

# FRONTLINE

**IBEW LOCAL 21**



**Volume 14, No. 1 • March 2009**

**SET TO TALK**

# 6-27-09

**READY TO WALK!**

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## **Contract Expectations**

By Ronald Kastner



**B**argaining contracts is an ongoing and constant process in our Local Union. We currently have members covered by 20 contracts. Each of these agreements is very important to our Local, and to you, the members. Local 21's largest agreement is with AT&T and covers approximately 9,000

members; it expires on June 27, 2009. Sisters and Brothers, it is not overstating the situation to say that this will be the fight of our lives.

Before the battle begins, though, I'd like to share a bit of my personal story with you. In August 2008, I completed my 30th year on the staff of our Local. Last December marked my 40th year with the IBEW. When I started at Illinois Bell, I left a full time job pumping gas at a Clark gas station, making all of \$2.35 an hour. My new position,

Installer-Repairman for Illinois Bell paid \$95.00 a week, which came out to \$2.37 an hour. I certainly didn't change jobs because of the prestige associated with driving the phone company truck. No, I did it because of the very attractive benefits that a large telecommunications company offered: health insurance, life insurance and job security to be specific. I know I've dated myself with these statistics, but I'm sure that if our AT&T members remember the start of their telephone careers, many would tell a similar story.

Recently I received a warning shot all the way from Dallas, Texas. It confirms what I have been telling our membership for the past several months. Like pirates on the high seas searching for gold, our current employer, AT&T, is after our benefits. They have communicated this to each of you, telling you what they feel you should accept. They justify their thievery of our benefits

by explaining that their own managers have accepted the so-called consumer driven health plan. What they don't tell you is that managers pay \$5,000 to \$7,000 in out of pocket expenses a year, and they are very unhappy about it. To expect our membership to accept a health care plan that was forced down the throat of their managers is totally outrageous. We should not become the scapegoats because they have a management mutiny on their hands. How dare they imply that union members should accept the same!

More than anything else, this is a betrayal of the faith that should exist between an employer and employee. Many of us gave up wages in our early years of working for this company because of the promise of benefits they would provide. We have worked diligently to build up the company, made them who they are, and in turn, they now treat us with this type of disrespect.

Furthermore, this strategy on the part of AT&T is not at all in accordance with the health care reform package that President

Barack Obama plans to implement in our country. His health care plan provides for a \$2,500 yearly savings for many American families. (See [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) for more information.) Why would union members pay more when a savings is on the horizon?

As we prepare ourselves for both prolonged and intense negotiations and the possibility of a strike, please keep in mind that your bargaining team is only as strong as you make it. You need to expect decent wages, job security, and healthcare for life. You need decent working conditions in order to perform your job properly and with dignity. You need to refuse to



let this bargaining become the bailout plan for AT&T. Stay informed. Refer often to our website [www.ibew21.org](http://www.ibew21.org), union bulletin board postings, and our hot line metropolitan Chicago 630 415-2711, outstate 866 423-9582. Keep in touch with your internal organizing mobilization contacts. And, remember, Solidarity!

# “Tell a lie long enough and loud enough and people will believe it.” – Joseph Goebbels

By Kevin Curran, Vice President/Assistant Business Manager Marketing



Joseph Goebbels was, of course, the Propaganda Minister for Nazi Germany. The Nazi’s used this strategy to deceive their own people into blindly following a dictator. Now it looks like AT&T is taking a page out of the Nazi playbook in their strategy for our upcoming bargaining.

Recently, AT&T sent out several emails to all of our members saying how bad 2009 is going to be and union

members can expect to see significant diminishments in their wages and benefits. This is the fourth time AT&T has sent out a mass email about contract negotiations telling us that we need to sacrifice for the good of the corporation.

Because of this, we consulted with our attorneys. We’ve put AT&T on official notice that since they have set the precedent of using company email to communicate to our members about contract negotiations, we reserve the right to use company email to communicate **Local 21’s** message to our members.

Expect AT&T to continue their propagand campaign to try to convince us that we should be prepared to accept significant givebacks in this year’s bargaining. You can expect to hear them cry poor-mouth and talk about how they need to “take cost out of the business” otherwise they will be unable to compete and the sky will fall. **Brothers and Sisters, don’t be fooled!** Here are the facts:

- ➔ AT&T took in **\$119 Billion** in revenues last year.
- ➔ Cash from operating activities was **\$34 Billion**, a new company record.
- ➔ **Double digit earnings per share**, which is 4 times the Standard and Poor average.

In fact, they were so profitable they were able to pay seven employees over \$150 million in wages. To put that number in perspective, the amount of money AT&T gave to just seven of its employees could pay for healthcare for all 11,000 IBEW Local 21 members.



"We have obligations to our stockholders, our employees and our community -- fortunately Henderson in legal has found a loophole."

AT&T's Highest Paid Employees	
Randall Stephenson <i>President &amp; CEO</i>	\$21,981,984
Ralph de la Vega <i>President &amp; CEO AT&amp;T Mobility</i>	\$12,389,944
Richard Lindner <i>EVP &amp; CFO</i>	\$8,455,340
Forrest E. Miller <i>President – Telecom Operations Former Pres. AT&amp;T Communications</i>	\$8,455,812
John T. Stankey <i>Group Pres. – Telecom</i>	\$8,076,753
Edward E. Whitacre, Jr. <i>Former Chairman &amp; CEO</i>	\$78,348,103
James D. Ellis <i>Former Sr. EVP &amp; General Counsel</i>	\$14,361,688
Source: AT&T Securities Exchange Filing	

By the way, the figures don’t take into account the non-salary “perks” these guys receive. For example, as shareholders of AT&T, last year we paid \$89,000 for Randall Stephenson’s **personal** use of corporate jets, and another \$15,000 to install a new home-security system in his mansion, and \$25,000 to buy Ed Whitacre a membership in an exclusive Texas country club.

Those numbers also don’t include the **\$158**

**million retirement package** paid to Ed Whitacre, **the largest amount ever given to any CEO in the country.**

So, when you hear AT&T saying that we **all** must sacrifice, what they really mean is **you and your family need to sacrifice** so they can increase their personal wealth. They want the workers who built this company to give up the things we fought so hard for over the years so they can give themselves more pay and more perks. After all, \$158 million just doesn’t go as far as it used to. I’ll bet if we all chipped in and gave up our healthcare benefits, we could buy Ed Whitacre that 50 foot yacht he’s been eyeing. And if you and your family would just be willing to give up your lump sum pension, maybe we could buy Randall Stephenson his own jet. Maybe then he would stop billing shareholders for his personal junkets.

As we get closer to the contract deadline, expect to hear more and more from AT&T about how badly they’re doing and how the only way they can survive is if we take less. Their propaganda will be repeated over and over and will get louder and louder because they believe we’re foolish enough to accept their lies if they just repeat them enough. They’ll continue their campaign of misinformation to distract us from the real truth about these negotiations. And the real truth is this:

*What we workers gain or lose in this year’s bargaining will not be determined by the economy, executive salaries, or even corporate profits. **The determining factor will be our unity and solidarity. When we are united as one, not even mega-corporations like AT&T can stand in our way.***

## Network Update

By Jerry Gast, Assistant Business Manager Network



Since January AT&T has cut their work force in most departments. In Network, they declared a **surplus** in central offices, plant engi-

neering clerks, drafters, senior plant assigners and some clerical titles. The company offered SIPP in all the surplus groups. In I&M and C&E fourteen techs took the voluntary SIPP, five in I&M, and nine in C&E left the payroll on December 31, 2008. They were not surplus; the Union agreed to let them go after we reached an agreement that there would not be any force readjustments across exhibits of techs. Management can only move techs within the exhibit, within 35 miles of their existing location.

In Construction we have been meeting to discuss the movement of some techs within Exhibits 1 and 2, for both line and splicing work. We will let the stewards

know the results of the meetings. We are still working on problems on details in Construction and have been meeting with Joe DiMelis Vice President of C&E.

The surplus in the Central Offices of 98 COTs has been satisfied because 150 members applied for the SIPP; 132 were granted and their off payroll date was February 5th. A preference was completed to readjust the head count in the offices left vacant after the SIPP.

There are additional surpluses in other titles like senior plant assigner, plant engineering clerks, TA's, admin specialists, drafters, and telecom specialists at 10 S. Canal. The Union is meeting with the company to try and resolve the surplus.

The company planned to lay off 36 EA'S by location which they can do according to the contract. However, **we were able to save all the engineering assistants** if they took a job offer in other locations, or they could choose to take the layoff termination pay. Seven took the layoff and received termination pay; the rest accepted jobs in other locations. According to AT&T, all of the surpluses and head count reductions are due to budget cuts caused by the economy.

The **Arbitration backlog** has been resolved and new cases are being scheduled as they are moved from the 3rd step to arbitration. Only 30 cases are waiting for dates from the arbitrators, the rest have dates scheduled for a hearing.

Our attorney and the company attorney are setting up meetings to discuss the **"one day in seven day rest law."** We have also been talking to the Illinois Department of Labor and are working to get something in writing from them. There are a lot of rumors out in the field from managers, but we hope to have an agreement with the company after our meeting in early February.

The union bargaining committee and staff are preparing for the upcoming contract. AT&T is sending out a lot of information already, trying to scare our membership into accepting concessions in benefits and other parts of the contract. The company is still a very healthy one and we should be rewarded for our hard work. Stay strong and united in solidarity. **We deserve a good contract.**

## Benefit Report

### "It's the principle of the thing"

By Lynn Arwood, Chief Steward/Benefits Coordinator



My mom always uses that phrase when you see something *really wrong* taking place and you just can't let it go. It came to mind when AT&T tried to use the basic rights of our members as a bargaining chip. They attempted to single out those who represent us. The company changed their policy and stopped counting union paid hours toward the 1,250 hours needed for **FMLA eligibility**. Union

members, activists and staff began receiving discipline up to and including suspensions due to time they had spent working for our Local, time they spent working on our behalf.

The ruling in the Federal lawsuit we filed against AT&T for unjust discrimination regarding FMLA eligibility came in and **we won**.

The suit was the first of its kind as it was the first time a labor union has challenged an employer's policy regarding a member's "union time." Any member who was negatively affected by the policy must be made whole. AT&T must also pay the legal costs



President Kastner congratulates Errick Houston (center) as the new E-Board member for Unit 1. Executive Board chairman Larry Schuler (right)

Local 21 incurred in filing this suit.

Most importantly our activists will once again have protection under the Family Medical Leave Act if they should have an eligible absence. I was proud our Local refused to accept the concessions proposed by the company that would have affected the entire membership. Instead, our Union chose to fight the fight. With this ruling we made an impact on all of organized labor. After all... *it's the principle of the thing.*

## Meet the Office Staff

By Jacquie Fields, Treasurer



Our benefits department is highly regarded by our chief stewards and business representatives when they need information and advice to help the

members working at AT&T. Grace Rivera is a new addition to the department. As a new benefits liaison, she's becoming well versed with the FMLA, and the disability issues that confront members on a daily basis. Grace has been a union member for seven years and a steward for the past five

years. She and "Mr. Wonderful" are the parents of four: Josh, Audrey, Alison and Grey along with their beloved dog, Max.

I was really impressed with how Grace takes on each and every case with efficiency. In a short period of time she has gained knowledge of the benefits we receive and Grace can get an issue resolved in an amazingly short period of time. She also brings the perspective of our younger generation—insight into the opinions and concerns of what is important to our members who have service of less than 15 years.



PHOTO: NANCY NORTH

## Watching Your Money

By Denis A. Cardone, Scarborough Alliance

I wrote our Scarborough plan participants last fall explaining that throughout our history there have been numerous market declines and fewer crises. The common factor is the economy and the markets do recover and go on to higher levels.

The difference between the markets I have observed in the last forty years and now is the unprecedented broadness of the decline, affecting almost all countries of the world. There are 67 markets around the world and all of them declined. It's ironic that the global economy everyone's talked about over the last ten years has brought about a common economic and financial fate.

What is going to happen in 2009? In looking at the various forecasts from publications, newsletters, advisory letters, etc, the range of predictions goes from cautiously optimistic to gloom and doom. Actually, a good many people are predicting matters will stabilize in the second half of 2009 and both the economy and the markets will begin to grow once again. Those on the cautious side think the problems will continue through '09 and stability won't be reached until 2010.

The fundamental impediment is in the credit markets. Banks are reluctant to lend in an uncertain environment and lending is the plumbing that makes the economy function. Late last year the Federal Reserve loaned a number of key banks \$25 billion each in order to encourage them to lend money to stimulate the economy. However, the banks almost universally put the money into their balance sheets and did not lend. Remarkably, in their haste to avoid further

panic, the Treasury had not made the loans contingent upon the banks lending it to companies.

As this is being written in early February, Congress is working with the Treasury Department to implement a broader, deeper stimulus to the economy. Some of the initial proposals by the Obama administration have been contested by both Democrats and Republicans who want to avoid the mistakes of last fall. It is a challenging task but there seems to be a bi-partisan awareness that they need to do the right thing for the country, not just political maneuvering.

It is my feeling that once comprehensive, well thought-out stimulus program is put into effect, then you will see credit opening up resulting in the stabilization of the markets here as well as overseas. Should you care about what happens overseas? Yes, because in fact, we do have a global economy that affects us considerably. For example, 50% of U.S. Treasury obligations are owned by foreign interests.

My conclusion is the same conclusion I have conveyed for years. We will recover; it is just a question of when, so stay the course. If you are properly diversified and your investment objectives have stayed the same, there is no need to change your investment direction.

*If you would like to discuss your retirement investment options and how Scarborough Alliance can help you meet your financial objectives please contact John Laughlin in our Chicago office. He can be reached at 773- 620-3047.*

# FRONTLINE

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# OFFICIAL NOTICE OF NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION

## Local Union 21, IBEW

### To: All Local 21 Members

- The nominations for Officers of Local Union 21 will be held in May, 2009 and the election shall be in June, 2009. Nomination and election requirements from the IBEW Constitution and Local Union 21 By-laws will be followed.
  - Nominations for Local Union Officers shall be held at the regular meeting of each Unit in May, 2009, except employees of Altura Communication Systems, Inc., which shall be by mail and received back to the Election Committee by May 14, 2009.
  - Members of one unit may nominate members of another Unit for Local Union office. It is not necessary that such nominees be confined to a particular Unit. A member placing the name of another member in nomination for office when the nominated member is not present, shall at the time the nomination is made, give the unit Recorder evidence in writing signed by the nominee, that the nominee agrees to be a candidate for a specific Local Union office. However, any member being nominated in this manner cannot signify his/her intentions to be a candidate for more than one (1) specific Local Union office.
  - After nominations have closed, the President shall appoint an Election Judge and as many Tellers as are required who shall serve as an Election Board to conduct the election. No candidate for any office shall be eligible to serve on this Board.
  - No member nominated for the office of President/Business Manager/Financial Secretary may be nominated for the at-large delegate position since the position of delegate is considered as an office in the local union for the purpose of the election.
  - No member shall be eligible for the office unless he/she has been a member of Local Union 21 in continuous good standing for at least two (2) years immediately prior to nomination.
  - Nominations will proceed in the order of offices as listed in the IBEW Constitution whose term of office shall be three years.
- President-Business Manager & Financial Secretary, and by virtue of office Delegate to IBEW System Councils, Coordinating Councils & IBEW International Convention.
  - Vice President
  - Recording Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Delegate to the International Convention (11)
  - Delegate to the Cable Coordinating Council CCC-1 (1)
  - Delegate to the Telephone Coordinating Council TCC-7 (3)
  - Executive Board Member (one from each of 7 units)
  - Unit Chairman (one from each of 7 units)
  - Unit Recorder (one from each of 7 units)

- Nominations will be held at the May meeting of each Unit as follows:

Unit	Date	Time	Location
1	Thurs., May 14	7:00	Irish-American Heritage Center 4626 N. Knox Ave. Chicago, IL 773-282-7035
2	Tues., May 12	7:00	Gaelic Park Banquet Hall 6119 W. 147th Oak Forest, IL 708-687-9323
3	Thurs., May 7	7:00	Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites 495 Airport Rd. Elgin, IL 847-488-9000
4	Wed., May 13	7:00	American Legion Harwood Post #5 705 S. Larkin Joliet, IL 815-725-4333
5	Mon., May 4	7:00	Rocky Point Club 3603 Bonansinga Dr. Quincy, IL 217-224-1332
6	Tues., May 5	5:30	IBEW Local #193 3150 Wide Track Dr. Springfield, IL 217-544-3479
7	Wed., May 6	7:00	IBEW Local #309 2000A Mall St. (Rt. 157) Collinsville, IL 618-345-5112

- The Local Union Officers' Election and Unit Officers' Election will be conducted by mail ballot. Ballots will be mailed out on May 22, 2009 and counted on June 12, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.
- Ballots received at the designated depository after 8:00 a.m. on June 12, 2009 will not be counted. Instructions on the use of the mail ballot will be enclosed with the ballot. Ballots will be mailed for a run-off election, if necessary, on June 19, 2009 and counted on July 10, 2009 at the Holiday Inn in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.
- All ballots will be mailed to the members' last known address. Please be sure to contact the Local Union office at 630 960-4466 if you are not sure that your correct address is on file.
- Write in votes shall not be permitted. The election shall be decided for the candidate receiving the most votes for a specific office. Officers and Executive Board Members will be installed in office at the first regular Local Union Executive Board meeting following their election to office. Unit Officers will be installed in office at the first Unit Meeting following their election.
- A member's Unit designation is determined by the member's work location as reported by the employer.

## UNIT OFFICER ELECTION

- Nominations for Unit Chairman and Unit Recorder will be held at the regular meeting of each unit in May and elected in June, in accordance with Article III of the bylaws. Unit officers shall be members of their respective Units.
- No members shall be a candidate for more than one (1) Unit Office. No member shall be nominated for Unit office unless they are present or signify their willingness in writing to be a candidate. A member must have at least six (6) months continuous good standing in their Unit immediately prior to

- nomination to be eligible for office in their Unit.
- Only members of each Unit in good standing are eligible to nominate and vote for the Unit's officers.
- The Local Union Officers, Executive Board, and Unit Officers are elected by mail ballot.
- The Local 21 rules of election and campaigning will be available to candidates at the May Unit meetings, or by contacting the Election Committee at 630 960-4466, ext. 388. Only the Election Committee has access to this voicemail box.

# Welcome New Members



*Customer Consultants in Rock Island*



## **Prem Techs**



*Photos this page:  
Rosetta Shinn*

## Employee Free Choice Act

By Rosetta Shinn & Dennis McCaffery, Committee on Political Education



Our steady message has been that the future of organized labor and the survival of the middle class depends on our ability to elect worker friendly candidates and hold them accountable to further our agenda. It is our belief that with the swearing-in of President Obama and the convening of the 111th U.S. Congress, step one of our mission has been accomplished. This brings us to the next task which is the

passage and signing of the **Employee Free Choice Act**. It's been sixty years since there's been any meaningful, far-reaching legislation such as this in our country and we must not let this opportunity pass us by. We're done talking the talk; it's time to walk the walk!

**The Employee Free Choice Act puts the choice of whether and how to form a Union back into the workers' hands NOT the company's!** For far too long, employers have denied workers the freedom to make their own choices. The Employee Free Choice Act will do three things to level the playing field for employees and employers:

1. Strengthens penalties for companies that illegally coerce or intimidate employees in an effort to prevent them from forming a union.
2. Brings in a neutral third party to settle a contract when a company and a newly certified union cannot agree on a contract after three months.
3. Establishes majority sign-up, meaning that if a majority of the employees sign union authorization cards, validated by the National Labor Relations Board, a company MUST recognize the union.

We are currently facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We need to take immediate steps to create good jobs that will strengthen our economy. But they won't produce shared prosperity or rebuild the middle class unless we pass the Employee Free Choice Act to restore workers' freedom to bargain for a better life.

Deceptively titled Big Business front groups such as the "Coalition for a Democratic Workplace" and the "Center for Union Facts" are gearing up to spend \$200 million to defeat EFCA. They will continue to do what they do best: lie, distort the facts and downright try to scare the hell out of everyone so corporations can keep all the power in the workplace and the fat-cat CEO's can continue to block workers from having the security of a contract. **WITH YOUR HELP, we will fight back and win, just like we won the 2008 elections.**

The COPE Dept. has been very busy monitoring and participating in the shaping of legislation that directly affects working people at national and statewide levels. With our contract at AT&T set to expire late in June, we've been busy building coalitions with various political and labor groups to ensure that when we get to that bargaining table, we sit down with the support and encouragement of ALL working people.

As always, please feel free to contact us on the Local's website: [www.ibew21.org](http://www.ibew21.org) or call the Union office (630)960-4466 ext. 327 for Executive Director Rosetta Shinn or ext. 353 for Director Dennis McCaffery. Until next time, take care and GOD Bless!



Ekong Udoh discusses his 2009 AT&T bargaining survey with Business Representative Mike Sacco.

### Set to Talk.



Local 21 internal organizing committee tabulates data from members AT&T bargaining surveys.

PHOTOS: BOB PRZYBYLNSKI



## Class is in Session

By Michael Sacco, Business Representative

Last fall, I was offered a unique opportunity from the University of Illinois to teach as a Visiting Lecturer in Labor Studies. The class focused on the history and methods workers used when organizing into unions to improve their lives.

My students were all juniors and seniors with varying experience in the workplace. One of the first exercises was a test to assess each student's knowledge of labor law in the U.S. The test included questions like "Is overtime guaranteed after eight hours work?" or "Is six weeks of paid maternity leave granted to all employees?" Needless to say, the students failed this test spectacularly. In my best estimation, most American workers would fail this test.

The U.S. has one of the most backward sets of labor laws in the industrial world and things like overtime pay and maternity leave are not part of the law. Our union contract includes protections that go beyond the legal minimums. Most unions have similar improvements in their contracts. Unions have helped to raise the standards

of many workers in the non-union sector.

As a business rep I see what happens when our members don't know their contractual rights or the law. The overall lack of knowledge is not the worker's or my student's fault. It's part of a larger plan over decades to keep workers in the dark about their rights.

The laws allowing unions to exist was a response to a workers revolution in the 1930's. The most successful unions prior to the Great Depression were outlaws that their members organized. These bottom-up unions were crushed by business and the government and were replaced by unions with little power. They lacked muscle because of stringent laws and a slow dispute resolution process designed to take grievances off of the workplace floor to insure "Industrial Peace."

There are many things workers can do to organize and build their solidarity, but



oddly, I can't write about many of them without violating the law or our contract. Please note the picture of a Kedzie garage bulletin board. It makes a bold statement about these members and their solidarity. These workers started a "strike fund" used to compensate members who are wrongly suspended. If there is a strike, they will be ready.

As a union rep, I'm unable to organize this, but I can show it to you as an example of what stewards Dave Hilliard and Mark Jackson are doing with the support of their brothers and sisters. They are re-writing the rules.

## Organizing is Power at Work!

By Rosetta Shinn, Business Representative

Being a union member has helped many working men and women make it to the middle class. It's no coincidence that when union membership declines, so do living wage jobs. That's why organizing is a top priority in the IBEW. Organizing brings the benefits of union membership to more working families. Organizing benefits current members, because more union members means greater clout at the bargaining table and in legislative halls.

Union organizers blend the old fashioned techniques of hand billing and house calls with the latest advances in videos, computers and research. Together we'll keep fighting for job security, better wages, benefits and working conditions!

Now this is where you come in. Your organizing department needs your help. Your neighbor may be that Comcast worker wanting a better work place or the person you see at your kids' school activities may be looking to improve their family's lives. If you have contacts like this, please call your organizing department. Business Rep Dave Webster and I will follow up and see what we can do about organizing in those workplaces. We can't do this alone, we need your help. Comcast is not the only company that treats its workers badly; the same problems exist in many non-organized shops, so please get those leads in to us.

The rulings from the NLRB out of Washington DC have been terrible for unions under the Bush administration. Now that there's a new sheriff in town let's hope this changes and SOON.

I've had many people ask, "What Is the NLRB?" so here is a little

background. The National Labor Relations Board is an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1935 to administer the National Labor Relations Act, the primary law governing relations between unions and employers in the private sector. The statute guarantees the right of employees to organize and to bargain collectively with their employers or to refrain from all such activity. Generally applying to all employers involved in interstate commerce – other than airlines, railroads, agriculture, and government – the Act implements the national labor policy of assuring free choice and encouraging collective bargaining as a means of maintaining industrial peace. Through the years, Congress has amended the Act and the Board and courts have developed a body of law drawn from the statute.

The importance of organizing should not be lost on any member in our Union. Our future contracts depend on more of our members in each industry gaining power at work.

As each Union works towards an industry leading contract, each contract improvement leads to an increase in the contract at the next company, creating a constant cycle of improvement for working families.

Don't leave your friends, neighbors or community behind; organize them today.

Please feel free to contact Dave Webster or me on the Local's website: [www.ibew21.org](http://www.ibew21.org) or call the Union office (630) 960-4466 ext. 327 for Rosetta Shinn or ext.449 for Dave Webster.

• • • **At Vermilion County** the contract expires on November 30, 2009. Area Steward Doris Halls and I are beginning the process of preparing now. We will review past contracts, compare contracts of other represented county employees, and look at job descriptions, etc. This will prepare us to negotiate for future improvements. We will be calling on all members to assist in one way or another it will take all of us to help our Union be successful. We hope to have a meeting sometime in the near future and encourage all of you to attend.

At the **Peoria County – Bel Wood Nursing Home** all the managers, stewards, and I will be attending the “Labor Management University through PALM” offered by the Peoria Area Labor/Management Council. We’ll attend two sessions in hopes of improving our skill sets and to further improve our working relationships. The first session “Roles and Responsibilities of Stewards and Supervisors” covers successful implementation of the collective bargaining agreement; the second “Grievance Handling” addresses the issue “Is it a gripe or a grievance?” Mediators from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS) out of Peoria will conduct the training.

Recently several people were stuck in the elevators at both Peoria Credit and Collections and in Hoffman Estates. Chief Steward Alison Watson referred this to the union’s safety committee chair, Mel Probst. The issue was discussed at the quarterly safety meeting with AT&T. The company’s safety committee chairman advised us there is no corporate policy on this issue but AT&T does have contractual procedures with the elevator companies. They are expected to arrive within 60 minutes of being called. Unless there is a violation of these contracts there is nothing AT&T can do. Mel presented potential situations and asked about contacting local emergency responders. The manager stated the fire and/or police departments could be called for anything that would be considered a medical emergency. Please keep this in mind if you are one of the unfortunate ones to get caught in an elevator.

Please remember **Asset Protection is not your friend**. If you’re called to a meeting with them, don’t just ask if you need a steward they will tell you “no.” Instead tell them you **WANT** a steward, read them the Weingarten statement on the back of your union card, and say nothing more until a steward arrives. Your steward will ask what is being investigated and then speak with you alone for a few minutes. Please listen to what the steward has to say and follow their directions. It’s your job that could be in jeopardy.



By Vickie Burroughs, Business Representative

• • • We lost 21 people at the **Total Grace Consumer** office on November 21, 2008. Eighteen of the members were charged with Code of Business Conduct violations. By the first week of December everyone was back on the job. We have been winning 80% of the grievances, including \$80,000 in incentive payments and lost wages. Sixty-one new Customer Consultants started January 5, 2009.

There is no change from the apprentice committee, all areas are in ratio. Just a quick message to all the network guys to always remember to work safe and do one job at a time and do it well.



Michael Cohns, Business Representative

• • • I previously reported the **Central Office** preferencing was complete. About a week later AT&T announced a surplus and they would be offering a SIPP to the Technical Specialists. What the heck is going on!?! This threw a huge monkey wrench into the mix and the only fix was to start over. Once again we hope this mess is over and our members at least got some good moves. Let’s hope this is the end of it for a long time.

We should be coming close to the end of the scheduling trial for the central offices and will be meeting with the company soon. Hopefully we’ll have more to report. We want to come to some agreement so we can work on refining the off hour scheduling on an on going basis.

It’s nice to see the **arbitration load** is coming under control and the last of the old cases are being heard. Any new grievances going to arbitration are now being scheduled within months.

Recently a Business Rep won an arbitration involving a member who had been terminated. AT&T, unhappy with the decision, asked the arbitrator to modify the award, which would greatly reduce the settlement amount our member would receive. Apparently the Article 13 language ....*The award of the Arbitrator shall be final and binding upon the parties...* is a problem for the company unless they win. I will report more on this case once we come to a resolution.

Finally, we have a **contract** coming up. We need to stick together up to, during, and after bargaining is finished. Remember it took years to get to where we are today. For many years we took less in one thing (wages) to get more in another (benefits.) Don’t be too willing to give up something that we fought hard to win and keep just because the company feels we should make concessions. As always Solidarity!



By Steve Unterfranz, Business Representative

• • • When **AT&T** declared a surplus on December 11, 2008 it impacted members at 225 W. Randolph in downtown Chicago as well as other locations. The force distribution date, the last day on payroll is March 16, 2009. We are waiting to see if the company has any job openings to offer the surplus members.

By *Liz Hodges, Business Representative*



• • • There's a lot of heartache with all the Details. There are Details in every work group. In Construction many techs are sent to some other location every week. For the past seven months the company has been paying for board and lodging, but Monday February 2nd that stopped because AT&T studied the verbiage in the contract, and interpreted that only the per diem applied. Some techs are driving between 150 to 200 miles round trip every day, but management has no compassion.

By *Dan Gruenich, Business Representative*



• • • First I'd like to introduce myself as the new Business Rep for the south suburban and Northwest Indiana area. Mike Kunas was a good friend and a year later we still mourn his passing.

I've been working with Chief Steward Byron Bonham in the transition from Business Rep Terry Sheehan. I'm working with Byron, the stewards and mobilization coordinators to aggressively establish a solid line of communication as we move closer to bargaining.

In December we received notification of surplus of plant **engineering clerks in Crown Point**. Working with Jerry Gast we were able to settle two arbitration cases and alleviate the surplus. The Crown Point plant engineering clerks had their title upgraded to Engineering Assistant. They received a pay raise. Some accepted the SIPP, all the others remain employed, but were required to move to positions in Illinois at Blue Island or Joliet.

The entire **Hammond AFRC** was declared surplus because the work was moving to Hoffman Estates. Three of the four senior plant assigners accepted the SIPP. One remains in the surplus.

We continue to monitor and adjust to the forced details coming into our area both in I/R and Construction. Please treat these detailed brothers and sisters as we would like to be treated if the roles were reversed. That day will come again.

By *Paul Wright, Business Representative*



• • • Local 21 reached an agreement regarding **Prem Techs** who did not get all their unused time in 2008. If a technician had 5 unused days from 2008, they can be taken until July 2009. If you have more than 5 unused days, please talk to John Dolsen, Paul Waters, or Brian Gee, so you can file a grievance for the remaining time. Each tech should use 2008 time before using any 2009 time off.

AT&T informed us they are hiring **150 new prem techs**. We're meeting with each new group every Friday through the end of February. We've reached an understanding with the company allowing more techs to move under the preference that went out last fall because of the new hires. So far all these new techs are former Terms, who were work completed under the core contract.

We've addressed your issue of understanding your payroll checks. The company sent us a document they wanted to use to explain your checks. We sent it back because it did not answer everyone's concerns. They are creating a new document.

**P2R Fraud Cases** are continuing. Many techs lost their jobs over this issue. Whenever the company promotes something you think is good there's always a catch. Many techs submitted leads on orders they weren't involved with. If you have questions on the P2R issue please talk to Paul, Brian, or John.

An issue about stewards came up recently. Under your agreement the language is silent as far as how they get paid. The company has taken the position if a steward sits in a meeting that time will only be paid at the straight time rate, which means if they work overtime the time they spent in the meeting won't go towards overtime hours. The Chief Stewards have been taking grievances on this issue.

At the Harvey location, a Prem Tech was fired for attendance by a manager who is on the fast track. This manager didn't understand we have a contract and an employee is not fired until there is a dismissal panel. The tech was supposedly fired on January 13th, a day when the temperature was 5 degrees and a blizzard warning was issued. The manager **had the audacity to tell the tech his shirt and jacket were company issued and he could not leave with them**. When will this company treat employees as HUMAN BEINGS?

The Chief Stewards are in the process of appointing new Mobilization Coordinators for each location.

We are all aware that the contract is coming up and we've been spending a lot of time researching AT&T. We need to understand this company is going to put all their eggs into U-Verse. If anyone thinks the Prem Tech department has no impact on you or the future of AT&T, you're kidding yourself.

By *Mike McCormick, Business Representative*



• • • I'd like to start by thanking President Ron Kastner for my recent promotion to Business Rep. The promotion includes reassignment to a new area so I want to thank everyone from my old locations for all your help and support throughout my time working with you. It's been fun and exciting to meet all my new people as I travel around the new area.

Let's list the excitement so far. First a Surplus in the Telecommunication job title, wait, it was voluntary SIPP offers not a Surplus, now let's readjust all the positions. In Construction, again voluntary SIPP offers, no wait it became a workforce adjustment. Originally the Engineering Assistants faced a Surplus, no wait, it became a workforce reduction. Wait again, the Union agrees with AT&T to allow changes in locations, everyone's safe and they are moved to their new locations. In I&M some members receive SIPP offers, no wait, management decides on Details, to move people to the work. Wait again, there's no work where you're sent, what the heck, throw in some mandatory overtime.



By Jim McLaughlan, Business Representative

• • • In **Construction** the term techs in C & E and the terms in the first mile project were released by AT&T. Now, the responsibility to build Project LightSpeed in **Chicago** is placed squarely on the backs of the existing construction force. The company will start detailing techs from the suburban areas and downstate to assist in building Project LightSpeed in the city.

In **I&M** the company allowed 25 term techs to preference for I&M and placed them in I&M garages. Management is also detailing techs from suburban and downstate areas to help with the workload.

And in the **Central Office** world the company followed the chaotic C.O. preference by declaring a surplus of 98 employees in the same offices that they preferred them in to. The company offered a voluntary SIPP to the C.O. techs to help alleviate the surplus and management did get enough volunteers to do so. Of course that meant another preference/force readjustment to balance the headcount again. Stay tuned.



By CJ-Cleveland Johnson, Business Representative

• • • We've begun contract negotiations at **Verizon** but we're still in the early stages. Many proposals have been passed across the table, but nothing has been agreed to. We are also preparing for an upcoming arbitration. This arbitration involves the company offering a retirement buyout, and then replacing the members with contractors. This practice is decreasing full time employees, thus decreasing our bargaining unit.

Mandatory overtime has reared its ugly head, but **Century Telephone** has taken it to another level. Management had the audacity to call members while on vacation and force them to come into work for 3 days. If that wasn't enough Local 21 Steward Willie Walker came in and worked for them for 1 day of his bargained for vacation, but not the other 2. He was suspended without pay for 2 days. **What an outrage!** I'd advise all members, while on vacation, do not answer your phone if you get a call from a company number or a number you don't recognize.

Also, Century is in the process of acquiring **Embarq**. First, they must get approval from the Illinois Commerce Commission. Local 21, along with the International, will attend the approval hearings to protect our members' interests.

We have an upcoming arbitration at **Frontier**. This case involves the company pulling our members off of a job at quitting time, and having contractors complete the job. What the hell are these people thinking? At this time, we are in the process of selecting an arbitrator. The scheduling process will begin after the selection is complete.

At **AT&T**... We have had surpluses, layoffs, SIPPs, details, you name it.

AT&T declared 98 central office telecom specialists in the state surplus. Luckily, more than 98 members accepted SIPP,

and the surplus was cared for. Techs preferred to locations vacated by the SIPP takers.

On December 26th, the company announced a layoff of 36 Engineering Assistants. We were able to negotiate allowing assistants to move from locations that were closing, to locations that were remaining open.

Voluntary SIPP was offered to Exhibit 3 I&M, and Statewide Construction outside technicians. We had 5 takers in I&M, and 9 in C&E.

Details are continuing in I&M. Company decisions don't appear to have any rhyme or reason. We have technicians in locations where the workload doesn't warrant it, then we send them somewhere else and there might be work for a few days. Members are away from their families for long periods of time, just in case the work load spikes. You would think that a company who's always crying about budgets wouldn't want to spend money for room and board when it is not necessary.

In Construction details are still an issue, but we negotiated a process to relieve some of the craziness. The company notifies us in advance the "from" and "to" locations. We then have the opportunity to fix some of the issues prior to techs leaving their home garages. Also, we have negotiated "moratorium" weeks throughout the year when no one is detailed away from home. Most are centered around holidays.



By Michael Roach, Business Representative

• • • Well 2008 was one hell of a year for **Construction & Engineering** with all the details! They're going to continue through 2009. Most of the work is in Chicago for the LightSpeed build. Members are detailed to the 89th & State garage, but there's not enough parking. The company has them pulling out the Bridgeview and 76th & Stewart garages in Chicago, and then reporting to 89th & State. Local 21 has tried to convince the company, that there are garages closer to the 89th street garage where the CSTs or OPTs could drive from, but management refused to listen.

Remember while you're on a detail in **Construction**, there is an overtime list in the home location. This OT list should be updated weekly. While on a detail, if the company asks for OT, please let the local steward know.

In C&E the company announced second level manager areas are going to change. Also the fiber splicers and the LVT group are going to be combined under Business as Usual (BAU) second levels.

AT&T announced a voluntary SIPP in C&E, with an off pay roll date of December 31, 2008. Those accepting the SIPP were allowed to defer their lump sum payout into 2009, enabling them to get the new lower GAT rate of 4.00%.

AT&T announced a surplus of 98 COTs in the **Central Offices**. Many Central Office Technicians applied for the SIPP. The surplus was eliminated by the COTs that applied for the SIPP.

In **I&M** the district-wide preference in Brain Breedlove's organization is still on hold for now. Management was talking about moving areas around to see if it would help areas that are over headcount. This has not taken place yet.

In recent weeks we've become aware of AT&T hiring contractors to perform bargained-for work. In **Bourbonnais** and **Orland Hills** we caught two contractors with service orders to install modems and inside wiring for customers' computer networking. This is our work, and should be grieved! Please get all information to your stewards.



By Terry Sheehan, Business Representative

• • • There's some good news from the **Lakewood** Center in Hoffman Estates. The Union presented and won a grievance for the MA's in the **NCS** repair center, demanding premium pay for their regular 8 hour shift when they worked 4 hours of overtime before their shift. The settlement of \$36,925.20 will be divided among the 65 MA's involved.



By Melanie Probst, Business Representative

• • • This is a big year for all of us as we head into bargaining with a very successful AT&T-- a success that we all made possible. Let's not forget that and remember "United we bargain--divided we beg!"

On the North Side of Chicago our new year was started with tragedy as Night Telecom Specialist Catherine Grayson (Kedzie CO) died in a tragic fire in her home in Chicago. Sister Grayson was 57 and had 27 years with the company. She was well-loved by her friends and peers. Sister Grayson was an active member of her community through her service in Trinity Community Baptist Church and left behind a large family to keep her memory alive, especially her mother Elizabeth Grayson and son Waverly Clark Jr. Sadly, her first grandchild Waverly Clark, III came into the world the day after Catherine went home. She will be missed.



By Michael Sacco, Business Representative

• • • Our Nation has a new President who is committed to working families. Of particular interest to all unions is the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). This will be a battle in Congress but President Obama has agreed to sign it into law once it reaches his desk.

Local 21 will have a busy year with the AT&T contract expiring on June 27, 2009. These negotiations will be the toughest I have seen in 30 years. I want everyone to realize AT&T is coming after health care.

I'm sharing my personal story to help you understand why keeping what we now have is so important. I visited my doctor to have a lesion on my face checked out. The office visit cost me \$20, an amount small enough that I wouldn't hesitate to go because of the co-pay. The test results showed that I had basal cell skin cancer and I had it removed. What's the only good news? Because our Union fought hard for our benefits I'm not worried about how I'll afford to pay for this surgery. My health benefits will cover it with little cost to me. I won't have to put my health on a list of, "I can't do it this week because my budget won't allow it?"

I don't want AT&T's management plan and DO NOT FEEL we should settle for it. Who wants to be forced to pay thousands of dollars to cover out of pocket medical expenses? Not me. Stay tuned for bargaining news by visiting the Local 21 website [www.ibew21.org](http://www.ibew21.org) and when asked to support an action, do it!

Finally, this is the year for union elections in Local 21. This will be taking place while we are in negotiations. Some officers might not be able to visit your office before the elections because they will be looking after your interests at the bargaining table. Even though they'd like to be there. Hang on tight this year is going to fly by.



By Kurt Schmidt, Business Representative

## Retiree Corner

By Larry Moeller, Retiree Liason



The tidal wave of corporate greed is about to wash over another group of people who worked long and hard to earn their reward. I am speaking now

of Local 21 retirees, who at the time they made the decision to cut ties with the corporate nipple, did not have to worry about the additional expense of paying a premium for their health care benefits. In the run up to 2009 bargaining, AT&T has begun bombarding active Local 21 members with company communications. They lay out AT&T's intention to force a health care premium on each active employee. So what does this mean to retirees? No one has threatened us, the company promised us health care when we retired, right? Yes, but promises don't figure in the mindset of modern CEO's. It should be obvious if health care premiums

are forced on active Local 21 members, retirees will be marched down that same road.

What can be done? Since we are no longer members of the Union, how can we prevent this? While it's true we are behind the eight ball, it is far from over. We can partner with the active members of Local 21; we can spread the word amongst ourselves when we meet for coffee, a beer or that monthly card game. The Unions have always spoken up for their retirees during bargaining. AT&T will claim the Union can't but Local 21 President Ron Kastner has promised me they will. This promise will be kept, but retirees are going to need to do their part. Allies are the key to any successful fight and retirees have a good one with Local 21. President Kastner has appointed me to act as a liaison between Local 21 and non-management retirees. In the future I'll be available to talk to retirees face to face wherever groups of retirees gather. A plan to defend our promised benefits is evolving, but ultimately success will depend on us.

You can email me at [lmoeller@ibew21.org](mailto:lmoeller@ibew21.org) or call me at 630 432-3836



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Schwadron

"Dunston, you can't quit! We'd never find anyone to fill your shoes!"

## Safety First!

By Melanie Probst, Business Representative/Safety Chair

Local 21 received a notice to appear at a hearing being held by OSHA to discuss an alleged violation issued to AT&T. I attended the hearing under the direction of President Ron Kastner; AT&T Corporate Safety, local management, an OSHA Field Agent, and an Area Director also attended. I learned a citation was issued to AT&T for a serious violation when a technician, observed by an OSHA Field Agent, failed to wear a body belt with a lanyard attached to the boom or basket while working from an elevated aerial lift. The employee was exposed to the hazards associated with falls. I sat and listened to the company explain that they provide training, equipment, on the job observations, garage postings etc. I kept thinking about the dangers associated with this infraction, the horrible phone call this technician's family could have received.

I wondered why this was happening. I'm not writing just to warn you that AT&T and OSHA are watching you. I'm



writing to **tell you how important you are to others**; it's not just about you. Please don't ever feel so comfortable in your job that you don't use the safety equipment and training provided to you. Luckily this technician made it home that evening.

Another issue involves the testing and ventilation of manholes. I hope to God that this is just a rumor but **I've been hearing technicians are working in manholes without the proper test**

**equipment or ventilation.** Who in their right mind would do something like that?

Training and equipment aren't given to you because OSHA says so; they are given to you so you can do your job safely and go home at the end of the work day. I know, some might say, "The equipment doesn't work or the equipment isn't supplied." Well I'm no rocket scientist but my position on that would be "THEN DON'T DO THE JOB." **AT&T admitted to me the quickest way to get the proper equipment to do the job is to refuse to do it because it is UNSAFE.**

Finally to the Premise Technicians; do not use a 2 piece extension ladder unless you have had the proper company training. I am currently in discussions with Corporate Safety regarding this matter. I'm hearing that managers in the field are issuing these ladders to techs who were never trained on using them safely.

## Food Drive Feeds the Hungry



In response to President Barack Obama's recent call for all Americans to participate in an annual national day of service in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., IBEW Local 21 partnered with CWA Local 4250, AT&T, and the Pioneers in the Share Our Strength food drive.

Bins were placed in five downtown Chicago locations. Our members filled them with a variety of canned goods, including beans, fruits, vegetables, cereal, chicken, chili, pasta, peanut butter, tuna, rice, salmon and soup. The equivalent of nearly 6,700 meals was delivered to the Greater Chicago Food Depository on January 22nd and unloaded by Local 21 and CWA members. The Greater Chicago Food Depository distributes donated and purchased food through a network of 600 food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters to 500,000 adults and children every year.

"In these tough times those most in need are often forgotten. We're proud of our members taking President Barack Obama's challenge to help rebuild America. Their donations will help children facing hunger. They are our future. The Greater Chicago Food Depository provides the substance so these children may have the nourishment to achieve their hopes and dreams," said IBEW Local 21 President Ronald E. Kastner.

Although the bins are gone, Share Our Strength's Operation No Kid Hungry initiative continued until March 1.

*On January 22nd Alderman Ed Burke thanked IBEW Local 21 and CWA members for their generosity at the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Left to right: Sylvia Aldretti, Verness Streeter, Charlene Herda, Patricia Jackson, Edith Rice, Chief Steward Cheryl Crooks, Jackie Morris, Chief Steward Charles Snipes, Alderman Ed Burke, CWA Local 4250 Steve Tisza, CWA Local 4250 Vice President Liz Vanderwoude, Kate Maehr, Director Greater Chicago Food Depository.*

## Saving Grace



At a time when organizations have seen donations decline our members working in the Total Grace Street Consumer Office dug deep to help out. They collected donations for a toy drive benefiting "My Joyful Heart." It's a nonprofit organization that provides a positive influence to inner city and suburban school children in need supporting them with basic life essentials, school supplies, clothing, toys and encouragement throughout the year. These children's holidays were brighter because of the donations our members made.

## Another View: Pirate Ethics

The difference between pirate captains of old and modern-day corporate bosses is that pirates had ethics. They fairly shared their loot, for example, with the entire crew.

Contrast that with the rip-off of employees by the bosses and bankers involved in the recent tribulations of the Tribune Company. This media conglomerate, which owns some of America's top newspapers and television stations, was bought a year ago by a Chicago real estate baron named Sam Zell.

This fellow didn't have anywhere near enough money to pay the \$8.2 billion purchase price, but, hey, that's no problem for a striver. Zell simply got the company's CEO to let him use the employee's pension fund as collateral for bank loans to buy the company. Even though their money was put at risk, the employees had no say in the deal, nor in how the company was run. It was run badly. Less than a year after Zell's takeover, the Tribune Co. has had to declare bankruptcy, and employees are likely to lose jobs, severance payments, and pensions.

Those who pulled off this heist, however, have been much more fortunate. The former CEO was given more than \$40 million when Zell took charge. Citigroup and Merrill Lynch were paid about \$36 million each for being "advisors" on the deal. Another Wall Street bank, Morgan Stanley, got \$7.5 million just for writing a "fairness opinion," stating that Zell's use of the pension fund was Kosher.

And Zell? He had put up less than four percent of the purchase price to get control of the company, and while he might lose some of that, he cut the deal in a way that makes him a secured creditor. This means that if the company's assets have to be distributed to creditors as a result of the bankruptcy, Zell will be first in line to get his—standing in front of the employees whose company and pensions he wrecked.

No pirate would do that to his crew.

—Jim Hightower is a nationally syndicated radio commentator and bestselling author.

## Banking Lessons from FDR's first 100 Days

By Nancy North, Area Steward



The Depression had been deepening for three years. People were hoarding money so it wasn't circulating. Bank runs and bank closings climaxed on Inauguration Day Saturday March 4, 1933 when New York and Illinois shut their banks.

The next day President Roosevelt invoked the 1917 Trading with the Enemy Act and declared a national bank holiday. Federal Reserve official Walter Wyatt was directed to draft a banking bill. The Emergency Banking Act was submitted to Congress on Thursday. Although almost no one had a copy, it passed both houses and was signed within seven hours.

For three days Treasury officials and bankers tried to work out which banks were safe to reopen. To retrieve the gold that had seeped out of the banks, FDR directed the Fed to announce it would publish a list of those who had withdrawn gold coins since February 1st, but not returned it by March 14th. In New York alone, over \$300 million was deposited.

In his first fireside chat on March 12th, FDR advised Americans that their money was safe in a reopened bank. People believed him and money flowed back into the system. Even in the Great Depression, the first step was rescuing the banks. Today's banks need to remember the lesson and get credit flowing again.

## IBEW Local 21 Michael J. Kunas Memorial Fund

By Jim Sheehan, Executive  
Board Member Unit 2/Chicago  
Ridge Union Steward

It is my pleasure to announce the formation of the IBEW Local 21 Michael J. Kunas Memorial Fund.

Mike Kunas was a steward, chief steward and newly appointed business representative, in N.W. Indiana and South suburbs of Illinois, when he died suddenly last year of heart complications.

Mike left behind a wife and young daughter. Thanks to President Ron Kastner, his staff, and the Executive Board we have formed this fund in Mike's memory. This year it will help his family and in years to come any IBEW Local 21 member or immediate family member in need.

I am extremely proud to announce to our members the first annual **IBEW Local 21 Michael J. Kunas Memorial Golf Outing** which will raise money for the Memorial Fund. Keep Saturday, October 3, 2009 open for fun on the links.

More details on the outing and fund will be forthcoming.



"How do we get the deregulated corporate monster back in the bottle?"

## Editors Note

We are aware some of you received your December issue of *Frontline* in mid-January. In an attempt to keep postage costs to a minimum we mail under a non-profit stamp which increases delivery times. While taking that into consideration it appears the December issue was held up in the postal system in certain areas. We made them aware of the problem. We do everything we can to ensure you receive timely delivery of every issue. If you don't receive your issue of *Frontline* please contact the editors so we can look into the problem. All issues of *Frontline* appear on our website after they are laid out and before they go to print usually three weeks before you receive your copy in the mail. Go to [www.ibew21.org](http://www.ibew21.org) to view all back issues of *Frontline*



## Letters To The Editor

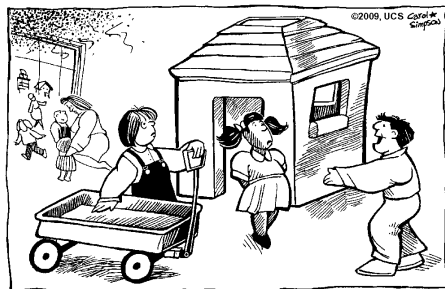


I count my lucky stars I have a job and can put a roof over my family's heads and food on the table. Still, hard times don't give AT&T the right to treat their workers like they are the scum of the earth.

Whatever happened to the "days of old," that guys with over 30 years talk about? Times when upper management didn't get involved with issues out in the field and our foremen actually made decisions and treated their employees like human beings. Now, these supervisors can't make any decisions without getting approval from 2 or 3 different managers. I've actually seen an email to a boss telling him that he's not being hard enough on his guys. Basically, it told him how to be a jerk.

I want to explain a few things to everyone. The most recent action drove me to write this letter. A term technician was deployed to Afghanistan shortly after he was hired. While on military leave, AT&T twice announced they were reducing the number of terms on the payroll. Because of his seniority this term should've been let go both times. Everyone assumed the law overruled AT&T's actions and he couldn't be let go until he returned from active duty.

Well low and behold, with the great dedication and investigation skills of the General Manager and his management team, they found a loophole giving them the right to terminate him while he is at war defending our freedom and our country. His wife who is at home taking care of their twins born while he was at



"I know. Let's play grownup. You be the heartless corporation that lays off Mommy and Daddy, and I'll auction off the house for taxes."

war will be receiving a letter stating their family's provider no longer has a job. You'd think the General Manager would sign the letter and take credit for this great victory of saving the company a few bucks a month. Not a chance. He is forcing a first level manager to sign it and send it.

Every department receives their annual budget from headquarters in Texas. This brings us to my second point. In 2007 AT&T hired hundreds of term techs to build U-Verse. By the end of 2008, most of these techs were term completed early. They didn't reach the two year employment mark they expected.

The killer part is publicly AT&T is blaming the economy. The truth is company mismanagement is the reason for the job cuts. Our management team some how burned through their budget and ran out of money. Texas didn't give them a bail-out. Approximately 500 techs lost their jobs because of budget **mismangement**. Management wasn't held **accountable**.

My final point is 2009 is contract year for Local 21. I see health care being a major issue. AT&T has already contacted our union saying concessions are necessary. AT&T again is claiming the economy is the reason. Well this is where the company doesn't think things through. Two weeks later a memo was posted in my garage boasting of AT&T's record setting profits for 2008.

I didn't write this on behalf of the union. I am writing this on behalf of a bunch of hard working guys getting the crappy end of every stick management throws at us. The guys in my garage feel the same way. AT&T management is not held accountable for anything and we are held accountable for everything. The company can blow thousands of dollars, maybe millions, and thinks nothing of it. You don't hear of any consequences for their actions. But if one of us makes a little mistake we get wacked. Again, they have **NO ACCOUNTABILITY**.

We must stick together; stand united and not let management get everything they demand. AT&T has deeper pockets than anyone will ever know, AT&T will never be poor.

—From An Extremely Ticked Off Employee

## Game on...

We were all aware that 2009 is a contract year, but now thanks to a recent E-mail from Mark Royse Executive Vice President-Labor Relations we know it's game on. His attempt to break our solidarity by directly contacting us has backfired. We're outraged at his disregard of us. I doubt he checked with corporate legal before trying to initiate his scare tactics.

He states "Since managers moved to consumer-driven health plans, health care costs, for the company overall and for the majority of employees, has dropped for the last four years." That's great. I am very proud of them. What does that have to do with us?

He goes on to say "It's pointless to speculate on whether there could be a strike but AT&T is always prepared for a work stoppage." This is yet another moot point and a poor attempt at scare tactics. We the Union Labor of AT&T are **Set to Talk but Ready to Walk** ourselves. Nobody wants a work stoppage.

Mark Royse seems to be pushing for a work stoppage. His management team has failed our stockholders and their employees with over 4,000 layoffs this year. Now he wants to engineer a disruption in service to our customers and fail them too? Our customers shouldn't be used as bargaining chips.

He also mentions that our main competition is able to maintain a significantly lower cost structure by shunning union representation. Yes, and they have high employee turnover, less customer satisfaction, less service reliability and less customer loyalty as a result. You get the service you pay for.

Is he really coming straight out and admitting he wants to destroy our union? In light of the economic pressures challenging our country and American families, we need to maintain our solidarity and continue to fight for good jobs with good benefits. Wilma Liebman, the new NLRB chairwoman, says "Democracy in the workplace is still basic to a democratic society, and collective bargaining is still basic to a fair economy."

Sincerely,  
Steven Hunter, Union Steward  
AT&T NRC Transport Access

PHOTO COURTESY

# CONGRATULATIONS LOCAL 21 RETIREES

## July 2008

Frances Pinkston

## August 2008

Virginia A. Hubbard

## September 2008

Sandy Palmiter

## December 2008

Kurt Kampendahl Sr.  
Steven Zachar  
Ralph Konicki  
Grier Walker  
Anthony Maskas  
Bruce Snyder  
Dale Dekker  
Frank Schnotala  
Drey Benson  
James Roberson  
William Lewison  
Joe Cline  
Orval Schoeman  
Donald Brincken  
Jane Brewer  
Eugene Hernandez  
Harold G. Hanson  
Mary A. Jackson  
Orville Schloemann  
Robert R. Hudzik  
Denise F. Wadley-  
Miller  
Thomas C. Nelson  
Thomas Melka  
Michael G. Brice  
Alan C. Hallstrom  
John Meuris  
Tom Christie  
James E. Brown  
Frank Schnotala  
William J. Lawrence

## January 2009

Charles Mullens  
Michael Combest  
Dennis Antolik  
Steven J. Picucci  
Lawrence Veal  
Sharon Schneider  
Pearl L. Jones  
Elizabeth Bradney  
Ken Worden  
John Hunter  
Angela A. Newberry  
Sylvia Stoub  
Mary M. Taphorn  
Frank G. Jost  
Edward Benes  
Cathie M. Williams

## February 2009

George Free  
Dale R. Dedinsky  
Jack Teresi  
Marlene Rybak  
Mary Skinner  
John Cheeseman  
Robert McNabb  
Susan L. Tarasievich  
Martha J. Moore  
Jerry Upchurch  
Walter Ingram III  
Ryan R. Lane  
Dan F. Weiss  
Laura Lee Williams  
James W. Archer  
Robert Lee Badzioch  
Eugene A.  
Robertson  
Robert E. Schmidt  
Jeffery Stager  
John Rahn  
Joan Thomas  
Linda Wozniak  
Ray Lewis  
Kenneth Streeter

Michael H. Schuth  
Peggy Klimek  
John L. Malec  
Kimberly Fanith  
Estefania V. Alegre  
Leslie R. Watkins  
Idella Barker  
Keith Kaplin  
Sandra L. Davis  
Joseph Lasch  
Daniel J. Puralewski  
Edward Espinoza  
Alison A. Manring  
Paul Papo  
Richardo Plasencia  
Mary S. McDonald  
Tom Herzog  
John Prendergast  
Karen Karwoski  
Frank Fleischer  
Corinne Renfrow  
Mike Kirkham  
Gary Thompson  
Myron Thomas  
Mabes  
David C. Kufner  
Arlene Dorn  
Patricia A. Patton  
Jeannette Medrano  
Richard Putnam  
Karen A. DeWane  
Peter Tio  
Sherry Baker  
Valerie J. Cholewa  
Lawrence J. Mooney  
Hermelinda Griffin  
Guadalupe Alatorre  
Carolyn Erving  
Wanda S. Vogt  
Bernice Debellocte  
Voncille Newkirk  
Carole Cozzi

In order to appear on this page you must inform your steward you are retiring and a retiree gift application must be submitted. Without receipt of this application the *Frontline* editors are unaware of your retirement.

### Information Alert

Members must be in good standing for 10 consecutive years with IBEW Local 21 immediately preceding their retirement in order to receive a retirement gift. These members must be severing their employment with the employer. Stewards can request applications by calling Nancy Kopydlowski at the union office 630 960-4466 X234.

## Michael G. Dewitt 1952-2009

Former Local 21 Business Rep  
Mike Dewitt died on January 29, 2009 at his home in Red Lion, PA. after a long illness



Brother Dewitt joined our predecessor Local 336 on May 1, 1972 as a Central Office Equipment Installer with the former Automatic Electric division of GTE and immediately became involved in our Union as a Job Steward. He rose through the ranks of our Union serving as an Area Steward, Chief Steward and Business Rep.

He also served our Union in elected positions, serving as an Executive Board member from Unit 6 beginning in 1993 and as an International Convention Delegate to the 1986 & 1991 conventions.

Dewitt served as a member of the Union bargaining committees for AG (formerly Automatic Electric) negotiations in 1982, 1985, 1991, 1994, 1997 and 2000. He ended his Local 21 service in 2003 when Lucent took over the company and it became a CWA bargaining unit.

A serious and hard worker, Mike was devoted to our Union and its members who he served well and long and earned the respect of everyone. He will be missed by the Local 21 family who mourn with his wife Caryn and sons Ben and Gabe.



### *In Memoriam*

We honor our Brothers and Sister who have passed.

**Robert Suwalski**  
Ronald Street, I&R

**Paul Hobe**  
Orland Hills, I&R

**Peter Morici**  
Cary, Prem Tech

**Catherine Grayson**  
Kedzie, C.O.

# UNIT MEETINGS 2009

## MARCH

### Unit 1

Thursday, March 12, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #21  
1307 W. Butterfield Rd. Suite 424  
Downers Grove IL  
630 960-4466

### Unit 2

Tuesday, March 10, 7 PM  
Lansing American Legion #697  
18255 Grant St.  
Lansing IL  
708 474-5906

### Unit 3

Thursday, March 19, 7 PM  
Holiday Inn of Rockford  
7550 E State St.  
Rockford IL  
815 398-2200

### Unit 4

Wednesday, March 11, 7 PM  
Lemont VFW  
15780 New Ave.  
Lemont IL  
630 257-9859

### Unit 5

Wednesday, March 18, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #538  
1290 N Michigan Ave.  
Danville IL  
217 442-0996

### Unit 6

Tuesday, March 17, 5:30 PM  
IBEW Local # 193  
3150 Wide Track Dr.  
Springfield IL  
217 544-3479

### Unit 7

Monday, March 16, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #649  
501 Humbert Rd.  
Alton IL  
618 462-16217

## APRIL

### Unit 1

Thursday, April 9, 6 PM\*  
IBEW Local #134  
600 W. Washington Blvd.  
Chicago IL  
312 474-4186

### Unit 2

Tuesday, April 14, 7 PM  
Slovak Club  
6920 Broadway  
Merrillville IN  
219 756-5101

### Unit 3

Thursday, April 16, 7 PM  
Gurnee American Legion  
749 Milwaukee Ave.  
Gurnee IL  
847 244-9282

### Unit 4

Wednesday, April 8, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #145  
1700 52nd Ave, Suite A  
Moline IL  
309 736-4239

### Unit 5

Wednesday, April 15, 7 PM  
American Legion Post #979  
4501 S. Airport Rd.  
Bartonville IL  
309 697-2432

### Unit 6

Tuesday, April 21, 5:30 PM  
IBEW Local # 193  
3150 Wide Track Dr.  
Springfield IL  
217 544-3479

### Unit 7

Monday, April 20, 7 PM  
American Legion Post #141  
916 Main St.  
Mt Vernon IL  
618 242-4561

## MAY

### Unit 1

Thursday, May 14, 7 PM  
Irish-American Heritage Center  
4626 N. Knox Ave.  
Chicago IL  
773 282-7035

### Unit 2

Tuesday May 12, 7 PM  
Gaelic Park  
6119 W. 147TH  
Oak Forest IL  
708 687-9323

### Unit 3

Thursday, May 7, 7 PM  
Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites  
495 Airport Rd.  
Elgin IL  
847 488-9000

### Unit 4

Wednesday, May 13, 7 PM  
American Legion Harwood #5  
705 S. Larkin  
Joliet IL  
815 725-4333

### Unit 5

Monday, May 4, 7 PM  
Rocky Point Club  
3603 Bonansinga Dr.  
Quincy IL  
217 224-1332

### Unit 6

Tuesday, May 5, 5:30 PM  
IBEW Local # 193  
3150 Wide Track Dr.  
Springfield IL  
217 544-3479

### Unit 7

Wednesday, May 6, 7 PM  
IBEW Local # 309  
2000A Mall St. (Rte 157)  
Collinsville IL  
618 345-5112

Information on attending your closest Local 21 Union meeting can be obtained by contacting the Union office at 630-960-4466 or ask your Steward.

**IBEW LOCAL 21**  
1307 W. Butterfield Rd.  
Suite 422  
Downers Grove, IL 60515-5601

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JOIN YOUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS  
ON THE  
IBEW LOCAL 21 FLOAT  
ON  
SUNDAY, MARCH 15TH

KICK OFF IS AT NOON

FLOAT LOCATION DETAILS TBA ON  
THE IBEW LOCAL 21 NEWSWIRE  
630-415-2711