

CWA President Morty Bahr To Attend April Meeting

Retiring International President makes a return visit to 2108 at Membership Meeting



CWA President Morton Bahr

On Wednesday, April 13th, CWA President Morty Bahr will attend and address CWA Local 2108 at our monthly membership meeting at the Local Office in Landover, MD starting at 6:00pm. You won't want to miss the chance to listen to President Bahr, maybe for the last time, since he will be retiring at the end of his current term. President Bahr will also be accompanied by District 2 Vice President Pete Catucci.

President Bahr has been a frequent visitor to Local 2108 in the past, including special appearances after contract negotiations with Verizon and attending special functions at our Local, like our 50th anniversary.

We are proud to call Morty Bahr our friend and we will miss him when he retires. Thanks for all you've done for us, Morty.

Morton Bahr has been leading CWA since 1985, guiding the more than 700,000-member union as it meets head on the challenge of changing technology and an evolving workplace.

Under Bahr's leadership, a growing number of unions in communications, media, the airline industry and electronics and manufacturing have chosen to merge with CWA, creating a highly effective and vital "union for the Information Age."

President Bahr is recognized as a leading voice of the labor movement, both in the United States and internationally. As a vice president of the AFL-CIO, he chairs the federation's Workers Education Committee.

Under his leadership, CWA has pioneered innovative programs, especially in the area of worker education. These include nationally recognized education programs with major employers, a partnership with Cisco Systems to provide certification and skill training for workers in internet technology, and a partnership with telecom employers and Pace University that has produced the first on-line degree program in telecommunications.

Also under Bahr's leadership, CWA has pioneered new techniques for helping workers win a union voice, including the "bargaining to organize" strategy which uses the union's collective bargaining power to negotiate procedures that give workers a free choice for union representation, and other strategies for reaching out to Information Age workers. More than 20,000 wireless workers were able to choose CWA representation through card check recognition as a result of CWA's effective use of "bargaining to organize" strategies.

Bahr, a native New Yorker, served for 16 years as CWA vice president for District 1, covering New York, New Jersey and New England before his election as CWA president. He and his wife Florence make their home in Washington, D.C.

WALK TO CURE DIABETES

CWA Local 2108 be taking part in Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's Walk to Cure Diabetes on Saturday, May 7, 2005 from 9am-12noon at Freedom Plaza in Washington, DC, along with one-half million other walkers across the country. Last year, Local 2108 collected over \$9,000 in pledges from its members. This year our goal is \$10,000.

Type 1, or juvenile diabetes, is a devastating disease that affects millions of people—a large and growing percentage of them children. There is some good news, though. For the first time, scientists are predicting that we CAN expect to see a cure well within our lifetime!

CWA Local 2108 has a team registered at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's website at www.walk.jdrf.org. Please input the team captain's name: **Jenny Sylvester**, and choose DC as the state (since that's where we'll be walking).

Join us on May 7th, or donate to the team via the website above. For further information, please contact **Jenny Sylvester** at the Local Office on 301.459.2108.



From The President's Desk

CHANGES AT THE TOP ARE COMING TO THE AFL-CIO

In the past few months, you may have read about changes in the Labor movement.

2005 is an election year for our top leaders of the AFL-CIO. President John Sweeney has been polling the AFL-CIO State Federations for suggestions on how to revamp the Labor movement. I believe that changes are necessary and vital to our success.

Union membership has declined steadily from a high of 20.1% in 1983 to 12.5% in 2004.

Government workers are at the top, holding a solid 36%, while the private industry came in at only 7.9%. In our own telecommunications industry we have a 22.4% union membership rate.

Most all leaders of the American Labor Movement agree something must be done to turn the tide of anti-unionism in corporate America.

On February 8th, I joined with the members of the Maryland State AFL-CIO Board of Directors to discuss our positions on what must be done. When my turn came, I took the position of our CWA leaders. We must focus the Federation towards the functions we need the most. Two areas are essential: politics and legislation and support of collective bargaining. Political unity is probably the most important. Too many times, the AFL-CIO endorses a political candidate only to see some of our brother and sister unions ignore the endorsement and support



President Campbell talks about current issues at a recent meeting at the Local Office in Landover.

an opposing candidate. To fix this is vital. Once an endorsement has been announced to the public, sanctions should be levied against any union that gives aid and support to the opposing candidate.

Organizing is also an area that needs change. The AFL-CIO should recognize that organizing is the responsibility of the national unions. Support of organizing campaigns should continue through the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute and the Voice @ Work program.

It is important to all union members to be able to use a strike if necessary, to gain the upper hand in bargaining. It is time to establish national strike insurance for all national unions. Part of our affiliation fees should go toward an insurance policy that would provide a minimum of \$200.00 per week to striking workers. For those unions which provide strike benefits at or above that level, the portion of their fees used for strike insurance should be rebated to that union.

National unions should be encouraged to study more flexible union structures in order to attract professional, technical and administrative workers into unions.

Participation in State and Central Labor Councils is not currently mandatory. Some unions pay a fee to the AFL-CIO on all of their members. Some join the CLC and not the State Federation and vice-versa. Some unions only affiliate when they need the help of the Federation and some drop out when the going gets tough. In order to be as effective as we need to be, the AFL-CIO should mandate participation in Central Labor Councils and state federations. Also, mandate that as a condition of mandatory affiliations, bylaws for electing officers and making political endorsements must be based on decisions made through the widest possible participation of workplace delegates.

Strength is in our numbers, numbers are power. We must never weaken or give away our power. Change is not always popular, but it is necessary. Over the coming months the Union leaders of the AFL-CIO will discuss, bargain and at some point agree on the future of our unions. Together we must and will

DO WHATEVER IT TAKES!

BOB

Communications Workers of America

2108 news

published monthly by
CWA Local 2108

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 (301) 459-8422: Verizon
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RMC 2108: The Retired Members Club

February Happenings, March Forward

The officers met on February 4 for the first time and discussed plans for the coming year. Although nothing has been set in stone, we made a lot of progress.

A number of guest speakers were discussed and a few social activities as well. We decided that while social activities are important, the club has to be fiscally responsible. We cannot spend a lot of money on having a good time. Therefore, when we plan an activity we will be asking for a show of interest prior to making any commitments. If there is a lack of interest we won't do it.

We have tentatively set dates for two activities. A May 18th bus trip to Atlantic City and a June 25th outing to a Bowie Baysox game. There has already been a lot of interest in both of these events. Further information will be forthcoming.

As for guest speakers, we have one lined up for our March 9th meeting already. He is **Ed Creegan**, President of CWA Retirees Council. Ed is an excellent speaker and please make plans to attend that meeting. We are also trying to get speakers from the Alliance for Retired Americans, with which we have an affiliation, and Progressive Maryland, an organization that works for all Maryland citizens. More information to come on those as well.

RMC2108 was well represented in the Community Services Agency of the AFL-CIO Bowling for Gold Tournament on January 30 at the Crofton Bowl. Mike Wallace, Kenny Roach, Jeannie Stitt, Kathy Harrison and Dennis Strout represented RMC2108. In spite of the weather, the place was packed with bowlers from as far away as Philadelphia. Everyone had a good time and RMC2108 raised over \$400 for the charity. Congratulations to Mike Wallace for his 207 game. Can't wait until next year!

Remember March 9th special guest, Ed Creegan. Be there!



RMC 2108 represents their Club at Bowling For Gold in Crofton recently: (from left:) Jean Stitt, Kenny Roach, Kathy Harrison, Dennis Strout and Mike Wallace

Bowling For Gold

CWA Local 2108 was proud to sponsor four teams at the Bowling For Gold tournament held on Sunday, January 30, 2005 at the Crofton Bowling Center in Crofton, MD. The four teams raised over \$2,200 in pledges from our members for a very worthwhile cause, the Community Services Agency (a United Way Agency) of the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO. Below are photos of the Local participants. Thanks again from Local 2108.



2005 CWA LOCAL 2108 SCHOLARSHIP GRANT

CWA Local 2108 is proud to offer scholarships to our members and their families. Please read the rules below, and call the Local if you have additional questions.

1. Three \$2,000 scholarships are available.
2. Available to members in good standing since last negotiated contract, their spouse and dependent children or dependent children of deceased members.
3. \$1,000 will be mailed directly to the institution per semester.
4. Student must take at least 9 credits per semester.
5. Must have a letter of acceptance to college or accredited learning institution with application.
6. Drawing at July membership meeting as a raffle.
7. Community Service Committee will screen applications.
8. Applications must be postmarked by June 30, of current year.
9. Resignation from the union will forfeit scholarship awards.

NAME: _____ SOCIAL SECURITY # _____

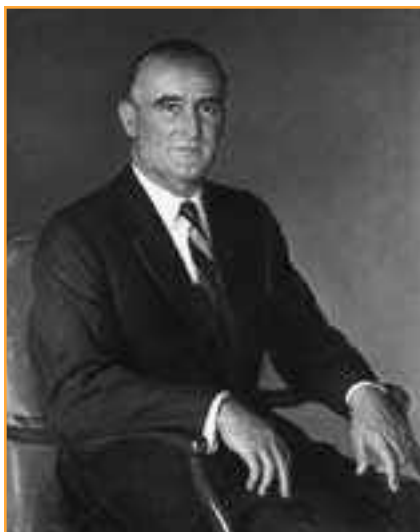
RELATIONSHIP TO MEMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____ HOME TELEPHONE #: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

MEMBER'S NAME: _____ WORK TELEPHONE #: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____



More Scholarships For CWA Members

CWA Joe Beirne Scholarships

The CWA Joe Beirne Foundation was established in October 1974 by the Communications Workers of America Executive Board to honor the name and memory of the founding President of CWA, who served for more than 30 years.

In his capacity as the first CWA President, **Joe Beirne** took great pride in the roles he played in the fields of education and learning and other areas of social concern.

CWA members, their spouses, children and grandchildren (including dependents of laid-off, retired or deceased CWA members) may apply. Applicants must be high school graduates or at least high school students who will graduate during the year in which they apply. Undergraduate and graduate students returning to schooling may also apply. Prior winners may not reapply.

Thirty (30) two-year scholarships, to be paid at the rate of \$3,000 annually, are awarded each year to applicants from the U.S.A. and Canada. A second-year award is contingent on academic accomplishment of the first year.

Applications are accepted during the months of November through March. Final deadline is **March 31, 2005**. Winners are chosen by lottery drawing and only winners will be notified. No specific studies are required. Scholarship winners may pursue whatever courses they wish.

The CWA Joe Beirne Foundation has been built up by voluntary contributions and is self-perpetuating. Contributions and pledges are received from CWA Locals, members and officers. For more information, please go to CWA's National site at <http://cwa-union.org>, then fill out and submit the online application form.

CWA Local 2108 Members

Personals

Congratulations to:

Shannon Thompson and **Darren Lee** on the birth of their daughter, **Danielle Lee** on November 23, 2004.

Sharon Temu on the birth of her daughter, **Wangui Khumba** on January 26, 2005.

Will Thompson on the birth of his daughter, **Lauren Kristianne** on January 27, 2005.

General Membership Meetings

The Local 2108 General Membership Meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every month, alternating between the Local Office in Landover, and American Legion Post #268 in Wheaton. All meetings start at 6 pm.

LOCAL 2108 DELEGATE ELECTION RESULTS

The CWA Local 2108 Election Committee met at the Local office on February 11th to count the ballots for Delegates-At-Large to the CWA Convention. The number of delegates that our Local is entitled to is based on our average number of members. The official numbers have not yet been released, but it is anticipated that we will be entitled to take three Delegates to the Convention in August. There were 536 ballots counted, and the results are as follows:

Lawrence Gibson	374
Carl Brogden	361
LaTasha Carpenter	355
Hank Allred (Alternate)	208
Trish Lyle	205

We congratulate the winners, and thank all members who took the time to vote and be involved. A special thank you goes to the members of the Election Committee for another job well done. The committee consists of **Frank Walker, Jr.** (Chair), **Debbie Boyle**, **Barbara Eden-Balster**, **Eva Cueto**, **Christopher Smith**, **Ruben Flores** and **Sonya Miranda**.

New Members

Anthony Queen

Brooks Smith

Barbara Oliver

Dawn Michelle Martin

Hank Allred

Anna Hunter

Trish Lyle

Rodney Kinney

Larry Gibson

Wannetta Brooks
Michael Gray
Michael Kuczinski
Erik Clark
Brian Thomas
Sean Pope
Greg Stephens
Russell Carter
Oliver Henderson
Tyrone Leach
Aaron Robinson
Curtis McDonald

Carl Brogden

Stephen Stewart
Carrie Pence

Jay Smith

Denon Hopkins
Frederick Marshall
Essey Ghiliau
Anthony Oriola

Kathi Earl

William Stone
Adrian Frierson
Deborah Fordyce-Bindah
Allan Brown
Clayton McDonald
Charles Patton
Matthew DePompa
Bruce Bulls, Jr.
Christopher Thompson, Sr.

Dorinda Bowers

Robert I. Gibson
Antwan Bullock
Earl Diggs
Everette Williams
Dennis Jones
Nevada Taylor

Transferred

Larry Gibson

NaCreishia Truesdale
Damon Burnette
Anthony Reed

Charles White

Nick Wagstaff
David Reed
Adrian Johnson

Roni Hamlin

Scott Torres

Vallorie Coley

Barbara Martin

Carmen Butler

Keisha Gold-Massey
Desiree' Thornton-Jones
Timetha Banks

Joe Cooke

Les Evans

Retired Members Club Meetings

The 2108 Retired Members Club Meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every month, at the Local Office in Landover.

All meetings start at 11 am.

Health Care Meltdown



Between now and the expiration of the Verizon and VCSI contracts in August 2008, a key issue in insuring our success at the bargaining table is legislation reforming the Health Care Industry in America.

Over the past decade, health care costs have skyrocketed to the point where costs on employers who provide health care benefits to their employees have become the number one issue in contract negotiations. More and more we hear of contracts being negotiated in other industries, as well as the telecommunications industry, where the burden of maintaining coverage for employees and retirees have been shifted to the employee. There is clear evidence of this practice in the 2003 Verizon contract over the Spousal Surcharge and the new Lucent agreement which imposes retiree co-pays.

In a direct correlation, the increase in health care costs has resulted in more Americans losing health insurance. Between 2001 and 2002, 2.4 million Americans lost their health insurance coverage. In 2003, another 1.4 million lost coverage which resulted in 45 million U.S. citizens with no health insurance at all. By 2006, it is projected that 53.7 million Americans will be without any health care coverage.

Employment based health coverage is disappearing as well. The percentage of people covered by job-based insurance has dropped from 62.6% in 2001 to 60.4% of the population in 2003.

The burden of escalated costs is also having an effect on negotiating continuing retiree benefits. Over 20% of businesses offering retiree health benefits have eliminated it for new hires, with cost shifting initiatives for those still fortunate enough to maintain some level of coverage. Data shows that the share of medium to large firms offering retiree health care to active workers has dropped from 85% in 1980 to 36% in 2004. Without a doubt, this is one of the most staggering, tell-tale indicators of our ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle in our golden years. This, coupled with the Bush Administration initiatives to privatize Social Security, could force retirees to be put in a position of deciding whether to pay for a prescription or buy groceries.

Now, while there are several key factors behind the rising costs of coverage, such as advances in medical technology, less restrictive managed care, hospital consolidation, nursing and health worker shortages, rising prescription drug costs is at the forefront.

A Hard Pill To Swallow :

The current economic downturn—the worst since the 1980s—disproportionately savaged millions of the nation's seniors because they tend to use more medications and depend on fixed incomes that cannot keep up with spiraling costs. The elderly on fixed incomes struggle to pay for life-saving prescription drugs that have risen in price by more than 15 percent a year—five times the rate of inflation for the past several years. One result: 29 percent of Americans failed to fill a prescription in 2000 because they could not afford to.

While families struggle to pay for medicine and deal with an increasingly bleak economic picture, drug makers prosper. In 2001, as the economy tumbled and corporate profits sank for the average Fortune 500 company, drug companies on the top 500 list saw their profits soar by 33 percent from the previous year. The nine largest pharmaceutical giants raked in \$30.6 billion in 2001 profits. During the past decade, drug firms' profits represented an 18.5 percent return on revenue or 5.6 times the median return (3.3 percent) of Fortune 500 companies. As the economy soured further in 2002, many drug companies continued to grow and thrive according to an AFL-CIO report.

While consumers pay twice as much for new diabetes drugs or \$117 for a Nexium prescription, the real cost of the drugs depends on who's buying them. Because they want to corner the market on popular drugs, drug makers who manufacture competitive drugs, such as Zocor®, Mevacor® or Lipitor® for cholesterol control, curry favor with volume buyers—federal agencies such as the Defense Department and the Veterans' Administration—through lower prices. Other bulk buyers, including hospitals, HMOs, insurers and pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs)—the for-profit companies that insurers and large employers hire to administer drug benefits—also get price breaks.

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Health Care Meltdown

From MELTDOWN, Page 6

Uninsured, cash-paying individuals pay the most. On average, the same drug that costs a cash-paying patient \$100 costs the federal government \$58 and costs private insurers or PBMs \$70 to \$95. And no one knows a drug's real wholesale price or what discounts other customers receive because the drug industry claims that such information is a trade secret—proprietary information.

The drug pricing game in the United States looks even more unfair when compared with the way big pharmaceutical corporations deals with foreign markets. On average, Italians pay 53 percent of the U.S. cost for a brand-name drug, while the French pay 55 percent, Swedes 64 percent, Germans 65 percent and Swiss and United Kingdom residents 69 percent. Perhaps most galling is our neighbors in Canada pay about 62 percent of what we do for the same medicines." Sixty tablets of the cholesterol drug Zocor cost \$43.97 in Canada and \$109.43 just across the border in Vermont. The arthritis drug Relafen® runs \$60 for 100 pills in Canada and \$120.27 in Vermont. It's no wonder more and more U.S. residents cross the border to fill prescriptions. In spring 2002, the Alliance for Retired Americans organized its first Rx Express bus trips to Canada, and 375 seniors saved more than half a million dollars on their prescriptions. And because of the strong armed drug lobbyists in Washington, D.C., The Bush Administration is trying to further curb this practice.

One way to rein in the questionable practices, pricing and other abuses of the pharmaceutical industry would be to pass tough new laws and regulations, including price controls that most other nations use to keep medicine affordable for their citizens. But the drug industry's powerful presence in Washington, D.C., makes such legislation next to impossible.

The pharmaceutical industry can count on a team of 625 lobbyists—more than the number of members in Congress—to influence legislation seeking to limit the industry's power or decrease its profits, such as new prescription drug benefit legislation for seniors or prescription drug price controls.

In the 1999-2000 election cycle "drug companies spent more money to influence politicians than did insurance companies, telephone companies, electric companies, commercial banks, oil and gas producers, automakers, tobacco companies, food processors and manufacturers—more, in short, than any other industry. "Most of that—about \$177 million—went to hire lobbyists from 134 firms, including 21 former members of Congress. The industry also gave \$20 million in campaign contributions and spent \$60 million on issue ads." In all, pharmaceutical marketing has become a 16 billion dollar a year enterprise.

The time to fight is now. We can't wait until 2008 to figure out a way to protect our health care benefits. We must continue to push for National Health Care Reform. Verizon has indicated that by 2008 it will cost them more than \$21,000 a year to provide each employee with family medical benefits. This clearly defines our number one obstacle in 2008 bargaining in maintaining the level of benefits we now enjoy. If successful, we can offset spiraling costs with soaring co-pays with a foundation of guaranteed benefits through nationalized health care and improve on contractual benefits already negotiated.

Medical Testing As Weapon?

CWA requests information from members

CWA is looking into the Company's increasing (and likely illegal) use of medical testing as a weapon against employees. Please contact the Local office or your Chief Steward if Verizon has required you to undergo medical testing or treatment or has required you to attend an IME (Independent Medical Examination).

It has been reported for example that local managers often claim that they are afraid of an employee and they then send the employee for psychological testing, etc. Frequently, the "fear" is based on nothing more than the fact that the employee got mad about something and had some words with a supervisor or co-worker. This ordinarily would be no basis at all for requiring medical testing. Such mandatory testing could be a substantial

violation of the disability provisions of the contract and perhaps also violate federal and state law.

CWA is not seeking regular FMLA cases where there is a dispute about whether the employee is sick and covered by FMLA and the parties use an IME process. CWA also does not want cases where the employee is out on short/long term disability and there is some dispute about how sick the employee is or whether he can return to work.

Please contact the Local as soon as possible on 301-459-2108 or notify your Chief Steward so we can provide the information to the district office.

Local 2108 Union Calendar

March 2005

- 2 **Chief Steward's Meeting 9:00 am**
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 6-9 **CWA National Legislative Conference**
Washington, DC
- 9 **Retired Member Club Meeting 11am**
at Local Office, Landover, MD
- 9 **General Membership Meeting 6pm**
at American Legion Post 268, Wheaton, MD
- 17 **St. Patrick's Day!**
- 23 **Stewards Meeting 6pm**
At Local Office, Landover, MD

April 2005

- 6 **Chief Steward's Meeting**
Cancelled/ D2 Conference
- 6-8 **CWA District 2 Conference**
Williamsburg, VA
- 13 **Retired Member Club Meeting 11am**
at Local Office, Landover, MD
- 13 **General Membership Meeting 6pm**
at Local Office, Landover, MD
CWA President Morty Bahr to attend
- 27 **Stewards Meeting 6pm**
At Local Office, Landover, MD

Visit Local 2108 On The Web: www.cwaincocal2108.org

It Pays To Belong To CWA

CWA President
Morty Bahr to
Attend April
Membership
Meeting
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