

CWA Opening Statement for Bargaining 2019

Today, as we officially open up negotiations, the Union and the Company recognize that it is in the best interest of both parties, Union members and Company employees, as well as the public for these negotiations to be conducted in the spirit of mutual responsibility and respect. In 2015, my opening statement for our negotiations emphasized the words responsibility and respect, but now, four years later, I am going to add another word - loyalty. If you were to visit any work center or call center across District 3, you would discover that your employees, our members, are not treated with the respect they have earned and deserve. As far as mutual responsibility, this has unfortunately become a one-way street. This billion-dollar corporation no longer feels a responsibility to share their record-breaking profits with the people who make it all possible, the employees, our members.

Allow me to speak on loyalty. What is loyalty? Loyalty is defined as “a strong feeling of support or allegiance.” In a working relationship this is vital to the well being of both parties, and it should be mutual. For many years, as an AT&T employee, I felt like there was a certain degree of loyalty in the relationship between CWA and AT&T/BellSouth. Were we always happy? Did we always agree? No of course not. However, as employees and members of CWA, we would see real gains and improvements to our work lives as a result of bargaining. Today, those gains and improvements are hard to come by.

Nowadays, as the company continues to grow and increase profits, through numerous corporate acquisitions, all of the Company’s continued success comes at the expense of our members. One would think that as hard as the Company fights to take things away from our members, that the Company was struggling or on the verge of bankruptcy. However, we, as employees and members of this Union, know the truth and we are not the only ones aware of the truth. The general public is also aware that AT&T is one of the most profitable companies in the world. Working class men and women all across the southeast know that AT&T has some of the highest paid corporate executives in our country. Americans have had enough. Working families are not going to stand

by anymore and watch corporate executives continue to increase shareholder profits and their own executive salaries at the expense and on the back of the workers.

The loyalty we see from AT&T towards our members continues to lessen. Our members have taken notice of this loss of loyalty and how it is also conveyed to customers. Loyalty has been misplaced and given to the stockholders. While I do agree stock holder importance is necessary for the survival of the company, AT&T has forgotten that CWA members are just as important if not more. It is our members who keep a customer happy and continue to remain loyal to AT&T, not stock holders. CWA members are the ones customers rely on to provide the services they use every day, not stock holders. CWA Member Gene S. stated it best. "The military veterans who give their own time to rebuild a home for a homeless veteran. The sports team coaches for local groups. The single parents who work to raise children who will one day be our future. They are not asking for a handout but rather a fairness in return for the commitment they give to both the company and their community. The same community you want to see AT&T in a positive light from, the people who will buy your products. The employees are the front line face OUR subscribers see and interact with every day." Our members are the ones who create that loyalty through their actions at work and in their communities and have earned the right to share in the success of the company through wages, benefits, a better work life and job security.

When it comes to the excellent service provided, it is not a result of constant beratement from managers, constantly changing expectations or developmental plans, it is the result of CWA members who take pride in doing exceptional work while enduring and fighting through these roadblocks created by the company. AT&T's loyalty has been misplaced and we demand that during this session of bargaining, it be given back to the ones who represent it the most.

When the President announced a new tax cut for businesses, CEO Stephenson was one of the first to come out in support by stating such quotes as "From my standpoint, the driver of this is the business tax reform... if we get investment going, we get productivity going, we get wage gain going, we invest another billion dollars. Every billion dollars AT&T invests is 7,000 hard hat jobs. These are not entry-level jobs. These are 7,000 jobs of people putting fiber in ground,

hard hat jobs that make \$70,000 to \$80,000 per year.” Instead we have seen a loss of 23,000 jobs company wide with over 1600 in District 3 alone. These were the good paying jobs that CEO Stephenson promised. I would like to see CEO Stephenson attend a few of the surplus meetings to speak with our members who are now without a job. I had a member named Jeff M. out of SC send me a letter with the following statement. “It’s saddens me the company I’ve loved working for these 19 years is giving itself millions of dollars in raises, without even a clue how their bad business decisions affect the working men and women that make them so successful. We are AT&T, we are the men and women that make it work. We are the ones the customers see and rants and cusses out because of your bad policies, procedures, and broken promises.” “Amazingly though we pay the price with our livelihoods.” “It’s sad, it’s a sign of people who are completely out of touch with the working men and women. It’s a sign of greed above all else. They have shown me that my years with the company, the company that I looked forward to coming into work thinks of its employees like dirt.”

We constantly hear how “this side of the house has declining revenue” but what they do not talk about are the number of contractors being utilized to perform the work our members could perform whether it is in a call center or working in the field. The work is there but AT&T chooses to give the work to a third-party company instead of our members. In two states where the company has surplused the most employees, we have also seen a dramatic increase in the use of contractors. Where is the Loyalty? Those contractors have ZERO loyalty to AT&T and its customers. It is time to be loyal to our members.

The Union, through its membership, plays a vital role in the overall success of the Company's operations. The bargaining team stands united today and recognizes this vital role and has come in the spirit of good faith, to reclaim our member's rightful part of that great success. This bargaining team is backed by thousands of Union members, myself and all of CWA who are tired of seeing their brothers and sisters put down, harassed, and treated as a number and not as a human being with families. We start this bargaining session demanding AT&T to show our hard-working members the respect and loyalty they deserve. This can be done through better wages, benefits, improved work rules, and job security. Declining business is not a reason to treat our jobs as being

expendable when the work is there. Give work to YOUR employees, CWA members not the employees of other companies.

Another issue AT&T completely ignores is its retirees. Our retirees spent many years building this company into what it is today, yet they are continuously treated as a mere liability. Now I am going to ask Ms. Rita Scott, president of the District 3 RMC to speak.

We are here with the intent to demonstrate that your workforce in D3 has been and will remain the most adaptive, diligent, and industrious throughout the company and will remain loyal to its customers. We are connected to each and every one of you. You and the communities we serve depend on us to be responsive, innovative, ethical, supportive and enlightened. We understand your role in this process and we are well armed with the information and evidence to show our value. If the company is the tree, we are the branches that hold the leaves. Without the leaves the tree will surely perish. ATT has taken advantage of its workers for far too long and it will take more than words and empty promises to put this fire out! The unity and might of D3 will show the world the truth about AT&T. Our unity and solidarity will be felt and remembered for years to come, we are change, we are district 3 and "Our Future is Now!"

Richard Honeycutt

District 3 Vice-President