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Our Union is at a critical moment in history, a time when frustration with income inequality and an economy designed to enrich the 1% is at an all-time high. Coinciding with this anger is the American public’s growing approval of labor unions. People are waking up to the importance and value of a strong labor movement.

A 2015 Gallup poll found that nearly 6 in 10 Americans say they have a favorable view of unions, a jump of five percentage points in the last year alone (and 10 percentage points since 2008).

We must take advantage of this moment by building on the work we’ve done on important issues such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Fight for $15, Occupy Wall Street, and the extraordinary peoples’ movement that gained so much support in the presidential primary campaign.

Senator Bernie Sanders’ history-making campaign gave voice to income inequality, stood up to Wall Street and corporate greed, and called out those in favor of trade deals that would send more American jobs overseas. Though Sanders did not win the nomination, the movement must continue if we are to reverse these trends and bring economic power back to workers.

The next step is to elect the presidential candidate that is most likely to help our cause and build our movement. CWA has endorsed Secretary Hillary Clinton because of her decades of commitment on behalf of working families.

Secretary Clinton heard our message loud and clear. The Democratic Party platform is the most progressive in history. It calls for a federal minimum wage of $15/hour, 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave, and several Wall Street reforms. In addition, Secretary Clinton pledged her opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership because of its lack of job protections.

On the other hand, the Republican Party takes direct aim at labor laws and working families. It proposes a national right-to-work law and declares that the minimum wage should be handled at the state and local level. Its platform calls banking regulations “an excuse to establish unprecedented government control over the nation’s financial markets.” As for the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Republicans promise to “restore fairness and common sense” to the Board in the name of “flexibility” for employers and employees.

As it exists now, the process for justice via the NLRB can take years. We have been witness to 13 years of frustration, waiting for justice, since CNN “reorganized” its workforce and fired hundreds of NABET-CWA-represented workers there. These conservative efforts to change the balance on the NLRB— in support of corporate interests— will decimate an already weak Board whose job it is to be a watchdog for workers’ rights.

For working families, the choice is clear: We must get out and vote for the progressive candidate if we have any hope of leveling the playing field for our families and the vast majority of Americans. We need to make sure OUR movement is the future of this country.

To that end, I encourage our members to contribute to CWA’s Political Action Fund (PAF) (formerly known as COPE). NABET-CWA’s political activity ensures our members have a voice, so our lawmakers aren’t just hearing from the National Association of Broadcasters or the Chamber of Commerce. Through PAF, we fight for issues specific to our industry and issues that affect us all. Today, PAF/COPE and the political activity it funds are more important than ever.

The success of the recent Verizon strike showed that labor is still a force, especially when unions join together. Members from other unions—including NABET-CWA—came out to support Verizon strikers and canceled their Verizon subscriptions.

“Labor built the middle class and we are under siege.” — Barry Peek, labor lawyer

The last decade, collective bargaining has changed. More and more often, unions are being asked to give back the benefits they fought so hard for.

“Many times, members took lower paying jobs to get these benefits and they are seeing them being stripped away,” said Barry Peek, who has worked as a labor lawyer since 1977 and with NABET-CWA Local 11 for the past 15. “The framework for negotiations has shifted and it’s getting harder and harder for workers to keep pace.”

Instead of coming out of contract talks with gains, negotiators these days are trying to limit loss as much as possible. Healthcare costs and jurisdiction give-backs are two areas that are hitting NABET-CWA workers the hardest.

Changes in labor laws are re-shaping negotiations and affecting labor’s ability to organize as well. In more than half the country—26 states—right-to-work laws have been implemented that allow non-dues-paying workers to be fully covered by the collective bargaining agreement negotiated between their employer and the Union, and the Union remains obligated to represent them. In states with right-to-work laws, the average worker makes 12% less annually and is more likely to be uninsured, according to the AFL-CIO.

The loss of bargaining power also means the ultimate negotiations strategy—a walk-out or strike—is not as effective today. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there were 12 major work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers in 2015, up just one from 2014, which tied the second-lowest total on record. The union membership rate in 2015 was just 11.1 percent, down from 20.1 percent in 1983.

“It’s hard to keep members engaged when you come back with a contract that has give-backs,” Peek said. “A 2% raise is not going to change your lifestyle, especially when healthcare costs erase it. It’s demoralizing.”

Peek recently negotiated with a “very successful” employer that wanted to take away overtime benefits that had for years been guaranteed when a minimum number of hours were worked. “We asked the company, ‘How can you take $10,000 to $15,000 away from people making $40,000 a year?’”

The Union was able to save the majority of the overtime benefit in this case, though Peek described it as “excru-ci-ating to describe negotiations as ‘successful’ when you don’t give up EVERYTHING.” If they weren’t in a Union, he said, it would have been much worse because the company would have taken it away completely.

“The balance of power has shifted. We are working against an economy that’s not working for the middle class,” Peek explained. “Labor built the middle class and we are under siege.”

The political action fund informs and mobilizes union families to encourage their participation in the political process. To find out more and get involved, go to:


(ANTI-) LABOR LAWS IMPACT NEGOTIATIONS

The success of the recent Verizon strike showed that labor is still a force, especially when unions join together. Members from other unions—including NABET-CWA—came out to support Verizon strikers and canceled their Verizon subscriptions.

“It showed that we are still able to move the needle so to speak and protect what we’ve gained,” Peek said. “If they’re going to hit us in the pocketbook, we’ve got to hit them there, too. When employees take action, the employer takes notice. There are still effective ways to level out the playing field.”

“This entire movement of 1% vs. the middle class I think will help energize and mobilize unions to join forces,” Peek asserts. “It’s going to have to come from the street and that will transcend into the negotiating room.”

Right-To-Work States

Alabama Nevada
Arizona North Carolina
Arkansas North Dakota
Florida Oklahoma
Georgia South Carolina
Idaho South Dakota
Indiana Tennessee
Iowa Texas
Kansas Utah
Louisiana Virginia
Michigan West Virginia
Mississippi Wisconsin
Missouri Nebraska
Nebraska Wyoming

Calling all members at ABC to update contact information!

Local 16: 212-757-7191
Local 31: 301-459-4999
Local 41: 312-372-4111
Local 51: 415-398-3160

Contact info
ADDRESS
cell phone number
e-mail

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You don’t need to look much further than the growth in NABET-CWA’s membership for evidence that sports broadcasting is booming. New work agreements with ABC Sports and NBC Sports have brought nearly a thousand new members to the Union over the past two years. Expanded coverage of college athletics is largely responsible. “The number of college football games broadcast in a weekend – and covered by NABET-CWA collective bargaining agreements – has grown from five on average, to as many as 35 games,” Sector President Charlie Braico explained.

“T he work in the field has grown tremendously,” said Sector Vice President Lou Marinaro. “As a result, we are increasing our presence at remote sites to let our members know that the Union is there to support them.”

Since most of the new workers are Daily Hires who work in the field, show-to-show and season-to-season, NABET-CWA representation gives them a much-needed voice in their workplace.

NABET-CWA has added two Remote Servicing Coordinators – Ed McEwan (Local 11/ABC) and Steve Rubbinaccio (Local 16/ABC) – who either cover certain events themselves or choose from a pool of people they have trained as Remote Servicing Representatives. The training program familiarizes them with the labor contracts and assesses their people skills. Before someone is assigned on their own, they join a seasoned representative on a remote to see how issues such as safety, site inspection, contract enforcement, proper breaks, and meals should be handled in the context of the collective bargaining or project agreement.

The full Remote Servicing Committee, comprised of Sector President Charlie Braico, Sector Vice President Lou Marinaro (Chair), Local 16 President Arthur Mazzacca, and Local 16 Vice President Jim Nolan, reviews upcoming sporting events and decides which to cover. The membership appreciates the Union’s increased presence. “When we are more in touch with people in field, they feel they are supported. It also lets the company know we are watching,” Marinaro said. “We want to be sure everyone is in good spirits and that we have good working relationships. We’d rather get things corrected on-site than go through the grievance process.”

The Union is often able to get issues resolved with a simple meeting. For example, when members on the golf crew were posted in towers and unable to break away from their cameras for hours on end, the Union negotiated to have water and other refreshments brought to the workers every couple of hours. In another case, management’s confusion over contract language related to lightening safety enabled the Union to clarify the policy and ensure management, as well as everyone on the ground, were in sync.

**Olympics in Rio**

Ed McEwan and Mike Noseworthy provided Union support for both the news and sports crews at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro over the summer. McEwan was there for two weeks prior to the event, monitoring the build-in process, while Noseworthy provided support during the following two weeks of event coverage.

NBC had the largest presence at the International Broadcast Center, which included thousands of broadcast workers from all over the world. There were 81 NABET-CWA members working in sports – 70 Daily Hires and 11 Staff – and dozens more in news. McEwan said traffic and transportation were difficult in and around Rio. The game locations were very spread out, making the logistics of supporting crews at all of the various venues complicated. Crews worked 12-hour shifts, so the extra hours spent commuting made for very long days.

There were some early concerns over the Zika virus. When the crews first arrived, some doors of the Media Village were open-air and did not have screens. This was soon remedied with the installation of screens and “insect fogging” of the Village daily at 5 pm.

**New Sports Production Website**

NABET-CWA recently unveiled its new sports production website for network locals: www.nabetcwasports.org. The website provides an easy way for members who work in the field under sports agreements with ABC and NBC to get important information about benefits, safety and other contract information. The website is tailored for those who work in the field to check-in and stay informed.

**NABET-CWA's new remote servicing website**
Every four years, the media gathers to cover our nation’s political conventions, a ritual that first came to television in 1940 when NBC’s New York City affiliate televised the Republican convention in Philadelphia. Twelve years later, the 1952 Republican and Democratic conventions were first televised nationally.

This year, Philadelphia played host again, this time for the Democratic National Convention, which was attended by an estimated 15,000-20,000 members of the media. According to Nielsen, the first three nights of the Democratic convention out-rated the same nights of the Republican convention. Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton’s Thursday night acceptance speech at the DNC averaged 29.8 million viewers across 10 broadcast and cable channels, while Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump’s speech at the Republican National Convention averaged 32.2 million viewers across the same channels.

Digital media played a big role in both conventions. The DNC was livestreamed on YouTube and through the DNC 2016 Official App, as well as on C-SPAN, Facebook and Twitter. Snapchat provided a “Live Story” convention experience. At the Republican National Convention, Media Row included as many social networks -- including Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube -- as traditional media. Some predicted that Facebook/Twitter could have its own network the next time around, in 2020. (CNET, July 21, 2016).

A Tale of Two Cities: NABET-CWA presence makes a difference

Local 42 Vice President Ken Koscick worked the RNC in Cleveland for Raycom Media, which owns WOIO/WUAB-TV. An Engineer/Technician Maintenance, Koscick is in his 45th year in broadcasting. He said over 100 NABET-CWA members from Local 42 were involved with the convention in one way or another, including approximately 50 members from his station.

In Philadelphia, NABET-CWA Local 16 Executive Board member Brian Kelly attended the DNC as the NABET-CWA Network Remote Servicing Representative. Kelly worked in ABC’s news department for 34 years, and this was his first stop as the NABET-CWA representative. Kelly had heard there were some problems in Cleveland, so he made sure things went differently in Philadelphia.

ABC corporate policy requires an emergency evacuation plan for major events, yet there was no such plan in Cleveland. The company also did not have a plan in Philadelphia just prior to the convention, so Kelly worked with the tech manager to correct this oversight. After some discussion with the Union, the company devised a plan, and the two sides figured out how it should be distributed to all of the workers.

“It is unacceptable not to have a plan and put our membership and all other lives at risk,” said Kelly. “You can be sure that when terrorists attack, they have a plan.”

Work schedules also had not been posted in Cleveland, which Kelly pointed out to the company.

At the RNC, reports of “deplorable” food that was difficult to access led Local 16 President Art Mazzacca and Local 16 Vice President Jim Nolan to get in touch with the Company’s Labor Relations department. At one point, NABET-CWA offered to bring in its own catering to help the situation.

Things got better in Philadelphia: food was placed in the newsroom area and around the arena so workers could grab something to eat, sit at a table, or take it back to their position. Because of the venue’s isolation, getting food outside of the arena proved difficult and many often didn’t eat until food service began at the arena.

Kelly also met with members about the working conditions in the network studio, and followed up from New York once he left.

“For the most part, these issues were dealt with, but they should have been dealt with long in advance,” Kelly said. “The corrections probably would not have been made had it not for the presence of either a Union officer or an E-Board representative.”

Andre Yoder-Harris, Ed Jennings, and Margot Knipe

Gary Rafuse, Tom Budai, and Hank Disselkamp
the 40,000 Verizon workers on strike. A new four-year agreement with big gains—more jobs and pay raises—was reached, which allows "13 million more Americans [to] punch their ticket to the middle class," Perez said.

Senator Brown and Representatives Lewis, Ellison and Sarbanes talked about restoring voting rights and reclaiming the economy.

Stopping the Trans-Pacific Partnership is a key legislative priority. The TPP is a continuation of the trade policies of the last two decades that have failed U.S. workers by bringing down wages and benefits and lacks environmental protections. CWA activists and allies are pushing back against this trade deal and are holding members of Congress accountable for their votes on this latest bad trade policy.

CWA outlined its policy on telecommunications and media. Public policy should support the growth of good, career jobs and companies that violate labor laws must be held accountable. Media diversity is essential; rules that bar companies from owning multiple TV stations in the same market, prohibit stations from skirting those rules with "shared services agreements" and restrict the combined ownership of local newspaper and TV stations are vital for local community needs and to preserve good jobs in print, video and electronic media.

CWA's numerous legislative priorities also include Campaign Finance Reform, the Living Wage Act (Fight for $15), and Health Care for All.

CWA has more than 1,000 Legislative and Political activists who have been trained in effective grassroots political action. They take CWA's political and legislative program to their states and communities and build coalitions to fight for workers and family-friendly legislation.

CWA President Chris Shelton told the conference, "These are movement times, times when the fight for fundamental change in our system is on, and all of us must join."
Regional Advisory Board Meeting for Regions 2 and 6

Trending: Social Media, Organizing, Associate Membership

More than 20 NABET-CWA Locals from Regions 2 and 6 convened in Syracuse, N.Y., on June 3 and 4 to confer on Union business and discover new strategies for bargaining, organizing and communicating with our members.

The “godfather” of Region 2, and a NABET-CWA member for more than 60 years, Fred Saburro greeted the participants. RVP 6 Bill Wachenschwanz also welcomed attendees to the meeting, followed by Sector President Charlie Braico’s welcome address and report on the state of the Union.

NABET-CWA Staff Representative Bill Murray gave presentations on new websites, social media and the Associate Membership program. Murray highlighted the ever-growing social media landscape and its potential use as a tool for Unions to reach out and organize members. With a Twitter and Facebook presence, Locals can promote events, such as mobilizations, and create conversations among members and Union leadership.

NABET-CWA is committed to adapting new ways of communicating with members, and has appointed a Social Media Coordinator, Toni Buoy, to guide content and post on the Union’s Facebook and Twitter pages. Buoy is actively recruiting people to sign up and follow along. She also updates the Union’s new website at www.nabetcwa.org, as well as the Retirees’ Facebook page.

The new Associate Membership program, a new By-Law that was adopted at last year’s Sector Conference, moved closer to fruition as Locals received language to put in their By-Laws, should they choose to participate. They also received a sample of the new membership card and application form for this new category. Each NABET-CWA Local has discretion on whether to offer Associate Membership and, if so, which services to include, such as job information, attendance at Local events, lynda.com training, etc. Before Associate Membership can be offered, however, the Local must first vote on the change in its By-Laws. If an Associate Member eventually becomes a full member, they would then be responsible for the full initiation fee and dues as prescribed in the Local By-Laws.

Murray discussed a new organizing survey that will ask Locals about organizing leads in their markets as part of the Union’s Strategic Industry Fund proposal for additional organizing positions. Staff Representatives Carrie Biggs-Adams and Lou Follot provided insight on writing contract language with the aid of a contracts database, as well as surveying members prior to the start of bargaining. Follot and Jim Kolendo provided an update on the Union’s training programs. Sector Vice President Lou Marinaro spoke about NABET-CWA’s increased presence at network remote sporting events (see story on page 3), as well as the recently launched sports production website for network locals: www.nabetcwasports.org.

NABET-CWA Staff Representative Eric Seggi and Local 25 Steward Ron Gabalski led the Shop Stewards Training Program. The one-day training covered grievance writing/handling, information requests, Weingarten Rights, building and growing the Union, local office administration/record-keeping and connecting with new members.

Since Local Stewards have more contact with members than any other union representative, whether as a Union official or at their regular job, training is important to make sure the Steward is well prepared for the variety of issues that arise. The Union is considering another Steward training at the next RAB in April 2017.

The meeting wrapped up with the presentation of Certificates of Completion for participating in NABET-CWA’s Shop Stewards Training Program:

Michael Abeyta (Local 52)
Kurt Ackerman (Local 211)
Culley Gosier (Local 24)
Jim Hefti (Local 21)
Chris Henry (Local 24)
Jim Herr (Local 25)
Kyle Johnson (Local 22)
Rob Plewa (Local 43)
Steve Stoeckel (Local 211)
Scott Vargas
Alan Waltz (Local 24)

Left to right: Kent Gilbert (Local 43), Ken Kascik (Local 43) and Toni Buoy, Social Media Coordinator.

From left to right: Scott Naught, Steve Stoeckel, Scott Mufritz, Ed Jones, Chris Ryan, Anthony Vecchio, Colin Bailey and Sector President Charlie Braico.

A fresh perspective on talks at BRIC Arts Media

“I’m a sponge,” Latoya Johnston said of herself as a first-time negotiator. “I am listening and absorbing all of this information. I’m just kind of taking it all in and learning a lot from this experience.”

NABET-CWA and BRIC Arts Media in Brooklyn, N.Y., began negotiations on July 6. The two sides have since met about five times to discuss the terms of a new contract for 20-25 people who work as instructors, engineers, computer programmers, producers, directors, and in public equipment, programming, operations, photography, and master control.

BRIC Arts Media offers free cultural programming by artists and media-makers. Its main venue includes a public media center, an art exhibition space, two performance spaces, a TV studio and artist work spaces. Johnston, 33, started at BRIC in 2010 and works in the Public Equipment department, where she and five co-workers facilitate equipment requests and oversee artist productions. She decided to take part in these talks because she wanted to be sure her department’s needs were addressed.

Prior to talks, NABET-CWA Local 11 held membership meetings to gather feedback. Because the Company has grown significantly since the last contract was negotiated, the bargaining committee wants to be sure that the new contract accurately reflects what people are doing in their jobs today.

Johnston’s department, for instance, has grown from a three-person department that managed a handful of producers and just two onsite classes to juggling multiple tasks each day. It is one of the only departments with weekend shifts, and as such, must handle all of the calls on the weekends. Since the renovation, Department employees fill all booking requests, service a high volume of walk-ins, assist classes, tutor people on equipment, and serve as the face of BRIC in the Company’s newly expanded partnership with the Brooklyn Public Library, which currently has five active locations and plans for more.

“We are simply the face of BRIC. We make the wheels turn, but we sometimes feel like we’re not heard,” said Johnston. “With our diverse and constant interaction with the community at large, we’re the personification of BRIC’s mission. Our department is in dire need of being redefined, in both description and wage compensation.”

Johnston said she approached bargaining as a learning experience. She wants to learn as much as she can in case she becomes involved in bargaining again. Of utmost importance to her is communicating the interests of her fellow Union members and co-workers to ensure their voices are heard at the table. “They aren’t there, so I have to be sure to represent them and their needs,” she said.

“Latoya has been a great asset to the bargaining team,” said Sector Vice President/Local 11 President Lou Marinaro. “As a rank-and-file member, she lives and breathes these issues, so she is an important piece of the puzzle.”

The inclusion of rank and file members in the negotiations process is very important to Marinaro. He wants to involve more members in bargaining so they can see it for themselves and voice their concerns and issues directly to management.

Some of the Union’s non-economic proposals include: a contract term of four years, enhancements in training language, modifications to how vacations are scheduled, and improvements in weekly assignment scheduling.

Joining Johnston on the bargaining committee are NABET-CWA Vice President and Local 11 President Lou Marinaro, Grievance Chairman and Assistant to the President Mike Noseworthy, Executive Board Member and Shop Steward Mike Carroll, and Bargaining Unit Members Dan Johnston and Clinton Philson.
NABET-CWA takes part in Next Gen

L ocal 43’s Troy Adamson, 34, a WJBK (FOX) photographer/editor, joined other young CWA activists for the CWA Next Generation Summit, July 19-21, in Detroit to share ideas and strategies on the major issues of the day: fair trade, organizing and bargaining rights, income and racial inequality, voting rights, campaign finance reform, LGBTQ rights, as well as immigration reform.

The group of 200 reflected the diversity among today’s workers, which CWA President Chris Shelton called “the future of our Labor Movement.” Two other NABET-CWA members from Youngstown, OH, and Las Vegas, NV, also participated.

With a decade of television news experience, including nearly four years at WJBK, Adamson was appointed to the Local 43 Executive Board six months ago. As the youngest on the board, his fellow Local E-Board members suggested he participate in the Next Gen Summit as a way to introduce him to conferences and “get the ball rolling on getting younger people involved,” Adamson said.

The three days were packed with panel discussions and information sessions, which featured several Next Gen Union groups, including Steelworkers Next Generation, CWA District 1 Next Generation, Young Machinists, and IUE-CWA Next Generation. The panels emphasized building the young worker movement, reforming politics, and building solidarity through inclusion. Adamson found the discussion of the Ver- zon strike, from the perspective of a Ver- zon employee, especially interesting, as well as a workshop on student debt and using social media to organize. Armed with this new information, Adamson recently suggested using Twitter to a local member for upcoming negotiations. He said it can be an effective tool for mobilization campaigns to employ in order to keep station advertisers apprised of contract talks.

Summit participants got a real-world taste of activism as they marched to City Hall with Michigan United members to urge the Detroit City Council to expand its “Ban the Box” ordinance to private-sector employers. The “Fair Chance for All” campaign seeks to delay questions about criminal records early in the hiring process. Adamson said he hopes that the next generation learns to get involved and stay involved in labor issues, so that they might fight harder and become more passionate about what they do for a living and where they work. “Somehow it’s been instilled in today’s young people that they’re going to be in many different jobs throughout their lives,” Adamson said. “But if they get involved in a union, they might work to make changes in their workplace rather than give up and just accept that they’re going to make less or be in a job they don’t enjoy. A labor agreement gives you a sense of job security. It’s nice having some protection.”

Adamson said he’d like to help get more young people involved in the future, and there was talk at the Summit about forming a group of younger union activists in his District.

WCMU-TV/FM – Mt. Pleasant, MI (Local 412)

Members ratified a new three-year agreement with a 2% raise in the first year, then the same wage increases that University management receives in the last two years. The bargaining committee included Local 412 President Linda Diedeman, Patti Link, Matt Oznacie, Lee Periard, Tom Ball, Mike Horace and NABET-CWA Staff Representative Bill Murray.

KWHY-TV – Los Angeles, CA (Local 53)

As reported in the Fall 2015 issue of NABET News, KWHY/MundoFOX22 laid off all of the station’s employees in August 2015, including 30 NABET-CWA members, for which the Union filed a grievance and unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board. The NLRB deferred the matter to arbitration, which was held on June 3, 2016, at the Local 53 office. The Company made a monetary settlement offer and agreed that if the station returns to producing local programming it will offer employment first to all Staff and Daily Hire employees.

WJLA-TV – Washington, DC (Local 31)

A unit mobilization meeting and two rounds of negotiations were held in June. Sinclair Broadcasting expressed disappointment in the progress of talks and is “looking ahead to possible impasse,” according to NABET-CWA Staff Representative Lou Fallot, who informed the Federal Mediator assigned to the talks about these discussions. Benefits, wages, seniority and jurisdiction are the major impediments to reaching an agreement.

MCTV – Washington, DC (Local 31)

A three-day training class for Adobe Premier took place June 24-26 at the MCT facility. Eight members participated in the class conducted by Jim Talutu. CWA’s Training Coordinator Kevin Celata helped to facilitate the training.
“A Better Way” – Really?

Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan has introduced his version of a plan that would replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA), more commonly known as “Obamacare.” Ryan has entitled this proposal “A Better Way.” Yeah, but for whom? Not for seniors, and certainly not for retirees.

An important provision of the ACA is the elimination of the dreaded “donut hole” by 2020 for prescription drug coverage under Medicare Part D. It appears to me that Speaker Ryan’s “Better Way” reunites the donut hole, pushing more costs onto seniors and retirees. Moreover, there are many other provisions of this “Better Way” that are not friendly toward seniors. I believe there is a hash, hidden reality that some members of Congress and corporate executives, both consciously and subconsciously are disappointed, Ebenezer Scrooge-like, that we are not dying off fast enough. Well you know what? That’s too damn bad! Deal with it! We are here, we’re staying as long as we possibly can, we are growing in number, and we vote.

If Speaker Ryan is really interested in cutting federal spending, let me suggest that he support a bill currently in the House that was introduced by Congressman Keith Ellison of Minnesota. If passed, this new law, H.R. 2623, known as The Personal Drug Importation Fairness Act of 2015, would legalize the importation of prescription drugs from outside the United States, from countries like Canada and Israel. Additionally, there is a bill languishing in the Senate, S.31, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2015, introduced by Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, that would permit Medicare and Medicaid to negotiate directly with pharmaceutical companies, the same way the Veterans Administration does. Both of these bills would result in billions of dollars in savings for the federal government—something that should appeal to so-called “deficit hawks” like Speaker Ryan.

Let me suggest that you call your Representative and Senators and ask them if they will introduce Senators and ask them if they will introduce a bill that would allow Medicare beneficiaries to purchase prescription drugs from outside the United States. Both of these bills, if passed, would allow Medicare and Medicaid to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies directly, which would result in significant savings for the federal government—and that’s not a bad thing!

Well, you know what? That’s too damn bad! Deal with it! We are here, we’re staying as long as we possibly can, we are growing in number, and we vote.

Thank You, Paul Pecora

In June, Paul Pecora, a Local 16 retiree, contacted me. Paul was paying approximately $598 per month in medical insurance premiums for his wife, son and himself. His premium was supposed to be reduced to approximately $130 a month once he was eligible for Medicare.

Paul celebrated his 65th birthday on December 20, 2015, and therefore became eligible for Medicare on December 1, 2015. However, Disney, his former employer, still charged him $598 for December, even though Medicare covered him. When Paul

Career ABC Technicians Retire

Wing Chung, a 37-year NABET-CWA member, spent his entire career working as a Technical Specialist in Broadcast Operations Engineering Maintenance at ABC-TV in New York. Wing, a well-liked individual amongst his peers, was well known for his wizardry in troubleshooting all types of broadcast equipment and was regarded as one of the “go to guys” in the network technical maintenance shop. Best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement! Mike Moran, a distinguished Viet Nam Veteran, started working at ABC in 1975 in Tech Records and shortly thereafter migrated into the Technical Operation Center - currently Network Technical Maintenance.

Local 411’s first president retires from 40-year career

Bob Cowan has decided to put down his camera after 46 years with CBS, saying it was “time to try something different.” His last day is October 31.

Cowan began his career at WCCO in Minneapolis in May 1970, following a stint at WHO-TV in Des Moines, Iowa. He graduated from Drake University in Des Moines in 1968, where he majored in radio and television.

At the time, there were about 20 photographers on staff and the station had just made the transition to color. Cowan was shooting on a Bell & Howell silent camera and on a very heavy Auricon film camera for sound.

One of his early assignments was the “topping ceremony” for the IDS Tower, which was completed in 1972 and is the tallest building in Minnesota. This proved to be a somewhat difficult assignment for Cowan, who is sensitive to heights.

“I remember getting up to the top and there were no railings. I thought I was about to fall.”

Other stations brought the change much more quickly. He said the competition with the other stations brought the change much faster than he’d expected at the time.

The new cameras also brought on a jurisdictional dispute with the IBEW-represented engineers at WCCO, who believed that operating the cameras fell under their jurisdiction. An NLRB hearing came out in favor of the news photographers, however, and they soon decided to organize. NABET-CWA Local 411 was chartered in 1976 and Cowan, who helped to lead the organizing drive, became the Local’s first president.

In 1979, Cowan became one of the three photographers to work on the nation-wide syndicated “Lifestyle” program, PM Magazine. The show, which aired five nights a week, had a main 15-person staff.

“PM Magazine helped me to expand my experience,” Cowan said. “I enjoyed the chance to travel and see a lot of different things.”

The most impactful story of Cowan’s career—on both him and the viewers—was the orphan crisis in Romania. Cowan and a couple of his colleagues traveled to Romania in 1990 for two weeks, touring the orphanages and reporting on the horrors they encountered: thousands of children, abused, sick and abandoned. Their coverage produced a three-part series on the crisis, “The Iron Crib” that was part of the news department’s long-form segment, “Dimension.” When the story aired on WCCO, Minnesotans were eager to help; they sent money and money wanted to adopt some of the children.

“WCCO brought the story to the viewers, and the viewers wanted to act.”

Cowan and his colleagues went on to travel to other parts of the world to cover humanitarian issues. “The world is a much smaller place than it used to be,” Cowan said.

“It’s an honor to have been a part of changing the lives of so many children.”

Cowan has been a part of changing the lives of so many children. He said he will miss it.