

# CrossTalk



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 4400  
COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA  
CINCINNATI, OHIO

This Newsletter published  
in house by CWA Local 4400

VOLUME 36 NO.1

MEMBER MIDWEST LABOR PRESS ASSOCIATIONS

MARCH 2007

## U.S. FAMILY-ORIENTED JOB POLICIES

NEW YORK - The United States lags far behind virtually all wealthy countries with regard to family-oriented workplace policies such as maternity leave, paid sick days and support for breast-feeding, a new study by Harvard and McGill University researchers says.

The new data comes as politicians and lobbyists wrangle over whether to scale back the existing federal law providing unpaid family leaves or to push new legislation allowing paid leaves.

The study says workplace policies for families in the United States are weaker than those of all high-income countries and many middle- and low-income countries. Notably, it says the U.S. is one of only five countries out of 173 in the survey that does not guarantee some form of paid maternity leave; the others are Lesotho, Liberia, Swaziland and Papua New Guinea.

More countries are providing the workplace protections that millions of Americans can only dream of, said the study's lead author, Jody Heymann, founder of the Harvard-based Project on Global Working Families and director of McGill's Institute for Health and Social Policy.

Among the study's findings:

\_ Fathers are granted paid paternity leave or paid parental leave in 65 countries, including 31 offering at least 14 weeks of paid leave. The U.S. guarantees fathers no such paid leaves.

\_ At least 107 countries protect working women's right to breast-feed; the breaks are paid in at least 73 of them. The U.S. does not have federal legislation guaranteeing the right to breast-feed at work.

\_ At least 145 countries provide paid sick days, with 127 providing a week or more annually. The U.S. provides unpaid leave through the Family and Medical Leave Act, which does not cover all workers; there is no federal law providing for paid sick days.

\_ At least 134 countries have laws setting the maximum length of the work week. The U.S. does not have a maximum work week length or a limit on mandatory overtime per week.

According to the study, the U.S. fares comparatively well in some areas \_ such as guaranteeing significantly higher pay for overtime work and ensuring the right to work for all racial and ethnic groups, regardless of gender, age or disability.

The U.S. has been a proud leader in adopting laws that provide for equal opportunity in the workplace, but our work/family protections are among the worst, Heymann said. It's time for a change.

The topic is of keen interest in Washington. The Labor Department is examining regulations that give workers unpaid leave to deal with family or medical emergencies, a review that supporters of the rules worry might be a prelude to scaling back these protections, as requested by some business groups.

At the same time, Sen. Chris Dodd, D-Conn., plans to announce that he will propose new legislation that would enable workers to take six weeks of paid family leave. Congress also is expected to reconsider the Healthy Families Act, a bill introduced last session that would require employers with at least 15 employees to provide seven paid sick days per year.

On the state level, some New Jersey lawmakers are pushing legislation that would make their state the second, along with California, to provide paid family leave. Under one New Jersey proposal, workers who take leave would be paid through the state's temporary disability insurance fund, augmented by a 0.1 percent charge on workers' weekly wages.

Traditionally, many conservatives have opposed moves for paid family leave, but there are signs of some shifts. A prominent anti-abortion leader, the Rev. Paul Schenck of the National Pro-Life Action Center, recently said he would support paid maternity leave on the premise that it might dissuade some pregnant women from having abortions.

Across the political spectrum, people are realizing these policies have an enormous impact on working families, Heymann said in a telephone interview. If you look at the most competitive economies in the world, all the others except the U.S. have these policies in place.

SOURCE - AP

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

We have only 14 months before the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the union and the company expires. Now is the time to start putting away a little extra savings in case of a strike. Just \$50.00 a pay period will give you a good sum of about \$1,400.00. You can use this for groceries, the house payment, a doctor's visit, etc. And hey, if there is no strike, you have saved a nice little chunk of change to do whatever with. Also don't forget to sit on that income tax return! Don't just hope for the best, be ready for anything.

Do you know of anyone hiring parttime? Contact a Women's Committee member to get the information on the CWA website. † Check out the Women's Committee webpage for additional upcoming information.

In Aug. 2005, Congress passed an energy bill that included extending Daylight Saving Time by about a month. The federal law that established idaylight time in this country does not require any area to observe daylight saving time. But if a state chooses to observe DST, it must follow the starting and ending

dates set by the law. From 1986 to 2006 this has been the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October, but starting in 2007, it will be observed from the second Sunday in March (the 11<sup>th</sup>) to the first Sunday in November (the 4<sup>th</sup>), adding about a month to daylight saving time.



## MOVING FORWARD ON THE EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT

The Employee Free Choice Act was introduced in the House of Representatives on Monday, Feb. 5, with support from 230 co-sponsors; labor, congressional and civil rights leaders outlined the need for the Employee Free Choice Act.

At a news conference, Rep. George Miller, chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee and the bill's chief House sponsor, said, "We cannot continue on our nation's current path, where CEOs have complete freedom to negotiate lavish pay and retirement packages for themselves while workers have no leverage to make their own lives better. † Our economy is more unequal than it has been at any point since before the New Deal."

Outlining the problems of the current, broken system, Senator Edward Kennedy said, "It can't stop these illegal anti-worker, anti-labor, anti-union tactics. The penalties are so minor that employers write them off as just another cost of doing business. Even when workers are able to form a union, they can't get a first contract because management stonewalls them and refuses to negotiate."

"The benefits of workers uniting to bargain for a better life are clear that's why more than half of workers -- 60 million -- who don't already have a union say they would join one today if given the chance," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said. †

Rep. Robert Andrews (D-N.J.) said the "reality is that workers in unions earn 30 percent more in wages than non-union workers and 80 percent of union workers have health insurance while only 49 percent of non-union workers do. The basic underpinnings of middle class life - - decent wages and benefits -- have been eroded by coercive employers determined to obstruct any effort to allow workers to organize."

The House Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions will hear from witnesses, many of them workers who have been harassed and intimidated for wanting a union voice. A panel of workers will include CWA member Teresa Joyce, of Local 2204 who works at Cingular Wireless. She will contrast those experiences with what it's like when an employer respects neutrality and a worker's right to make his or her own choice about having a union.

## SPRING TIME

K L A S U Z R P E U  
S A A C P E F Q T M  
R R M W T R U K Y B  
E S E S N I I L C R  
D U A W N C F N I E  
N E N O O R A J G L  
U E X J E H X R E L  
H G E T F A S Z E A  
T O T R Y N N U B I  
W U D I G A R D E N  
B L I G H T N I N G  
X S R E W O L F S W  
S E G C B R Z M T U  
D O N I S M Y Y O J  
U I R G R A I N R R  
B D G Z A F A R M H  
S E Q E L Q Y P S K

Birds	Green
Buds	Lawncare
Bunny	Lightning
Butterfly	Rain
Easter	Showers
Eggs	Spring
Equinox	Storms
Flowers	Thunder
Garden	Umbrella

**CONTEST RULES:** Words can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, frontward or backward. Letters may be used in more than one word. Hidden words must be circled. Send completed entry to the local office, 2300 Montana Av. Suite 101 Cinti, OH 45211, or house mail to location 350. Randomly drawn, correct entry wins a \$50.00 U.S. Savings Bond. You must be a CWA Local 4400 active member or retiree.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**The winner of the December  
word search puzzle is  
William Healion  
of Loveland, OH**

## GRIEVANCE PROCESS AND STATEMENT OF OCCURRENCE

I would like to take the time to talk about the grievance process. If you go to page three of your contract book under article VI, Adjustment of Grievances, you will see that the grievance process is a three step process consisting of what the union calls a first step grievance, second step grievance, and a third step grievance.

With first step grievances the union has 30 days from the date that the action occurs, to contact management in writing or by e-mail of the grievance. Usually first step grievance meetings are with the member's Team Leader, another Team Leader, a Local 4400 Steward, Chief Steward, Area Vice President, and or Executive Vice President.

In the second step grievance meetings, the union's Executive Vice President, Area Vice President, Chief Steward, or Steward meet with the Vice President, Director, and or Team Leaders of that department. This meeting will be held within 30 days of the union's intent to escalate the grievance to the second step.

In the third step grievance meetings the Union President, Executive Vice President, and or Area Vice President meet with the Director of Labor Relations and their designated representatives. This meeting, according to the contract, will be held with the utmost effort within 60 days of the receipt of the unions intend to escalate the grievance.

The union has and always will, make every effort to hold the steps of the grievances in a timely manner. The problem we have now with third step grievance meetings, is that the company may give us one or two days a month to meet on these grievances and we may bring anywhere from 8 to 10 grievances to these meetings, maybe only a handful of the grievances will be heard. The first and second step grievance meetings are usually held quickly and sometimes resolved without moving them along to the third step. But the third step process is different. First the union tries to place on the docket for meetings, grievances that deal with 1) termination for an unjust cause; 2) any denied FMLA disability pay; 3) suspension without pay; and 4) all others. Also the union runs into problems with the company canceling meetings due to matters beyond the local's control.

Also the union is implementing something new which should make filing and handling your grievance a lot better. It is a Statement of Occurrence form. You can find it on the web site CWA4400.ORG. You can also get this form by contacting your Steward, Area Vice President, or the union hall. This form is to be filled out by you, the grievant, so that your Steward, Area Vice President, Tim, or myself can understand the grievance and can handle your grievance in a way to serve you, the union member, better.

Feel free to call me with any questions you have about the grievance process or the statement of occurrence form.

*By - EVP Gary Vater*

## BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW

Patent # 174,465 was issued on March 7, 1876 by the U.S. Patent Office which covered the method of, and apparatus for, transmitting vocal or other sounds telegraphically by causing electrical undulations, similar in form to the vibrations of the air accompanying the said vocal or other sound.

Three days after the patent issued, Alexander Graham Bell experimented with a water transmitter, using an acid-water mixture. Vibration of the diaphragm caused a needle to vibrate in the water which varied the electrical resistance in the circuit. When Bell spoke the famous sentence "Mr. Watson, come here, I want to see you" into the liquid transmitter, Watson, listening at the receiving end, heard the words clearly.

Bell and his partners, Gardiner Hubbard and Thomas Sanders, offered to sell the patent outright to Western Union for \$100,000. The president of Western

Union balked, countering that the telephone was nothing but a toy. Two years later, he told colleagues that if he could get the patent for \$25 million he'd consider it a bargain. By then the Bell Company no longer wanted to sell the patent.

## UNION JOBS MEAN



A BETTER COMMUNITY



The Retirees Club will be meeting on Tuesday, March 20th at 1:00pm. There will be a social hour from 12:00 to 1:00.

## GOOD NEWS!

The House of Representatives swiftly approved a bill on Friday, Jan. 12, that would allow the government to negotiate drug prices on behalf of 43 million Medicare beneficiaries, but the ease of passage masked a tough road ahead for the legislation.

The measure is under a filibuster threat in the Senate and a veto threat from President George W. Bush.

Nonetheless, the House bill attracted support from both Democrats and Republicans. It was approved 255-170, with 24 Republicans crossing the aisle to vote for the bipartisan bill.

Supporters argued that allowing the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to negotiate drug prices could save taxpayers money and lower costs for those who need the prescriptions. Opponents said interfering with the free market is a bad idea, said seniors are already getting good prices, and argued the legislation won't lower costs.

The bill would require the government to negotiate with the pharmaceutical industry for medication prices on behalf of the private insurers that run the drug benefit program. The measure leaves it up to the Secretary to determine just how the Medicare program would negotiate with drug manufacturers.

Commerce Committee Chairman Dingell suggested that the drug companies' opposition was rooted in their profits. According to HHS, of the 43 million Medicare beneficiaries, about 22.5 million people, many of whom did not have prescription drug coverage before, have signed up for Part D, providing a boon to the drug companies.

The legislation is supported by many seniors' groups, including AARP.

*source- AARP*

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## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

It seems like every article written for this column describes the latest attack on our membership. This issue respectfully is no different.

A new approach was used for this round. Instead of laying off the junior people, whole departments were cut down to 35 hours a week. While at first glance that may seem to be a more generous plan to handle the situation, upon further investigation you'll find their notices were not so pure.

First, there is no shortage of work, some may be slow, but others are struggling to keep up with the workload. While some are being cut back, others are still fighting mandatory overtime.

Second, by not laying off our members and just cutting hours, they still can use job bankers and contractors. There are large projects currently underway and these people are not cutting back. CBTS and ARC are still going full weeks. They seem to be immune to any downsizing or cutbacks.

Third, by not laying off, no one will receive termination allowances to help make up for lost wages.

I know there are people reading this and saying that this is a better way for the company to save money. Maybe the union should just shut up and take its medicine. They feel if it's good for CBT it will be good for the employees.

I had a chance to address the executives of the company and the board of directors concerning these issues. I want to start by reminding everyone that the company is looking at lost access lines and the resulting loss of revenue as the drive for cutbacks.

Leaving people out in the field to try to explain to the customer that their support was sent home so they will have to wait another day doesn't help save access lines. Leaving your work site to drive to the CO or trying to find someone else to work with you, causes your productivity to slow down and drives up overtime. That doesn't help revenue or EBITDA. Telling your employees and some customers they are low priority and won't get the service that they are accustomed to, that won't stop the flow of customers leaving us. Having vendors install products that never properly function leaving our techs to rescue the project so that it looks like a good deal to the six sigma team will not win you J.D. Powers awards or new customers.

If we're going to return to the previous Golden status we always enjoyed and still make a profit for investors we better rethink the situation. We need to better manage the people we have so we don't have some departments that can keep up, while others are struggling to find work for the full day.

We don't need to pay contractors to do our work and have our people standby in case they need help or equipment. There is no sense trying this method.

If we have to have managers doing our work to ensure the customer is taken care of, then the cutting back to so many has been misguided. If they have the time to start doing our job there must be a surplus of managers.

Finally if my pay and security is driven by access lines and EBITDA then everybody should be judged that way. Even the shareholders must wonder how things can be so bad for employees and other reports show all goals have been exceeded and bonuses will be paid.

Published by CWA Local 4400  
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