, it was not a mere gripe session. Many members offered solutions that would benefit both Company and crews. One of the most confounding problems for crews for the past 8 years has been a profound lack of communication with news Management. Our only interaction is when the Company is aggressive in discipline matters.

Our next step will be to organize the key points and try to bring Management to the table for a productive discussion.

—Mike Noseworthy, Local 11 Shop Steward
### Daily Hire Corner
**By: Larry Barr, Daily Hire, NBC-TV**

Since NABET-CWA announced its drone training program last fall, the program has grown exponentially and attracted interest from members at several locals. In 2017, members at these stations have taken or requested the training through their Union:

- **WTHM-TV** – Local 14 (New Haven, CT)
- **WFSB-TV** – Local 17 (Hartford, CT)
- **WNYT-TV** – Local 21 (Albany, NY)
- **WHEC-TV** – Local 22 (Rochester, NY)
- **WNNY-TV** – Local 24 (Watertown, NY)
- **WIZC-TV** – Local 26 (Binghamton, NY)
- **WIOO-TV, WUAB-TV, WKYC-TV** – Local 42 (Cleveland, OH)
- **WSYR-TV** – Local 211 (Syracuse, NY)
- **WCCO-TV** – Local 411 (Minneapolis, MN)
- **CMU-TV-FM** – Local 412 (Mt. Pleasant, MI)

WABJ-TV engineer Bill Lind, a NABET-CWA Local 16 member in New York City, operates a drone at Jones Beach just prior to the Memorial Day Air Show. Lind is licensed and certified by the FAA to fly drones. (Photo credit: Jim Nolan)

**Drones in Demand**

NABET-CWA training program reaches new heights

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“The popularity of this training shows that our members are dedicated to becoming proficient in this expanding technology,” said Sector President Charlie Bracco.

NABET-CWA Local 25 in Buffalo was the first to take advantage of the Union’s newest training offering. The success of these sessions led other members to seek out the DArt Drones-led classes. Local 411 President Joe Kolendo is working with CWA/NETT Academy Director Kevin Celata to schedule training for his members in Minneapolis, and Local 17 President Andy Halpin reports that seven members at his Local completed the course in May. Local 42 in Cleveland teamed up with CWA Local 4340 for a training held June 10-11. As the training program’s administrator, Celata said there is such high demand that he needs to request additional funding for the CWA Strategic Industry Fund that had been set up for digital editing training. Requests for the more-costly drone training classes surpassed those for digital editing; therefore, the SIF needs to be replenished.

“IT’s a new technology that is being used in all sorts of industries, including telecommunications,” Celata said. “The police in my hometown recently used a drone to locate a suspect. The application is unlimited.” For NABET-CWA, it will enable its members to get the work that is sometimes being performed by contractors.

Such was the case at Local 17 in Hartford, CT. WFBS-TV purchased footage of the city of Hartford taken by a drone and used it on the air. NABET-CWA filed a grievance for what it considered to be a violation of the unit’s contractual jurisdiction over photography and broadcasting equipment. The arbitrator ruled against the Union, however, because “he felt the video used was ‘stock footage, and the Company has a history of buying stock footage,’” explained Local 17 President Andy Halpin, who was a witness for NABET-CWA at the arbitration hearing.

Currently, one unit member at WFSB who has an FCC license has been working to get their FAA licenses as well. However, they also must adhere to further requirements of station owner, Meredith. “Meredith has even more restrictions than the FCC,” Halpin said. “We are learning that there is a whole lot more to drones than flying. When you start getting into weather and regulations, it’s about what you can and can’t do. The Company is nowhere near ready for the FAA to license.

Eight Local 42 members from WOIO-TV, WUAB-TV and WKYC-TV took advantage of the weekend drone training offered jointly for members of Local 42 and CWA Local 4340 in Cleveland. “It was, by far, one of the most professional and thorough trainings we’ve done,” said Local 42 President Bill Wachenschwanz, adding that all of the members really appreciated the training and hope to test for their FAA license.

“I can see where the business is going. We’re chasing jobs and this is a job we can capture.” Wachenschwanz explained. “I think we got a lot of value out of it.”

After members have been trained and certified, many of them are telling their respective companies that they are ready for this work. “If you are looking for training that will prepare you for the future, this is a great program,” Celata said.

**Local 17’s May 20-21 training took place at member Al Wurst’s home in order to keep costs down for the Local. The trainees were Chip Bowley, Mike Kopelman, Tony Salafia, Nate Buynicki, Derek Pezzotti, Al Wurst, and Jay Farquhar.**

### Drones in Demand

- **NABET-CWA training program reaches new heights**

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### Drone Early Bargaining

NABET-CWA and NBC/Universal are in discussions regarding early bargaining for a new contract. The current agreement expires less than a year from now – on March 31, 2018. NABET-CWA/NBC Locals have chosen members for the National Bargaining Committee, and the Committee wants to hear from YOU. This is YOUR CHANCE to tell the Committee what you’d like to see in a new contract. Sure, we’d all like a 200% raise and full jurisdiction (Not likely). There are lots of proposals that would make sense and even might work, so you should think about it and submit those proposals. Now, it’s easier than ever! Your proposals and suggestions can be submitted online by logging onto https://www.sysjigsaw.com/BL7SB. There’s also a link on the NABET-CWA Local 11 website. All proposals will be kept confidential. If you’re an analog type like me, you can download a hard copy paper form and scan, fax, or send it by mail to Local 11 or your own Local. There is a deadline: Get them in, please, by August 1. Remember, this is the way to make your concerns clear to the people who will work on our new contract. This is where we Daily Hires get to PUT OUR concerns on the board.

(Continued on page 5)
Local 11 member Douglas Hamilton, staff Engineer/NBCU Field Operations, based in NYC. “Our members working for NBC Network News go to every corner of the earth to bring us the news each day. Where ever the story is,” said Local 11 Grievance Chairman Mike Noseworthy.

United Center

Cameramen Kevin Flagg (left) and Bob Carzoli (middle)

EPA Rally

A March 2 rally at Federal Plaza in Chicago brought together AFGE workers at the EPA and other Unions, who turned out in solidarity to call on Congress to protect the environment in the face of President Trump’s call for cuts.

Local 11 in Manchester, England

Local 11 member Douglas Hamilton, staff Engineer/NBCU Field Operations, based in NYC. “Our members working for NBC Network News go to every corner of the earth to bring us the news each day. Where ever the story is,” said Local 11 Grievance Chairman Mike Noseworthy.

Local 41/Chicago

Local 41/Chicago

Local 46/Flint, MI

Local 46 member Cameron Millbrot

Local 46 member Katie Poniatowski on the audio board

For Daily Hires, as well as the rest of the labor community, the news out of Washington continues to astonish, confound, and frighten most of us. The battle over health care reform will affect every one of us. For those of you who get health insurance through the Flex Plan, Plan officials say nothing will change for the rest of this year. Next year is a very different story, however, because no one knows what the law might look like. Insurance companies are now trying to plan what our rates might be, but they have no real guidance about what kind of laws will control them. For us, information and activism are power.

Pay attention and stay informed about what Congress is up to – and not just healthcare. There are several dangerous proposals circulating through Congress, which will gut organized labor that will likely affect us as Daily Hires first. Right-to-Work law changes, NLRB changes and appointments, and even changes at the FCC will likely affect our jobs. Keep current and keep your keyboard handy. It doesn’t really take much time to e-mail your Senators and Representatives to remind them that labor votes. Treat what goes on in Washington the same way you treat your bank and investment statements. If NABET-CWA and the rest of organized labor lose ground, it’s going to come out of your pocket and affect your life.

Keep the faith and remember Union Strength!

Fraternally, Larry Barr,
NABET-CWA MAIL@gmail.com

Daily Hire Corner

(Continued from page 4)

One important note: early bargaining does NOT mean our team will accept a bad offer. Union leadership has made it very clear that they will work for the best deal possible. Early talks are just a starting place. If the expiration date comes and the Company offer is bad, the work toward a good contract will continue.

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At Right: Lou Marinaro (Sector Vice President/Local 11 President) Ed Dabrowski (Local 41), and Warren Stern (Local 53); Missing: Steve Ross (Local 53 President)

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On March 20, members of Chicago-area media unions tackled questions about the importance of a free press in an age of "fake news." NABET-CWA Local 41 President Don Villar developed the program in conjunction with the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL), the News Guild, and Loyola University’s Chicago School of Communication, where the event was held. Villar said the idea was hatched during a CFL organizing luncheon, which was held not long after the inauguration. Villar and the CFL3 Bob Reiter wanted to add a labor perspective to the attacks on the free press to show how union members were being affected.

“We discussed how President Trump’s attacks on the industry and our members was a real problem,” said Villar. During Trump’s campaign events last year, NABET-CWA Local 41 members who work for Univision were harassed by Trump supporters—a result, Villar believes, of the anti-immigrant rhetoric spewed during the campaign.

“It makes the job tougher for working journalists, our members, because he is saying we are ‘blamed, we are ‘fake news,’” Villar explained. “Our members out in the field take their job seriously. They are committed to the craft. Many are being negatively affected by these accusations and labeling.”

A self-professed “news junkie,” the CFL3 Reiter told the audience that he hoped the discussion explains “why we need to honor the profession of journalism and refocus our attention on what matters.”

The audience was made up largely of union members from NABET-CWA, SAG-AFTRA and the News Guild, as well as Loyola students and other interested parties. WBBM Radio news anchor Craig Dellimore, who is the president of SAG-AFTRA in Chicago, moderated the panel, which included TV news anchor Ariel Gurian (SAG-AFTRA), reporter Rumphana Hussain (Chicago News Guild), media law expert Bastiaan Vanacker, radio news reporter Michael Puente (SAG-AFTRA), and Daily Hire news photographer Raza Siddiqui (NABET-CWA Local 41).

“The event was well attended and well-received,” said Siddiqui, who represented NABET-CWA on the panel. “We discussed a wide range of issues from the duties journalists have in the current political environment to how we as an industry should react to the propagation of ‘fake news.’

“News anchor Gurian said news organizations can fall into the “fake news” trap when they are closely following social media trends and trying to be the first to break news. Though they don’t want to continue to follow a confirmed “fake news” story or give it more attention than it deserves, there is a question of whether it then becomes a public service to let people know about the false story.

“As a videographer, Siddiqui said, “the image is one of the most important tools of communication that we have” because images have the power to elicit a highly emotional response. Photojournalists, he said, have two responsibilities: to expose the public to what is happening in their community and to document history. In the current climate, “There is a lot at stake in our community as journalists,” he said.

Further discussion centered on how the general public can distinguish reputable news sources from “fake news” through the many fact-checking services, and why a healthy free press is important to the dissemination of legitimate news. “It was a good way for union members to come together in solidarity and talk about what we’re seeing in the trenches,” Villar said. “Many working journalists are spending a lot of time and resources researching “fake news,” which impedes their efforts to report on important and relevant stories.”

Villar would like to organize a follow-up to this discussion that focuses on the vast amount of resources that are being expended on trying to push back on “fake news,” which can and does really influence people’s opinions.

According to Villar, there are a couple hundred conservative radio stations in the United States that perpetuate these stories, compared to just four progressive talk radio stations that must compete against them. “People are getting bombarded with these unverified stories that have been pulled from the Internet and social media,” Villar said. “It really shows how unequal the playing field is.”

The event was videotaped by NABET-CWA-represented Chicago Access Network Television (CAN-TV) photographers and aired in Chicago. It can be viewed online at http://canvt.org/watch-now/free-press-vs-fake-news/.
**INDEPENDENT REPORT**

WICU-TV/WSSE-TV – Erie, PA (Local 28)
Two days of bargaining resulted in a new three-year agreement, which was recently ratified. The contract calls for wage increases in each year of the three-year contract and other improvements, including enhanced vacation and permanent schedule change notice. Local 28 President Mike Prince, Matt Milano, Matt Knowleder, and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi.

KCNC-TV – Denver, CO (Local 52)
A new three-year extension agreement was reached with this CBS-owned and operated station. The discussions leading to the extension agreement were handled by Local 52 President Gil Maestas.

WRGB-TV – Albany, NY (Local 21)
Sinclair representatives presented 45 proposals to the Union on the first day of bargaining, according to NABET-CWA Staff Representative Bill Murray. Murray is working with the Local on counterproposals and setting up a mobilization committee. The two sides will meet again at the end of July.

CMU-TV-FM – Mt. Pleasant, MI (Local 412)
Central Michigan University announced campus-wide layoffs – including two unit members – due to a $20 million budget shortfall. One member retired and the Union is filing a grievance on behalf of the other member. There are 14 represented members in the unit at CMU.

WCCL-TV – Minneapolis, MN (Local 411)
The station recently hired three photographers to fill vacancies and staff its expanded news operation. “We are fortunate and excited to be back at full staffing in our photography department at WCCO Television in the Twin Cities in Minnesota,” said Local 411 President Joe Kaczynski. “After several years of running understaffed, we are now back to our full positions.” Kaczynski said they were short-staffed for several reasons, including the departure of several longtime members who decided to retire. Bob Hernandez, who had been at WCCO for over 40 years, was the first to go, followed by Gordy Leach, with 37 years, and, finally, Bob Cowan, who retired after 47 years with WCCO and more than 50 years total in broadcast television. The station recently retired after 47 years with WCCO and more than 50 years total in broadcast television. The company waited to fill the positions, but eventually ended up hiring three new, full-time photographers: Lewis Karpel from Syracuse, NY, where he served as the NABET-CWA Steward for the last six years, and David Schwab and Nick Lunemann from Fort Meyers, FL. “All three are great photographers and great additions to our photography staff,” Kaczynski said.

WTRF-TV – Wheeling, WV (Local 212)
During a negotiations session in April with the Tribune-owned station, tentative agreement was reached on seniority, severance, jurisdiction, as well as grievance and arbitration. The two sides are set to meet again in June to discuss wages and remaining open, non-economic issues, according to NABET-CWA Staff Representative Bill Murray, who said he is “hopeful” a contract can be reached soon.

WJRT-TV – Flint, MI (Local 46)
The two sides met in March to begin work on a successor agreement. A tentative agreement was reached at the conclusion of the first round of bargaining, but the offer was ultimately rejected by the membership. Follow-up talks are scheduled for July 27. The bargaining committee includes Local 46 President Sheldon Neely, Mike Adams, Brandon Milbrot, Local Secretary-Treasurer Jerry Look and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi.

WNEM-TV – Saginaw, MI (Local 48)
The Company contacted the Union about the possibility of holding early negotiations in the hope of reaching a successor agreement well before expiration. The Union has agreed and the parties have scheduled for a week of meetings in September with the agreement expiring on April 30, 2018.

WDIV-TV – Detroit, MI (Local 43)
NABET-CWA is in the process of trying to reach a successor agreement with the Company. Bargaining was held in February and April, and tentative agreements were reached in several areas. Primary issues – wages, jurisdiction and seniority – are still unresolved. The local has begun mobilization activity in front of the station during negotiations, which seems to have motivated the Company. Bargaining resumed in June. The bargaining committee includes Local 43 President Doretha Brown-Maxey, Jack Bellomo, Madalyn Lee, Paul Muczynski, Mark Baur, James Wegehaupt, and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi.

KTCA/KTCI-TV – Minneapolis, MN (Local 411)
A tentative agreement was reached for a three-year successor contract. Following a ratification meeting, the agreement was rejected by the membership. The two sides met in May, but no further agreement was reached. The Union is seeking additional dates with the Company. The bargaining committee includes Local 411 President Joe Kaczynski, Mike Phillips, Terry Grey, Clayton Henderson and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi.

WTNH-TV – New Haven, CT (Local 14)
A new three-year agreement was ratified on June 20 for the Producers contract, which will now expire on June 20, 2020. The Directors agreement that had been reached earlier was rejected. These agreements had expired on January 31, 2016. The impending sale of Media General to Nexstar complicated the bargaining, according to NABET-CWA Staff Representative Lou Fallot. Once the sale finally concluded and went into effect on March 1, 2017, talks resumed and the agreement was reached.

The new deal contains wage increases of 2%, 2.7% and 2.5%. There is also a $275 signing bonus upon ratification. The Union was able to preserve the unit’s seniority and overall jurisdiction. A complete package was presented, without recommendation, to members on June 20, 2017.

The bargaining committee consisted of Local 14 President Joe D’Adessee, Vice President John Coleman and Treasurer Jim Bagely, “all of whom did a wonderful job in dealing with the Company,” said Fallot, who was assisted them in reaching the pact.

WTRF-TV – Wheeling, WV (Local 212)
One tentative session was scheduled for May – the first meeting with the Company since August 2016. Tentative agreements were reached on a few minor proposals. The parties are scheduled to resume negotiations in late July.

WIVB-TV – Buffalo, NY (Local 25)
The initial round of bargaining commenced on Feb. 23-24, during which several Unfair Labor Practice charges and many outstanding grievances were resolved. Talks resumed on March 27, where the Union presented initial proposals to the Company and countered many of the Company’s first proposals. Several minor issues were resolved, but the parties are far apart in areas such as seniority, union security, dues check-off and overtime, according to NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi. The current contract expired on March 26. The bargaining committee includes Ron Gabalski, Rich Ersing and Jim Diavastes, and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi.

Regions 2 and 6 to hold meeting in conjunction with CWA Convention

The Regional Advisory Board for Regions 2 and 6 will meet for two days before the CWA Convention in Pittsburgh. The RAB meeting days are Saturday, August 5, 2017, and Sunday, August 6, 2017, at the Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown.

Attendance at both the RAB and the CWA Convention are mandatory meetings. In accordance with the NABET-CWA Sector By-laws, one person from each local should be in attendance at the RAB meeting and the CWA Convention.

This year, the Union is adding some internal organizing and outside organizing training. Back by popular demand, there will also be a one-day Shop Stewards training class on Saturday, which will be given by NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi and Ron Gabalski. In addition, a dinner will be held to honor those who have recently retired from NABET-CWA: Staff Representative Lou Fallot, General Counsel Steve Sturm, and RVP2 Fred Saburro. CWA will host its 76th Convention on August 7-8, 2017.
On April 26, 2017, I attended the 2017 GE shareholders meeting at a GE aviation plant in Asheville, NC, along with approximately 40 GE retirees, including Dennis Rocheleau. The retirees, who came from Erie, PA; Louisville, KY; Lynn, MA; and Milwaukee, WI, gathered to demonstrate beforehand and, at 9 a.m., entered the plant and enjoyed a continental breakfast provided for shareholders. The breakfast gave us an opportunity to interact with GE executives and members of GE’s Board of Directors. The shareholders meeting, as always, began promptly at 10 a.m. First, there were the obligatory corporate presentations. During these presentations, it occurred to me that Jeff Immelt and his surrogates were proud of the aviation plant and the engines it built, than they were of their employees and retirees. Following the corporate presentations, I was the first speaker.

Good Morning Fellow Shareholders, my name is Bill Freeda and I am here this morning to once again vote against Jeff Immelt for the same reason I gave last year: I do not trust what he tells us as shareholders.

My mistrust stems from the remarks made by the Chairman regarding the termination of GE’s post-65 retiree medical benefits. At our 2015 shareholders meeting, Chairman Immelt made the following statement: “We’ve constantly evolved our strategies around healthcare, and provided more alternatives this year in the post-65 healthcare, to take advantage with some of the things that are going on in the government around healthcare exchanges.”

The Chairman made a similar statement at last year’s meeting. What Mr. Immelt seems to be implying is that the health insurance marketplaces created by the Affordable Care Act, more commonly known as Obamacare, applies to Medicare Supplement Plans, and fellow shareholders, and members of our Board of Directors, to accept this change in policy. It occurs to me that when this issue was presented to you, at worst you were deliberately given bad information.

I am sorry to say, but it appears that our Board’s biographies provided in the annual report, I realize that we, GE, are fortunate to have some of the smartest and most accomplished individuals serve as Directors of our company. So I have asked myself, why would this group of intelligent, savvy people agree to make a decision that would devastate the lives of tens of thousands of loyal long-term GE employees, and retirees? I have entertained a number of scenarios, but the most logical one to me is that our Board of Directors was given a presentation that was designed to accomplish the eventual outcome. In other words, our Board may have been misled.

That is where we get back to the issue of due-diligence. How much resistance did Board members show? Did you ask enough questions? Did you ask any questions at all? How much time was actually devoted to discussing this topic? In other words, did you do your due-diligence?

I have been assured that if you do not have access to a computer, or feel uncomfortable using one, you can call 317-245-6025. Rx Help Centers specializes in managing medications. If you do not have access to a computer, or feel uncomfortable using one, you can call 317-245-6025.

Rx Help Centers

When I was in Asheville, NC, I met a GE retiree from Indiana, Melody Jackson. She provided me with information that may be helpful with your prescription medications, primarily, but not exclusively, expensive medications. For more information contact Anji Hopper at:

Rx Help Centers
317-245-6025
anji@rxhelpcenters.com

Should you decide to use Rx Help Centers reduces your cost of medication, you will need to register and pay a $50 per month fee. You will need to balance your savings against the monthly fee. Registration can be done online at: www.rxhelpcenters.com

I have been assured that if you do not have access to a computer, or feel uncomfortable using one, you can call to be assisted. I would be grateful if you would notify me about your experience with Rx Help Centers at: fbfreedanabctw@verizon.net

What in fact GE did do, was hire a subsidiary of the publicly owned company Willis Tower Watson, traded on the NASDAQ exchange under the symbol WLTW. The name of the subsidiary is OneExchange. This company is not a government exchange; in fact it is not an exchange at all. It is a self-described insurance brokerage company that earns a commission from every Medicare Supplement Plan, Medicare Advantage Plan, or Prescription Drug Plan in which they enroll a GE retiree. So, fellow shareholders and members of our Board of Directors, does that remotely sound like a strategy that takes advantage of the things that are going on in the governm ent around healthcare exchanges?

Now, I would like to direct my remarks to the members of the GE Board of Directors, more specifically to those of you who voted to accept this change in policy. It occurs to me that when this issue was presented to you, at worst you were deliberately given bad information.

I am sorry to say, but it appears that our Board’s biographies provided in the annual report, I realize that we, GE, are fortunate to have some of the smartest and most accomplished individuals serve as Directors of our company. So I have asked myself, why would this group of intelligent, savvy people agree to make a decision that would devastate the lives of tens of thousands of loyal long-term GE employees, and retirees? I have entertained a number of scenarios, but the most logical one to me is that our Board of Directors was given a presentation that was designed to accomplish the eventual outcome. In other words, our Board may have been misled.

That is where we get back to the issue of due-diligence. How much resistance did Board members show? Did you ask enough questions? Did you ask any questions at all? How much time was actually devoted to discussing this topic? In other words, did you do your due-diligence?

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Mr. Immelt has in the past made reference to GE’s financial assistance to retirees. What that amounts to is $1,000 a year per participant. GE has been very careful not to make any commitment beyond 2017. In addition, what Chairman Immelt has conveniently not mentioned is that other large corporations, like AT&T, reimburse their post-65 retirees $4,250 dollars per year for a retiree and eligible spouse – more than double what GE offers its retirees.

In court, GE attorneys have alluded to the fact that GE retirees will not be harmed by this change in policy. Let me share just one story with you that disputes that callous claim. I know a retiree that cannot take statin drugs, like Lipitor, to control his cholesterol, because they make him seriously ill. Therefore, he needs to take a combination of two other medications.

Under the GE Medicare Part D prescription drug plan, he paid $130 for a three-month supply for both medications. In 2016, he paid $1,128.61. Now, you may be thinking that this story is an exaggeration. Well, the retiree is me and I have in my hand the invoices to prove it.

Chairman Immelt is fond of using the terms “win” or “winning” when describing GE’s performance. He used them six times during this year’s Letter to Shareholders.

Mr. Chairman, who in the world is “winning”? Not GE retirees, or GE shareholders, and certainly not long-term shareholders. Many GE employees and retirees purchased GE stock and continued to retain it because they had faith in GE’s future. That clearly was a mistake, and you, Mr. Immelt, compound that mistake by making them scapegoats for your inability to raise the price of GE’s stock by terminating their post-65 retirement benefits. Ladies and gentlemen of the GE Board of Directors, I cannot make you care about the health and welfare of GE retirees. Either you do or you don’t. What I hope you will do is make sure you are given all of the facts, and examine them carefully before you make decisions that have such a profound effect on so many people’s lives.

Today, I am asking that a group representing GE retirees meet with the GE Board of Directors in Executive Session. In other words, without Chairman Immelt or his surrogates. For the sake of all GE retirees, on whose shoulders Chairman Immelt now stands, please take this request very seriously, and grant us that meeting.

Thank you.

The message I try to convey in my column in each issue, is that whatever our differences, politically, spiritually or ideologically, the one thing we have in common is all retirees want to protect what we have earned and were promised during our working years. Use your voice and your actions to let corporate executives and elected officials know you are willing to fight for what is rightfully ours.

GE Lawsuit Dismissed

A judge in Wisconsin has dismissed the lawsuit regarding GE’s termination of their post-65 retiree medical benefits for salaried employees. Although I am disappointed, I am not surprised. Dennis Rocheleau, GE’s former chief negotiator, and Ev Kauffman, who was a Senior Benefits Counselor at GE, filed the lawsuit. Dennis has spoken passionately about this issue at recent GE shareholder meetings.

In my opinion, Dennis was viewed by some of his former colleagues as a traitor, instead of the principled person he is. It was not widely known that Dennis used his personal funds to pay many of the costs of this lawsuit. Let me suggest you write Dennis an email to let him know how much his efforts were appreciated: Dwrocheleau5@gmail.com

A second lawsuit filed by the Coordinating Bargaining Committee (CBC), on behalf of the hourly and production workers, is still pending in Ohio. For some reason, which I still fail to understand, some NABET-CWA retirees were considered salaried and other hourly. They were never able to give me a cogent answer for this decision.

Network Coordinating Committee Meeting

NCC meeting in Las Vegas, April 27-28 (Photo credit: Jodi Fabrillo-Clonta)