

Regional Bargaining Report # 56

Monday, May 7, 2012

Last week, the CWA District 1/IBEW Local 2213 and IBEW New England Regional Committees and the CWA District 2-13/ IBEW Mid Atlantic Regional Committees met with the Company together to discuss issues in a new approach to bargaining. For the past 11 months the two committees have been meeting separately with the company. The Union committees decided on this approach and also decided to give the company an aggressive comprehensive package to be used for discussion purposes to help jump start these negotiations.

The Union presented a 'what if' scenario and offered "what if" the Union proposed a phase in to premiums to help offset the cost of Health Benefits. In this "what if" scenario the union proposed that the company would withdraw their retrogressive demands on pensions, job security, disability benefits, retiree medical benefits and other retrogressive demands and the union would agree to some cost sharing of Health benefits which would include a phase in level of employee contributions.

The Company spent little or no time evaluating the Union's comprehensive package. The Company rejected the Union's comprehensive package and responded with a new proposal which included minor changes to their last proposal. The Company's new proposal lowered some deductibles and out of pocket maximums for individual and family plans.

It is important to note that the company's initial proposal would drastically change our Benefit Plans by changing components of the Benefit Plan. These components are: Deductibles; Co-Pays; Co-Insurance; Out-Of-Pocket Maximums and they added contributions as a component. The Company's earlier proposals had higher deductibles, higher co-pays, higher co-insurance and higher out of pocket maximums plus the new component - high employee contributions.

The earlier company proposals would add thousands of dollars a year to what our members would have to pay for benefits by adding these higher components. In addition, the company wants each employee to pay excessive premiums (contributions) for these benefits.

**It is not just about premiums (contributions).
It is about these other components that make up a Benefit Plan
We have Great Benefit Plans which the company wants to destroy.**

So, when they make a proposal which slightly lowers the deductibles and out of pocket maximums from a point that was too high in the first place and only slightly decrease contributions for only one plan and not the others– **they are not making a serious counter proposal to the Union.**

The Company's proposal would add \$4,000 to \$5,000 for the cost of health care to our members for each year of the contract with only small increases in wages.

The Company only proposed a small wage increases for the 2nd and 3rd year of the contract and **NO INCREASE in the first year of the contract.**

The Company still wants to eliminate the EPO plan where 6,000 of our members are enrolled, forcing them into other plans. Most of our members went into the EPO plan when the company eliminated the most popular HMOs. Now that the EPO is the most popular HMO type plan, they want to eliminate it, forcing our members into other plans that are not as popular for their areas.

The Company wants you to pay more. They want you to feel it in your wallet. They want you to think twice about visiting the doctor or seeking medical attention.

By rejecting the Union's "What if" proposal the company not only wants to destroy your benefit plans and have you pay thousands of dollars more for those reduced benefits with high premiums but they also want to:

Eliminate Pensions:

- Cut pension accruals in half. For anyone currently on the payroll your pension will be capped at 30years. Beginning October 1, 2012, your pension plan will only accrue at 50 %.
- Eliminate the Pension Lump Sum option.
- Modify the 401(k) Plan and the CPS.
- Eliminate the Sickness Death Benefit

Eliminate Job Security:

- Eliminate the Job Security Provisions for all employees.
- Eliminate the Movement of Work Protection
- Eliminate the 35 mile transfer provision
- Eliminate provisions in Force Adjustment Plan
- Eliminate New Contracting Initiatives agreement – which would allow them to increase the level of contracting

The Company has many other issues that are still on the bargaining table and some of them are:

- **ABSENCE** – The Company only wants to give 5 paid days per year and still discipline members who use those 5 days.
- **CALL SHARING** – Verizon still demands their call sharing proposal but have not addressed any of the security provisions from the Union nor have they given us any additional jobs.
- **ELIMINATE THE NEXT STEP PROGRAM**

Every member must tell every manager - every day - that we will not allow Verizon to destroy our benefits and to destroy the middle class jobs that CWA and IBEW have fought so hard to create over the last 50 years of collective bargaining.

It is more important than ever that our members continue to mobilize and that EVERY member commit to spending at least 4 hours per week participating in mobilization activities.

There are new mobilization activities planned for this week and every member must be involved in every activity

**If you have not got involved it is time to
Call your Local or talk to your steward and find out what
you can do to help**

**IT IS TIME TO GET ANGRY
IT IS TIME TO GET INVOLVED
IT'S TIME TO FIGHT BACK**

Now more than ever we need to mobilize!

Mobilize! – Mobilize! – Mobilize!