

Verizon Bargaining
Opening Statement Vice President, CWA District One
June 22, 2011

The Unions are here today to start the process of negotiating a new Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Our Unions have negotiated contracts with Verizon, Bell Atlantic and their predecessors since before any of us started working here. During the last 50 years, we worked together to solve problems, to address one another's needs at the bargaining table, to deliver quality service to customers and build a strong company.

And we have changed together as well. Our members have never stood in the way of technological change. Our union has always advocated efforts to insure that our members worked to stay abreast of the ever changing telecommunications industry.

Verizon CEO Ivan Seidenberg should know better than almost anyone that it was our members who did the work to make the profits which gave this Company the ability to grow and to expand into the businesses that it now includes. I say this because Ivan has the unique perspective for a CEO that he started out as one of us.

But in recent years, this company has turned its back on its employees. This company that we built together has taken its profits and headed off in new directions, to new products and technologies, and left behind the very workers that are responsible for its success.

Since 2005 Verizon has cut 80,000 wireline jobs from its rolls through access line sales, segment spin-offs, layoffs, attrition and retirements. In the same time period, Verizon Wireless has added 23,000 jobs.

Prior to the merger of Bell Atlantic and GTE in 2000, CWA and the IBEW represented 69% of Bell Atlantic employees. After the merger, 53% of the new Verizon Company was union-represented employees. Now we have dropped to only 35%.

We know that the industry is changing in a fundamental way and that the consumer side of the wireline business is in decline. While wireless subscribers continue to grow in number.

But we also know, in spite of what we hear from Mr. Seidenberg and the commercials for Verizon Wireless, that wireless service is not limitless. And without a quality *wired* network, there can be no reliable wireless phone service, no wireless data network, and no limitless world of communications.

We need to be able to grow with Verizon. The Company cannot keep claiming surplus after surplus while hiring more contractors every day. It is not fair to your employees to tell them there are too many of them but yet you need contractors to do their work. It is not even good business to do this. We know that Verizon has an ideology of union avoidance and that shrinking the Union workforce is a priority. When ideology flies in the face of good business sense sooner or later the business and the stockholders suffer.

Our members are not only loyal to the Union they are loyal to Verizon as well. They want to see Verizon succeed, they work hard every day and have for the last half century to see Verizon and its predecessors succeed. However, Verizon's success should not be, cannot be, at their expense.

So we come here today to negotiate a contract that is fair to the Company, one that protects good Union jobs and that gives our membership the opportunity to grow along with the Company. Both the Company and the Union have an opportunity here to change the dynamic. An adversarial stance serves neither the members of our Union or Verizon and its shareholders. We must come to an agreement that is fair to both sides.