

Tear Down the Wall at Verizon

Verizon Communications (and its Bell System predecessors) has had a long-standing relationship with organized labor. Recently, management has begun aggressively interfering with employees in its wireless and business divisions to prevent them from forming unions. Now as the company grows, management has erected an internal wall to segregate these workers from the nearly 100,000 workers at Verizon who are already united in CWA and IBEW.



The AFL-CIO has formed a partnership with CWA and IBEW in a strategic campaign to help union members turn management at Verizon away from its low road strategy and to once again remain neutral and voluntarily recognize employees who want a voice at work.

In March 2006, sixty percent of the Verizon Business techs in the Northeast chose to form a union, signed union cards and sought formal recognition from Verizon. The workers had their majority support verified by elected officials in New York and Massachusetts who counted the union cards and confirmed the majority against a company employee roster.

Verizon's response has been to mount a classic union-avoidance campaign with mandatory captive-audience meetings, supervisory one-on-ones and "fact sheets" full of distortions about unions.

In April 2007, the NLRB upheld an administrative judge's decision that Verizon Wireless violated federal labor law during an organizing campaign by orally warning an employee not to talk about union issues on the work floor.

The campaign has identified cities and states that contract with Verizon Wireless and/or Verizon Business. Where a contract with one or both entities was found, President Sweeney sent a letter to the corresponding governor or mayor, urging them to write to Verizon CEO Ivan Seidenberg urging him to respect the rights of employees to form a union without harassment or intimidation. As it stands now, 23 governors and 14 mayors have received letters from President Sweeney. Governor Sebelius of Kansas and Mayors Perez of Hartford, CT and Thomas Menino of Boston, MA have already sent letters. Two others, Governor Patrick of Massachusetts and Mayor Dixon of Baltimore, MD, have written President Sweeney promising to look into the matter further.

Our top priority is to have State Federations and Central Labor Councils follow up on President Sweeney's letter with each of the governors' and mayors' offices. **We want all of the governors and mayors with Verizon contracts to tell Seidenberg that they fully support the rights of Verizon employees to form a union and bargain collectively without intimidation and harassment.**

A second objective in cases where cities and states have Verizon Wireless contracts, is to get these government units to decide to "buy union" when their current contracts reach expiration.



More information about the Verizon organizing campaign is on the web at: www.cwa-union.org/verizon and www.freechoiceatverizon.com

Please contact Belinda Boyce (bboyce@afcio.org or 202-637-5102) or Mike Surrusco (msurrusc@afcio.org or 202-637-5344) if you have any questions or need further information regarding this campaign.