

# FRONTLINE

**IBEW LOCAL 21**



**Volume 10, No. 5 • December 2006**



## *Into The New Year at Lightspeed*

*David Gier  
DAVAR Tech  
Orland  
Construction  
conducts net  
DSL testing  
for Project  
Lightspeed.*

*Photo Credit: Larry Moeller*

## INSIDE

**Business Manager . . . .pg 2**  
**Curran's Report . . . .pg 3**  
**Gast's Report . . . .pg 4**  
**Scholarships . . . .pg 5**

**COPE . . . . .pg 6**  
**News Across The Local .pg 8**  
**Webster's Report . . . .pg 11**

**Sacco's Report . . . . .pg 12**  
**Retirees . . . . .pg 14**  
**Meetings . . . . .pg 15**

## **Contractual & Political Victories**

By Ronald Kastner



**T**he elections have been over for some time, and I'm sure you're all tired of hearing about the Democratic victory and how much better life will now be. Based on my experience, this change for the better will only happen if we all band together and hold our elected officials accountable. As

union members, we need to continue our efforts and make sure our elected officials do not forget the people who voted them into office. Already, the shoring up of our foundation of power in Illinois has paid dividends with the increase of the minimum wage. This measure passed in both houses and soon should be signed by Governor Blagojevich.

This month I'd like to recap some of the events of the past year and highlight our efforts of 2007. Within the public sector divisions of Local 21, an agreement was reached at the

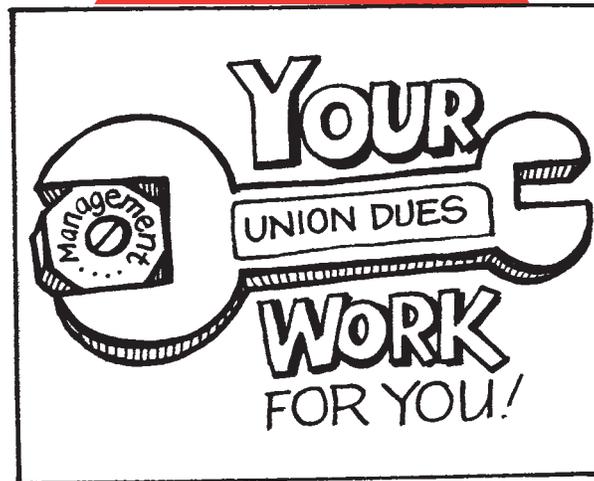
**Peoria County Bel-wood Nursing Home** when a wage re-opener turned into an extension of the current agreement with substantial increases over the next 4 years.

Furthermore, I am hopeful that an agreement will soon be reached for our **Vermillion County Judicial and non-Judicial** members; these members can also anticipate a well deserved wage increase. Rounding out our Public sector contracts is the **Office of Emergency and Management Communications / City of Chicago 911 Dispatchers**, our largest Public sector bargaining unit. Their contract expires in June of 2007, and we are very hopeful that we will

reach an agreement in a timely fashion.

Contracts that settled last year include our contract with **Avaya** which brought in a fair agreement. We also settled our nationwide agreement with **Altura Communications Solutions**. This was a very difficult contract to negotiate. And who can forget our seven year struggle at **Comcast**? We all should be proud of our Sisters and Brothers who work there because they finally have a viable contract. However, the Comcast agreement at Irving Park/Cortland expires in May 2007.

Bargaining dates are currently being discussed with **Johnson Controls** for the upcoming contract that expires in February, 2007. The Local 21 bargaining team will start to meet with this employer right after the first of the year. We are currently jointly bargaining with Local 51 and Local 702 on the **Citizens/Frontier** Agreement, and at this time we have extended the agreement past the expiration date. We hope to reach an agreement soon. Last but not least, the **J.U.L.I.E** contract expires late in 2007. It will be another busy year.



Our **legislative agenda** will be full in 2007 when we deal with the Telecom rewrite in Springfield. Leveling the playing field as competition rages between telephone and cable companies is a priority of ours. This will have to be dealt with while securing jobs at the same time. Job security in Illinois is top on our list, and we'll need to make sure our legislative friends see it the same way.

Hope that all of you have a good Holiday season.

Ron

# The Battle for Workers Rights Continues

By Kevin Curran, Vice President/Assistant Business Manager Marketing



**B**rothers and Sisters, I believe that it's indisputable that we are living through one of the most challenging and difficult periods in the

labor movement's history. Workers everywhere are facing the **most aggressive anti-union attacks** our country has ever seen. Our Union certainly saw its share of these attacks in 2006. We have seen our members in **Consumer** placed under an unjust performance management system called **"PAR"**. We've seen our members in **Global Markets** placed on surplus/layoff due to AT&T's illegal movement of work to lower-paid, out of state workers. We've also seen smaller surpluses in other Business Units such as BCS.

The National Labor Relations Board is charged with protecting the rights of millions of American workers to form Unions, participate in collective bargaining, and engage in concerted activities to support themselves and their co-workers. The harsh reality is that in today's world the Bush-appointed National Labor Relations Board is packed with the enemies of workers who seem to only have the interests of corporate America in mind when they render their decisions.

Because of this fact, Local 21 must employ new tactics to combat these ever-increasing threats to our members. As most of you are aware, our **Union sued AT&T in federal court** earlier this year over their "PAR" performance management plan and beat them. AT&T appealed that decision to the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals, who heard

final oral arguments on November 8th. We are currently awaiting the Court of Appeals ruling on this matter.

In the **Global Markets surplus/layoff**, we attacked AT&T on several fronts. With the help of many committed members, we took to the streets of downtown Chicago, hand-billing key areas to alert the public about this immoral action AT&T was committing against its own workers. We solicited the help of over 200 elected officials. President Ron Kastner met personally with Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan regarding this matter. Through these activities and weeks of negotiations, we were able to gain agreement to have the arbitration case on this issue accelerated and heard as soon as possible. Because of this agreement, the arbitration hearing will be held on December 18th and 19th of this year (instead of the normal lengthy period of time it takes to get a case heard at arbitration.)

In addition, we are engaged in an **aggressive training program** for our Union staff. This included the hiring an Arbitrator with over 3 decades of experience to provide training to all of our Business Representatives on arbitration presentation and post-hearing brief writing. Similar training for all of our Chief and Area Stewards is planned for early 2007. In the new year, our Research Department will continue to work to ensure Local 21's Business Reps, Chief

Stewards, Area Stewards, and Stewards are provided with the best training available so that we are **prepared to fight the battles to come**.

As the year comes to a close, I'd like to report on **several rulings** which we have just received. The Union was victorious in an arbitration case that involved the discharge of one member for alleged job abandonment due to substance abuse. In his ruling, the Arbitrator found that **AT&T violated the just cause standard** of our contract and ordered that the member be reinstated. In his ruling, the Arbitrator was impressed that the grievant came forward and sought help for his substance problem prior to being discharged by the company. **By the way, this arbitration hearing was handled by one of our Business Reps who beat (once again) one of AT&T's \$500 an hour attorneys.**

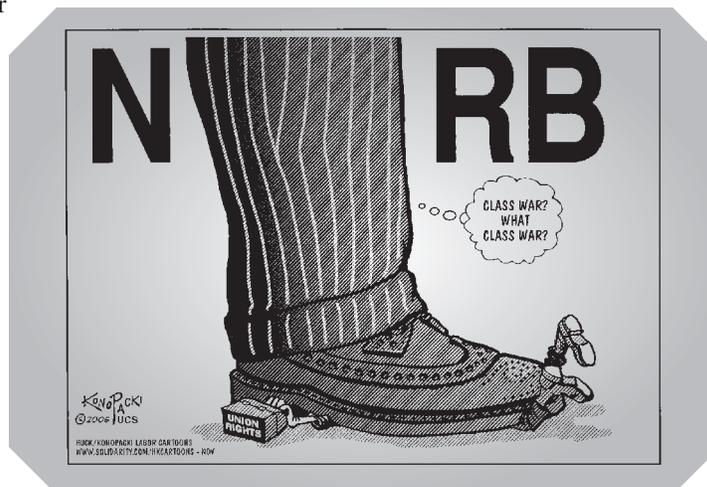
The second ruling was in federal court, where the United States Northern District Court of Illinois handed AT&T another loss as they slapped down the company's attempt to stop the Union's effort to enforce what's known as the **"Kasher" arbitration award** over the 2002 layoff in Network. The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals is currently reviewing AT&T's refusal to comply with this award.

In closing, Brothers and Sisters, 2006 was certainly a difficult and contentious year. However, keep in mind the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said:

*"The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand in times of challenge and controversy."*

2007 is sure to bring more challenges, but, **we will stand and face them together as one**. And when we stand together, **there is nothing we can't accomplish!**

My best wishes to all our members for a Merry Christmas and Happy and Safe New Year.



# FRONTLINE

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Local 21, AFL-CIO/CLC

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**Member: Illinois State Labor Press Association, Midwest Labor Press Association, and International Labor Communications Association, AFL-CIO/CLC**

## Arbitration Update

By Jerry Gast, Assistant Business Manager Network



I want to thank all the Network staff and stewards for their hard work and help in 2006 in my first full year as an Assistant

Business Manager. We worked through a lot of grievances and arbitrations together.

In the next year as Project Lightspeed ramps up we will see a lot of work in Construction and I&R. That's good for both departments. The problem will be getting AT&T to staff the departments with the proper number of techs so they can stop all the details; Local 21 will be working on that.

On the arbitration front we have completed both the **crossover of work groups on overtime**, and the **pay treatment of working overtime on holidays**. We should be receiving the arbitrator's ruling in January and will report on them at the unit meetings. The Union is working on a settlement on two arbitrations in the D O G department: **Holiday scheduling and off hours and weekend scheduling**. We will report on these cases as soon as we reach a settlement. The Business Reps are presenting more cases in arbitration without an attorney and are very successful.

In closing out the year I want to wish every one a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year. Also remember our members serving in the military during the holidays.

## Benefit Report

### Coercion Ends with Arbitration Win

By Linda Cox, Recording Secretary, Business Representative



It's been a very busy year for the benefit department. We fought hard for each member. Some of that resulted in successful outcomes and sometimes it did not.

Our workload has become larger with each case taking longer to get responses from AT&T's vendors. It's not unusual for us to juggle twenty-five to thirty cases each day. Needless to say, we stay busy.

Our biggest win was the **Overpayment Arbitration** which now prohibits AT&T from taking involuntary deductions without your consent. You can no longer be threatened with any form of discipline, including suspensions and terminations, for failure to sign a form agreeing to pay back an amount that

AT&T deems an overpayment.

Additionally, you can't be denied future disability benefits if you have an outstanding overpayment. You may choose to make arrangements to repay the overpayment amount with as little as \$50 a week but you can't be forced to pay any amount. You may choose not to pay anything; however AT&T will then seek outside sources such as a collection agency. The key word here is you have a CHOICE.

That may not sound like a big deal but many members were threatened, suspended and forced to pay amounts they couldn't afford. On a going forward basis from July, this has now been stopped or should have been. There are occasions where money has been taken without consent. If it happens to you, please call us.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their time and patience and wish each of you Happy Holidays! We hope 2007 brings health and happiness to all!

## Marketing Year in Review

By Kurt Schmidt, Business Representative

For Marketing, 2006 has been a year of changes including consolidation, surpluses and performance plans. It saw the first impacts from the AT&T merger with possibly more to come. Local 21 anticipated changes in Long Distance and Business with a limited effect on Consumer, based on the fact that AT&T had large business and government accounts but had gotten out of the consumer market.

We were made aware the **Long Distance** business unit wanted to be at 60 members by the end of 2006. Nineteen Solution Specialists were declared "at risk." The company hoped that attrition would take care of this. However, as of today there are still 12 members "at risk" with an off-payroll date of December 29, 2006. The Union is working to get the date extended and keep the members on the payroll until the attrition of the twelve members is attained. If this isn't possible, then we are asking for an offering to all of the Solution Specialists which could make room for some of the lower senior members if higher senior members accept it. The company hasn't agreed to either of these counters as *Frontline* goes to press, and the Union awaits their response.

In **Business**, there have been several surpluses in both Chicago and Oak Brook in the **Global Markets** group. Even with the reduction of headcount from these surpluses, in June the company came to the Union and announced the movement of the Global work to Michigan. This surplused the remaining 137 Global members. The Union is fighting the company decision as one of a layoff

instead of a surplus with arbitration hearings due to begin on December 18th and 19th of this year. Sadly, there won't be a decision before the current off-payroll date of December 28, 2006 unless this group is extended by the company.

Consolidation impacted **Consumer**. The Oak Brook Customer Care Center closed and all members moved to Arlington Heights or Total Grace on December 1st. This was to reduce the cost of leased space and move employees into company owned buildings. Many members are feeling a significant hardship because of the much longer commutes to work, causing less time with their families. The Union is trying to get extended hours in the Arlington Heights office to help with the longer commutes; some later starts would reduce the rush hour pressures for many members. We expect to hear from the company by the time new tours are announced for 1st Quarter of 2007.

Finally, the Union has had to deal with grievance delays by AT&T at all steps, forcing the Union into arbitration on almost every issue, it looks like 2007 will be more of the same.

There is however, **hope on the political front** with the resounding victory in mid-term elections achieved by labor voting. The union-busting Bush and his fellow Republicans are no longer in power. Now there is a chance for better laws to benefit working families. Union members need to be active in the upcoming Presidential elections just around the corner. Voting does make the difference.

## 2007 Union Scholarships

By Tom Hopper,  
Business Representative

### IBEW Local 21 Scholarship Program

Our local union is proud to offer, on an annual basis, the IBEW Local Union 21 Scholarship Program, available to all Local 21 members and immediate family members. Each year, the Local awards ten winners scholarships of \$1,000 each. Applications must be received by March 1st of the program year. Complete Scholarship Program Rules and Applications are available through the union office and at [www.ibew21.org/resources/scholarships.html](http://www.ibew21.org/resources/scholarships.html).

### IBEW Founders' Scholarship

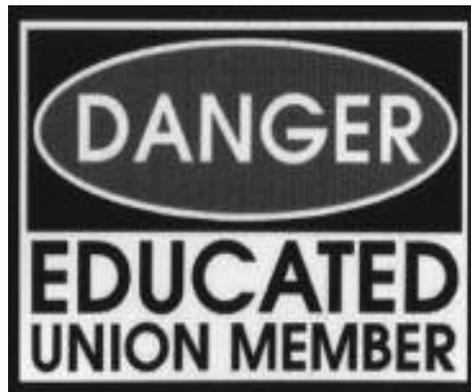
Offered by the IBEW International, and to be used solely by IBEW members, the IBEW Founders' Scholarship honors the dedicated wiremen and linemen who, on November 28, 1891, organized the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. This award is for \$200 per semester credit hour at any accredited college or university toward an initial bachelor's degree in an approved field. The maximum distribution is \$24,000 over a period not to exceed eight years. The application and all related materials must be postmarked prior to May 1 of the scholarship year. Complete Scholarship Program Rules and Applications are available through the Local 21 union office and at [www.ibew.org/links/ScholarshipAd.pdf](http://www.ibew.org/links/ScholarshipAd.pdf)

### William A. Lee Scholarships

The Chicago Federation of Labor is currently accepting applications for the 2007 William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship Program, available to students who graduate from a Chicago or surrounding suburban area high school in 2007. Ten awards are offered, each in the amount of \$1,500. Students must submit a **written** request for an application to the Chicago Federation of Labor, William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship Committee, 130 East Randolph Street, Suite 2600, Chicago, IL 60601. An application request form can be downloaded at [www.chicagolabor.org](http://www.chicagolabor.org). **No phone calls will be accepted for application requests.** Once completed, the scholarship application must be returned to the Chicago Federation of Labor by March 1, 2007 in order to be eligible.



"Let him keep his security blanket. It may be the only coverage he'll ever get."



## Nobody Gets to Sit on Their Laurels

By Larry Moeller, Committee on Political Education



The November elections have come and gone and working men and women deserve a huge pat on the back for voting in large numbers. I have always maintained Union members and their families are good citizens and like all concerned voters will vote their own self-interests when properly informed. It's not my intention to relive the election but to put it in perspective as to what it means

to Local 21 members, the Union staff and the future of our jobs.

Nationally, with Democratic control of Congress we no longer have to worry about adverse legislation but can look forward to the "Employee Free Choice Act" being passed in the U.S. House. It will then move to the Senate where Democrats hold a 51 to 49 edge but do not have the required 60 vote margin to stop a Republican filibuster. This Act would give Unions and unorganized workers a leg up by certifying a Union's right to represent workers with a simple majority pro-union vote vastly improving Labor Unions' ability to organize new members.

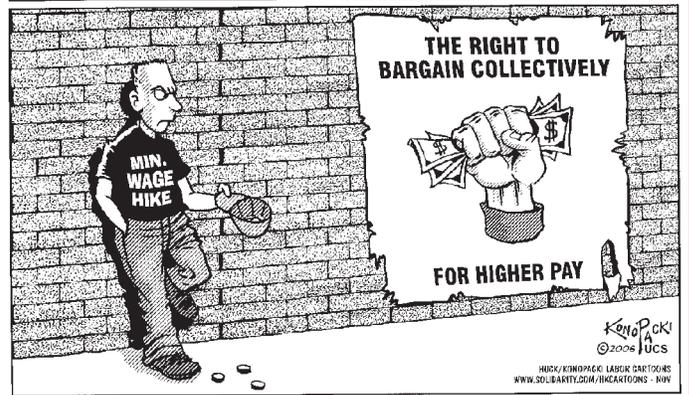
In Indiana the re-taking of the State House by the Democrats means we no longer have to worry about "right to work for less" legislation.

In Illinois the Democrats enjoy a super-majority in the State Senate and increased their majority in the State House. This is especially important because in 2007 the Legislature will again

take up Telecom Reform. The way this turns out will have a direct effect on the members of Local 21 who work for AT&T. Our Union intends to be an active participant in this process and has already begun planning our position.

Brothers and Sisters, we must hold the Democrats' feet to the fire to ensure our jobs and working conditions are not diminished. You hold the key to success, by simply writing a post card, an E-Mail, or making a phone call to your legislators when we ask. You can have great influence on the outcome of Telecom Reform in Illinois.

**If America were really a democracy, which would you choose?**



## Election Victory

By Rosetta Shinn, Committee on Political Education



Thanks to all the efforts of IBEW members across the state, the 2006 General Election was a great victory

for labor and for working families. The majority of the IBEW's endorsed candidates won their elections by significant margins statewide.

In a key congressional race, Phil Hare (D-17th) will succeed former Congressman Lane Evans in Washington.

In the Illinois Senate, IBEW members helped re-elect incumbent Senator Deanna DeMuzio (D-Carlinville) and elect David Koehler (D-Peoria) to his first-term. In a number of hotly-contested House races, IBEW support helped to ensure the victories of Representatives Kurt Granberg (D-Carlyle), Michael Noland (D-Elgin) and Dan Kotowski (D-Park Ridge).

During the campaign season, Local 21 officers, members and family members, manned phone banks, participated in labor walks, supported IBEW-endorsed candidates at all levels and got the word out at their work sites.

Our work is not done yet. All of us need to make sure that those elected

remember the commitments they made to the people who elected them. The Telecom Rewrite of 2007 will be a major issue very soon. The people we helped put in office for the first time and our friends who were re-elected need to remember we need their help NOW.

The legislative department and President Kastner wish to thank all of you who gave up your time and talents to help in the general election. No matter what your role was, if union members and their families had not gone to the polls to cast their ballots, this election would have had quite a different outcome. We were successful, let's carry that into 2008.

## Organized Labor Made the Difference

By Dennis McCafferty, Committee on Political Education



**H**ello Sisters and Brothers, I would like to thank the membership and all of our volunteers, especially **Jan Pierce and Shanda Cade**

for your support and all your hard work getting out the vote on Election Day. Be proud of yourselves, none of our success would have been possible without you!

In order to clarify the political realities of the shift in the balance of power created by the new Democratic majorities, let's first start at the state level. The next session of the Indiana General Assembly will begin in January with the Democrats holding a 51-48 majority (with one race still undecided as of press time). What this means to working people like us is that **there is considerably less of a possibility of any anti-worker legislation (such as Right to Work) getting passed.** I say this with a certain degree of confidence because I

know our good friend State Representative Duane Cheney of Portage is now the Chairman of the House Employment and Labor Committee. He will make sure that Right to Work legislation and others like it never see the light of day. Another likely issue is reforming workers' compensation laws. Indiana ranks 48th in the nation, but expect the Republicans and their Chamber of Commerce pals to put up a fight on this one.

As far as Congress is concerned, we know what a friend to labor Congressman Pete Visclosky has been all these years. With a Democratic majority, he is now in line for the chairmanship of the powerful Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee. He will have a tremendous amount of influence in getting real funding for regional projects like the Gary/Chicago Airport and extending the South Shore Line to Lowell and Valparaiso. Just as important, for the first time the **Employee Free Choice Act** will have a genuine chance to pass and go to the Senate for its approval.

A lot of the political pundits are quick to point out that the reason for the ideological turn around in this country was due to dissatisfaction over the war.

That may be true to some extent. It's my belief that it was people like us, working-class people who have gotten fed up with the way we've been treated and have finally stood up to say enough is enough. **Organized labor stepped up big time, Sisters and Brothers, and don't let anyone tell you any different.** We contributed every dime we legally could to worthy candidates and on Election Day in Lake and Porter Counties we had over 300 volunteers out on the streets making sure the job got done.

Our mission was simple: we had to get back to doing the things we do best, educating and mobilizing our members, and then making sure they got out to the polls. We proved to all the haters and doubters that we are still capable of kickin' a little ass when necessary. The leadership of both County parties have wisely taken notice that **Labor is still a force to be reckoned with in our region and that we intend to remain leaders in the fight for political, social, and economic justice.** Thank you for making it all possible and I hope everyone has a safe, joyous and blessed Holiday Season!

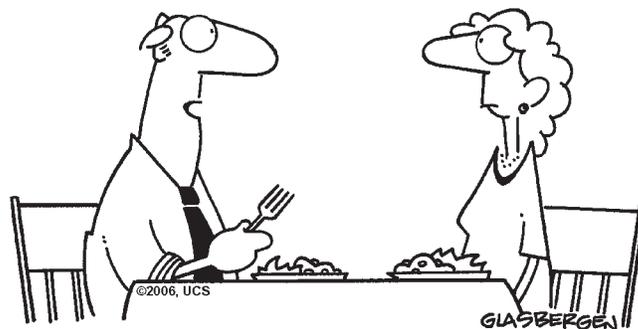
### \* Union Made in the USA \* Apparel from IBEW Local 21

By Tom Hopper, Business Representative

**C**heck out the NEW IBEW Local 21 Union Made in the USA apparel on our Local's website at [www.ibew21.org/resources/shop\\_online.html](http://www.ibew21.org/resources/shop_online.html). Here, you can shop for shirts and blouses, blue jeans, jackets, and more. All items are high quality, union-made, union decorated in the USA, and are provided by the top manufacturers of Union Made in the USA apparel in the industry. You can purchase with a credit card securely via e-commerce.

Purchasing and wearing IBEW Local 21 clothing is a great way to demonstrate solidarity and pride in IBEW membership. It promotes a positive image with the entire union membership, with other workers who are organizing with our local union, with our customers, and in our communities.

Take some time to look around, find something you like, and then spend your hard-earned American dollars the right way – on American-made Union-made products. This is a great way to reward unionized American workers and unionized American companies!



"An amazing thing happened at work today. For 3 minutes, my computer and I were both functional at the same time!"

• • • Mike Cohns is still recovering from his illness. The good news is Mike is planning to return to his duties as a Business Representative as early as possible in 2007.

... **I&R** will no longer pull out of the Addison garage. Ten techs will move to Villa Park where they will continue to cover the Addison I&R work and four techs will be reporting to Schaumburg

... **Total Grace Consumer** welcomes 27 service reps who preferred from **Oak Brook Consumer** when AT&T closed that location on November 30th.



By Chief Stewards Deb Maples & Paul Wright for Michael Cohns, Business Representative

• • • **Downstate** the hot item is the ice storm of early December. The hardest hit areas were Decatur, Springfield, Peoria, and further south to East St. Louis, Alton, and Maryville. This meant overtime and details from people out of town. As *Frontline* goes to press there is talk of another detail from the suburbs going to Downstate. One issue is that the power companies have so many workers in that the motels are all filled up.

... **Vermillion County** should have a contract offer for both the judicial and non-judicial contracts by the end of December. We are waiting on the county to make a determination on insurance packages.



By Jim Foster, Business Representative

• • • My area is experiencing the same problems as every one else: detailing in **C&E**, holiday scheduling in the special service group, and scheduling problems in the C.O.'s. We are meeting with **AT&T** to try and resolve the problems.

...On December 8th final testimony was taken on the Tech of the Future Arbitration, we will then wait for the decision.



...Happy Holidays.

By Dan Gruenich, Business Representative

• • • At **AT&T** 2006 it was not a very good year as far as Marketing was concerned. We were hit with a succession of surpluses wiping out the MSS work force in the Global Customer Care Center at 225 Randolph. The Union believes the company's decision to move this work to Michigan violates the contract and the arbitration is scheduled for December.

...In 2006 I was successful in two of three neutral evaluation hearings. The arbitrator overturned suspensions and awarded back pay. Of the three arbitration cases I participated in I was successful in getting one member's job back.

...2006 was a challenging year here's hoping 2007 will bring better news. Please have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



By Liz Hodges, Business Representative

• • • The **SBC Datacomm** layoff arbitration hearing is over, and we expect the arbitrator's decision some time in the first quarter of 2007. This case is nearly the same as a 2004 case that we won. Here's hoping this arbitrator will see things the same way.

...We had a near miss at **SBC Datacomm** with GPS. One Brother took a month's loss in pay, but we did get him another chance on the job. GPS is on the truck and they know where you are. Remember this the next time you drive too fast or are out of route.

... **Johnson Controls** notified the Union of their intent to install GPS on company vehicles, but they won't turn the system on until the issue is negotiated in the upcoming bargaining for a new three year agreement. Meetings begin in early January.

...Peace on Earth this Holiday Season, and every day.



By Michael Sacco, Business Representative

# S T H E L O C A L . . .

• • • 2006 was a good year at **Comcast**. For the first time since 1998 we are not in negotiations. Our Comcast bargaining unit out of Courtland/Irving Park has doubled in membership, this strength will be needed because their contract expires on May 31st 2007.

...At the **OEMC/911 Center in Chicago** the contract will expire on June 30th 2007. We are encouraged that a fair contract for both groups is in the future, but this won't happen without a lot of hard work and membership solidarity.

...In 2006 we accomplished a lot and as we look forward to 2007 the struggle will continue. Justice in the work place is never easy but as always our solidarity will lead to victory.

...To all members I give you my thanks for your support and your willingness to fight for your rights. Please enjoy this Holiday Season with your friends and families and be thankful for what we all have. God Bless you and your family.

...Solidarity

*By Jerry Rankins, Business Representative*



• • • **Gallatin River Communications** is trying to implement a no smoking on company property policy for all employees, both inside and outside. The Union is trying to negotiate a policy that will make some accommodation for smokers. The contracts should be back from the printer soon.

...At the **Bel-wood Nursing Home** the Union completed the one year wage reopener, and negotiated wages for an additional four years with pay retroactive back to September 26th.

...At **AT&T** the United Way contributions were down compared to last year. We have meetings scheduled already to work on next year in hope of getting more union involvement.

...I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas. In 2007 we want to think of ways to get the members more involved, if you have any suggestions please call me.

*By Vickie Burroughs, Business Representative*



• • • I'd like to start out by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and thank all my Stewards for their hard work and dedication

...For the remainder of 2006 into 2007 we will continue to meet with **AT&T** to resolve the scheduling issues in the DOG group. The arbitration case on this has been postponed while progress is being made but we won't wait long.

...In the **Central Office** world management must have a different contract than we do, because the decisions they are making do not seem to come from the one we use. Oh yeah, honoring past practice is not in their vocabulary either.

*By Steve Tengbladt, Business Representative*



• • • On behalf of Tom Moran, Paul Wright and myself, have a safe and Happy Christmas Holiday.

...**Johnson Controls** bargaining begins in early January.

...The Union and **AT&T** are working on a solution to the scheduling dispute in the special service group. If we can work out an agreement it will be a much better alternative than going to arbitration.

...There are all kinds of problems in the C.O. world; it seems that when the cat's away the mice will play. All the trouble seems to be coming from one renegade area manager who has chosen to ignore years of past scheduling practice. We intend to meet as often as it takes to resolve this problem.

*By Steve Unterfranz, Business Representative*



• • • Thank you for all the support I've received through the year. Have a safe and Happy Holiday, and enjoy time with your family.

*By Kurt Schmidt, Business Representative*



• • • Terry Sheehan, Bill Henne and I would like to wish everyone and their families a Joyous Holiday Season.

...At **Altura** there is an opening for a tech in Sacramento California, while in San Mateo California there is a possibility of a tech being laid off. Somehow I think we will be able to come to an agreement where no one gets laid off.

...This year at **Altura** bargaining, the Union was able to negotiate training for senior techs. It is my understanding the training has begun. Hopefully, everyone has taken care of their 2007 health care open enrollment.

...Some **Verizon** vehicles are having GPS installed; make no mistake about it, this has nothing to do with safety. It has everything to do with the company keeping their eyes on you at all times. Remember don't think you are immune and the boss will never check on you.

...On January 1st 2007 **Gallatin River Communications** wants to impose their "No Smoking Ban."

...As Frontline goes to press, **Citizens/Frontier** has extended the bargaining dates. One item we will be discussing is the company trying to contract-out more work.

...I could take up a whole page on **AT&T** but I will just make a few observations for now. It seems to me, that upper management doesn't communicate with each other or could it be they just don't care? I wonder how C&E techs can be detailed away from their garage only to have I&R techs show up there the next day to work. It must be one of those so called "daily loans."

...Techs in the Central Offices are being forced onto off-hour shifts. This is a case of sometimes we are our own worst enemies. You see off-hour shifts used to be done on a volunteer basis for a specific job. If there was no work available the tech did not do preventative maintenance or clean up work, but some techs cut a deal with the boss in order to remain on an off-hour shift. Now the company feels they have proved the shift in, and the Union is being asked to step in and fix the problem. Some I&R techs are still going into manned C.O.'s and running their own jumpers. If we keep this up we lose even more C.O. techs. Please use your head.

...**AT&T** Asset Protection puts out an "Integrity Bulletin." We are negotiating with the company to have it posted at all locations. This Bulletin should leave no doubt in any Local 21 member's mind that Asset Protection's job is to fire them. They are not your friends, they will try to fire you. Demand a Steward right away.



By Mike McCormick, Business Representative

• • • On the south-side of **Chicago**, there has been detailing from Construction to **I&R**. The company is taking the techs back. Now they are detailing people to other Construction areas, the suburbs and downstate.

...Most of the vacation schedules are complete.

...We are still losing people on GPS issues. When driving watch out for people who have had too much early holiday cheer.

...Customer mistreat is the new bucket for every mistake, or every occasion where the customer is dissatisfied with any part of their service experience, whether or not it was the technician's fault.

...Have a Happy & Safe Holiday Season.

By CJ-Cleveland Johnson, Business Representative



• • • The good news from the **JULIE** group is that everything is going along fine; let's hope 2007 goes the same way

...At Hoffman Estates **NDC** (Dispatch) it's been one hell of a year, some work was lost, and some work was gained, management came and went and when that happens there is always a potential for problems. Thankfully everyone worked together to ease the transition, let's hope 2007 will be more stable. In January 2007 some new local agreements may be rolled out pending an agreement with the company.

...Hoffman **NCSC** (Repair) has seen a new system implemented across 13 states, its called the "work share program." Naturally there have been a lot of complications, but the company has committed to adapting the system to iron out the rough edges.

Finally I'd like to wish a Happy Holiday Season to all

By Melanie Probst, Business Representative



## Politics Make a Difference in Organizing?

By Dave Webster, Business Representative



Over 50 million workers say that they would join a Union if they had a chance, but employers routinely harass, intimidate and coerce workers who try to

exercise their right to form a Union at work.

On April 19, 2005, a bipartisan coalition reintroduced into Congress the historic Employee Free Choice Act (S. 842 and H.R. 1696.) The Act would allow workers to organize by requiring an employer to recognize their wishes through a simple procedure called card check, where a majority of workers in a unit sign authorization cards and they become union. No delayed process like the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election that allows workers to be coerced and intimidated while the employer drags its feet in the process to allow more time to make workers fear for their jobs if they form a Union.

The Act would also stop companies from stalling negotiations by allowing employers or employees to request mediation of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) if no agreement on a first contract has been reached after 90 days of bargaining.

If the FMCS is unable to bring the parties to agreement after 30 days of mediation, the dispute must be referred to binding arbitration. This is important because **in today's climate employers regularly stall negotiations** (almost seven years for our Comcast members) to make workers feel helpless and question their decision to form a Union.

Lastly, the Act would implement **stiffer penalties for employers that break the law** to keep Unions out. Today employers are free to use scare tactics and intimidation to make workers think twice before becoming active in any union movement. There are laws in place, but they have no punitive value. They amount to a scolding and a slap on the wrist at best. ....if you can get workers who are already afraid to provide a statement to the NLRB.

In 2005 it was obvious to all involved, that such legislation would be difficult to

get through the House and the Senate. There would be absolutely no chance of getting King George to sign any bill that could help workers have a voice in the workplace and build strength to elect working family candidates.

With the recent wins by the friends of working families in the 2006 election we have a greater opportunity to get the legislation passed through Congress and to the President's desk. Currently the House Bill sponsored by Rep. George Miller has 215 co-sponsors. The Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy has 43 co-sponsors. Because we all know that Bush is NOT signing such a bill, the 2008 Presidential election is critical. With the right person in the White House we can push the Employee Free Choice Act to the President's desk *and* get a signature to make the law work for working families. With the 2008 Presidential election right around the corner we need to be doing our homework now and decide the best person to represent working families. Politics, as you've heard from our union leadership many times before, is so important to our cause that it affects nearly everything we do, especially organizing!!

## Houston, We Have A Solution

By Nancy North, Area Steward



Texas. Ever since SBC bought Ameritech, we've dealt with the Texas mentality. Surprisingly, I was cheered by a story of hope from, of all places, Houston Texas. It's a story of those who have, reaching out to those who have far, far less. A few years ago the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1 in Chicago took on the challenge of organizing the Houston janitors.

The three year campaign wrapped up in November when the union agreed

on a contract that will double the incomes of most of Houston's 5,300 janitors and provide them with health insurance, paid holidays, and vacations for the first time.

Although the cleaning companies recognized the SEIU as the bargaining agent in the fall of 2005, contract talks bogged down. The union stepped up the pressure and called a strike in October 2006.

Local 1 faced immense challenges. Texas ranks 47th nationally in term of union membership. The workers were part-timers who typically lasted only a few months on the job. Many were Latino immigrants with little experience of labor unions.

Victory was the result of hard work, economic commitment, and some new tactics.

First, the Union worked to gain a foothold among the janitors. Before promoting union membership, organizers spent a year gaining acceptance by the janitors. Because of the high turnover rate, it was difficult to identify those it could count on. Eventually it found about 1,500.

Second, Local 1 had to make a hefty commitment in staff and money. The Chicago Local sent their best people. Teams of Latino janitors went to Houston for months at a time to help with the organizing. The Local also sent teams of Polish-speaking janitors, in hopes they would bond with the Houston janitors.

Since it was taking a year to bargain the first contract, the SEIU set a goal of a \$1 million strike fund and Local 1 put up the first \$250,000. The strike lasted nearly a month and the Union paid them \$100 a week, which was close to their regular salary.

Third, the Union expanded the places where it applied pressure, lobbying the owners of the buildings who hire the cleaning firms. Eventually those owners signaled the cleaning firms they wouldn't drop their contracts if the Union won pay raises for the janitors. The Union also contacted tenants directly. They explained to major companies about contracts with cleaning firms in other cities. It warned those firms that the Houston janitors would walk out.

The organizing effort ending with a signed contract cost Local 1 and other SEIU locals several million dollars. A key theme was that improving the janitors' lot would be good for both the workers and the city. *The Houston Chronicle* editorial summed it up best, "Living in Houston can, and should be a guarantee that hard work will be rewarded with dignified treatment and a living wage."

## It's Time to Think About Your Retirement

By Rosetta Shinn, E-Board member Unit 6 & E-Board Recording Secretary

Recently Scarborough Alliance put on a retirement seminar in the Pekin and Springfield area. This company provides the official plan of the IBEW and only handles union members. As I sat in the presentations it really hit me hard that another chapter of our lives was about to unfold. Time has passed quicker than I realized. I can remember listening to my father who was a UAW official talk about union-company battles. I have pictures of my daughter as a small child walking the picket line with me, in the 1983 strike at Illinois Bell. Now I have pictures of my grandchildren on the line during an informational picket. It's true time stops for no one.

Many of us will be making decisions regarding our retirement in the next few days, months, or years. It's never too early to become informed. John Laughlin, a Financial Consultant and Regional Manager gave an excellent presentation. I've been to presentations from other financial companies and this was the best I've seen. John spoke English to all of us, and made things easy to understand.

Within a week of the meeting I had a "Retirement Goal Plan" mapped out for myself. It is 38 pages of personalized information that I need to make my decision on retiring. It answered questions. "Can I retire now?" "Will there be enough money for the rest of my life to live on?" Young members may not be thinking about this now, but you should. I'm glad someone explained the company match stock program that the Union negotiated when I was a new hire. I would have never been able to save as much as I have on my own.

If you haven't been to a Scarborough meeting, you should. Ask your steward, "When can we have this in our area?" This plan lets you borrow from it with no penalty. I haven't seen this in any other plan. Say I need money to remodel my house, I can borrow from my plan and pay myself back with interest. Many of us will be making life changing decisions sooner than you think regarding our retirement. Be informed, go to one of Scarborough's meetings.



## Another Year in Trade Union History

By Michael Sacco, Business Representative

I'm privileged to be part of the group that trains our new stewards. I talk about the history of workers and unions. I also point out that we make Labor History every day on the job working under a union contract.

As part of my reflection on the year 2006, I looked back at the events of 2004. I'm amazed how people don't learn from their own history.

In 2006 **SBC Datacomm** did another illegal layoff, this time disrupting 34 families instead of the 16 from 2004. We grieved and arbitrated the 2004 layoff and won in 2005. We're doing the same thing this year and I expect that we'll win again.

New for this year is an illegal layoff by **Johnson Controls** of 4 workers in the Chicago REAC. A violation we're heading to arbitration on, and an illegal action that sets a bitter tone for the

bargaining we begin on a new contract in January 2007.

The grievance process is still broken at **AT&T** and all of us are still upset about it. Management complains that people just don't seem to want to go the extra mile for the customer and the company. I say DUH! This place sucks to work at. It's not fun and it is more stressful than ever. Most people are thrilled to leave at the end of the day and still have a job!

On the flip side, a few people continue to "lay themselves off" by not learning from the past. Some still think they can lie, cheat and steal and keep a job. Some think they can be "occasional employees" with chronic tardy and attendance problems. Others think the company isn't paying attention to what they do on their computer and GPS-monitored vehicle. Still wrong on all counts. Again I say, do what you're supposed to do and be where

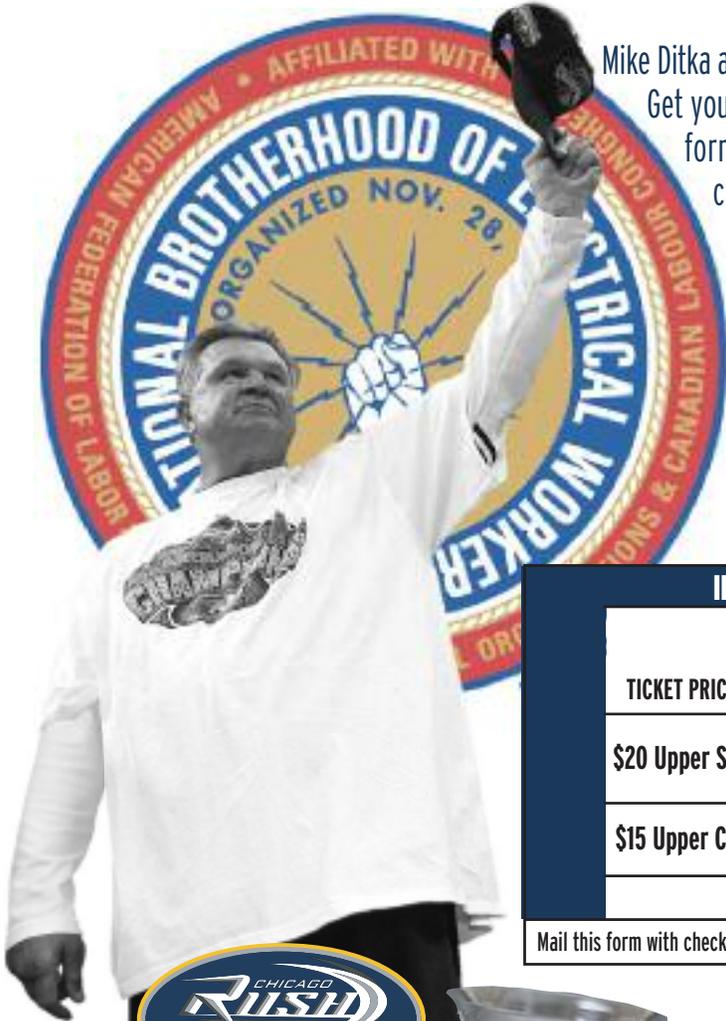
you're supposed to be and we can overcome just about any discipline that happens.

Finally, one piece of history that has changed regards **our government**. When I wrote in 2004, Bush and his cronies had stolen another election. This year the outlook is brighter as some balance has been returned to our political process with the Democrats now being the check on the worst excesses of this criminal government.

Do I believe the Dems are saviors? Far from it. I understand that until big money is taken out of elections and we publicly finance them, the system will always cater to the rich and privileged. Still, I'm hopeful that the ignored agenda of working families, languishing for 12 years, will finally be addressed.

Have a safe and joyous holiday.  
Peace on Earth.

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## CONGRATULATIONS LOCAL 21 RETIREES

### February 2006

Linda Kalata

### May 2006

Stan Kucharski

### June 2006

Jeff Bagin

### July 2006

Clarence Reiley

Dan Yatsko

Janet Niebrand

Daniel Murillo

### August 2006

Leslie McClain

Jim Stolz

Enrique Arauso

### September 2006

Barbara Melton

Loiann Waters

Raymond Konopka

Cynthia Murphy

John Murphy

John Meehan

Michael Heminger

Ronald Silk

### October 2006

David Palm

Charles Plovich

### January 2007

Larry Pfeiffer



## Another View: The Ungodly Pensions of CEOs

by Jim Hightower

Corporate America is fast implementing a two-tiered retirement system: a platinum-level plan for the top executives, and a dirt level plan for all of you riff-raff below.

There's even a term for the platinum pensions reserved for the corporate elite: "Top Hat" plans, they're called. But while the CEOs are feathering their own nests with multimillion-dollar annual pension payments, they're working double-time to destroy the retirement nest eggs of millions of their rank-and-file workers.

Leading this pension-busting movement is the Business Roundtable, a lobbying front made up of the CEOs of America's 400 largest and richest corporations. The Roundtable wails that its members simply can no longer be expected to pay the middle-class pensions that they negotiated—supposedly in good faith—with workers. Roundtable members say that workers must "take responsibility" for their own retirement accounts, rather than expecting the corporation to come through for them.

The Business Roundtable is also

leading another minging effort to downsize the "golden years" of America's working class. It has been an enthusiastic backer of George W's push to privatize our Social Security program. The top honcho of the Roundtable has grandly declared that its members will spend what it takes to switch Social Security to private pension accounts.

The CEOs want everyone's retirement to be at the mercy of the market...except theirs, of course. Consider such Roundtable members as Home Depot, IBM, ExxonMobil, Pfizer, Coca-Cola, Prudential, and GE. The CEOs of these giants are to get corporate-guaranteed pension payments of more than \$2 million a year.

The attitude of these CEOs is summed up by ExxonMobil. Its executive suite at corporate headquarters is known as the "God Pod." To keep track of the hypocrisy of these false gods—and to help bring them down to earth—go to [www.paywatch.org](http://www.paywatch.org).

—Jim Hightower is a nationally syndicated radio commentator and bestselling author.

**Information Alert** Members must be in good standing for 10 consecutive years with IBEW Local 21 (or former Locals 165, 188, 336, 383, or 399) immediately preceding their retirement in order to receive a retirement from the Local Union. These members must be severing their employment with the employer. Stewards, Area Stewards, Chief Stewards, and Business Reps can request applications by calling Nancy Kopydlowski at the union office 630 960-4466 X234.

# UNIT MEETINGS 2007

## JANUARY

### **Unit 1**

Thursday, January 11, 7 PM  
Irish-American Heritage Center  
4626 N. Knox Ave.  
Chicago IL  
773 282-7035

### **Unit 2**

Tuesday, January 9, 7 PM  
Lansing American Legion Post #697  
18255 Grant St.  
Lansing IL  
708 474-5906

### **Unit 3**

Thursday, January 18, 7 PM  
IBEW Local # 364  
6820 Mill Rd.  
Rockford IL  
815 398-6282

### **Unit 4**

Wednesday, January 10, 7 PM  
Lemont VFW  
15780 New Ave.  
Lemont IL  
630 257-9859

### **Unit 5**

Wednesday, January 17, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #146  
3390 N. Woodford St.  
Decatur IL  
217 877-4604

### **Unit 6**

Tuesday, January 16, 5:30 PM  
IBEW Local # 193  
3150 Wide Track Dr.  
Springfield IL  
217 544-3479

### **Unit 7**

Monday, January 15, 7 PM  
Alton Sports Tap  
3812 College Ave.  
Alton IL  
618 465-2539

## FEBRUARY

### **Unit 1**

Thursday, February 8, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #21 Conference Center  
1307 W. Butterfield Rd. Suite 424  
Downers Grove IL  
630 960-4466

### **Unit 2**

Tuesday, February 13, 7 PM  
Gaelic Park Banquet Hall  
6119 W.147th St.  
Oak Forest IL  
708 687-9323

### **Unit 3**

Thursday, February 15, 7 PM  
Gurnee American Legion  
749 Milwaukee Ave.  
Gurnee IL  
847 244-9282

### **Unit 4**

Wednesday, February 14, 7 PM  
American Legion Harwood Post #5  
705 S. Larkin  
Joliet IL  
815 725-4333

### **Unit 5**

Wednesday, February 21, 7 PM  
VFW Post #630  
1303 E. Main St.  
Urbana IL  
217 367-4197

### **Unit 6**

Tuesday, February 20, 5:30 PM  
IBEW Local # 193  
3150 Wide Track Dr.  
Springfield IL  
217 544-3479

### **Unit 7**

Monday, February 19, 7 PM  
American Legion Post #141  
916 Main St.  
Mt Vernon IL  
618 242-4561

## MARCH

### **Unit 1**

Thursday, March 8, 6 PM  
IBEW Local #134  
600 W. Washington  
Chicago IL  
312 474-4186

### **Unit 2**

Tuesday March 13, 7 PM  
Slovak Club  
6920 Broadway.  
Merrillville IN  
219 756-5101

### **Unit 3**

Thursday, March 15, 7 PM  
Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites  
495 Airport Rd.  
Elgin IL  
847 488-9000

### **Unit 4**

Wednesday, March 14, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #145  
1700 52nd Ave. Suite A  
Moline IL  
309 736-4239

### **Unit 5**

Wednesday, March 21, 7 PM  
American Legion Post #979  
4501 S Airport Rd.  
Bartonville IL  
309 697-2432

### **Unit 6**

Tuesday, March 20, 5:30 PM  
IBEW Local # 193  
3150 Wide Track Dr.  
Springfield IL  
217 544-3479

### **Unit 7**

Monday, March 19, 7 PM  
IBEW Local # 309  
2000A Mall St. (Rte 157)  
Collinsville IL  
618 345-5112

Information about attending your closest Local 21 Union meeting can be obtained by contacting the Union office at 630-960-4466 or ask your Steward.

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