



IBEW LOCAL UNION 21

# FRONTLINE

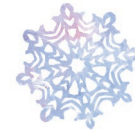
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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Paul Wright – President , Business Manager, Financial Secretary



## Another Important Year

Congratulations go out to Marissa Leezer, Patricia Griffin and the many other award recipients from our City of Chicago and Lake County Indiana 911 Centers. It is wonderful to see their work ethic and dedication

recognized in such a way. Especially amidst all of the turmoil our members in these vital centers face every day.

Sadly some of that turmoil is born from the very bureaucracy created by their employers. A good example would be our ongoing attempt to reach an agreement on a new contract with the City of Chicago after almost 24 months of bargaining. Please read the articles in this issue about our members working in these lifesaving jobs and our other heroic members.

This year our Local faced many challenges from surpluses to contract negotiations and litigation in multiple jurisdictions. This isn't something new. What is new are the advantages being given to advance the corporate agenda by the right wing political party.

People often say they don't want to discuss politics because it is a personal subject. I can somewhat agree with their opinion. It is personal and I take it that way too. I do take it personally when all of the hard work, sacrifices and our dues paying member's money is seemingly flushed down the toilet because of a biased political appointment. This person wasn't elected to that position of authority. They were recommended and "paid for" by individuals looking to destroy your collective voice and the power of our Union and our membership.

Right now there is a truly diabolical secondary scheme behind the stacking of appointments to the high courts. There is a clear agenda to force anti-worker, anti-middle class lawsuits into and through the lower courts to get them to the high court so the out of touch upper class fat cats get favorable rulings. Yep, your damn right I take that personally. You should too.

Our Constitution is bigger than any one person or one party. Its language was not meant to be subverted by a single person or a party agenda. It was most certainly not meant to restrict the rights of citizens to fight for what is right. Hell, there were no corporations to have a voice

back then. So how is it today that corporations think their voice is the one that should be heard? The answer is easy, corporate greed and power. If our rights are for sale and the corporations hold all the money, the workers beg. I take that damn personally as well.

Enough is enough. No more excuses. The once great party of honest men like Abraham Lincoln is dead. Business Representative Mike Grindle often references this quote from Lincoln, who was a Republican; *"And, inasmuch [as] most good things are produced by labour, it follows that [all] such things of right belong to those whose labour has produced them. But it has so happened in all ages of the world, that some have laboured, and others have, without labour, enjoyed a large proportion of the fruits. This is wrong, and should not continue. To [secure] to each labourer the whole product of his labour, or as nearly as possible, is a most worthy object of any good government."*

I think you can tell that I appreciate Mike's point of quoting Abraham Lincoln. I appreciate that he takes it personally when bureaucrats of today attempt to wrap themselves in the glory of great leaders while they attempt to destroy the very values and laws that Lincoln arguably died protecting.

You see, it isn't that I am a left wing socialist trying to screw old glory. It is that I am a worker who is fighting to protect and expand the rights of workers like us. I take it personally when people sit on the sidelines only to tell us in the labor movement what is wrong with what we are attempting to do and then acknowledge, sometimes with great pride that they vote for and with the people and party looking to destroy the worker protections granted under the law.

2020 is an important election year. We as union members have suffered too many losses in the past 3 years. Please get out there and vote and vote for the candidates who are willing to vote to protect your rights as a worker. Don't get fooled by some carpet bagger or snake oil salesmen. Ask them about their positions on worker's rights legislation and ask them to prove it.

Remember "Right to Work" is Wrong and when I talk politics your rights as workers are paramount. May you and your love ones have a safe and blessed new year.

## Excellence and Compassion on the Job

We're at the end of another year full of changes, big changes like headcount reductions - you know - people. We are all aware that technology outpaced our once bountiful membership. There have been constant reductions in every facet of our jobs, our union members, and management alike. Unfortunately, we are losing people from both ends of the seniority list.

Currently we're experiencing a rare respite but we wonder what's next? What is next is what we are going to do about it; we must keep on working and excelling at our jobs so it is more difficult for our employer to find reasons to cut our Sisters and Brothers out of their jobs. We adapt like we always have, through changes in every facet of our jobs.

All of you should take pride in your efforts. While we all see this ugly scenario taking place, I am very proud about what our members do without hesitating. Once again this year a large number of IBEW 21 members are giving of themselves. In central Illinois our centers are unrelenting in their decades long commitment to help clothe, feed and bring smiles to the truly suffering.

We don't crumble - we help. We don't complain - we show compassion. Yet again, this year we are providing food, clothing, toys and more importantly happiness and hope to those in need. Our members in centers in Peoria, Rock Island, Springfield and many Brothers and Sisters throughout our expansive workplaces are there with a smile. In many cases these efforts are shared by IBEW 21 members and AT&T management in unison. It is truly an awesome commitment and rewarding for all involved.

I actually started write about a totally different message but I kept coming back to this truth. We will survive and do well because of what we do and who we are. We're resilient, caring and compassionate. I realized a long time ago; we are really the ones receiving the gifts.

I am very proud to be part of such a family.



By Bill Henne - Vice President, Assistant Business Manager



## Somebody's Watching You

Our Local recently completed **CenturyLink** bargaining. Dave Cottral, Kevin Hiser, Mike Scime and I were all part of this negotiating team. I'd like to thank everyone for working diligently during this process. While this is a

small group of members, less than 20, 94% showed up to vote and overwhelming approved the contract.

Recently I've noticed an increase in discipline cases involving GPS tracking at some employers, namely AT&T, CenturyLink and Frontier. These systems are not new to our industry and have evolved dramatically. Besides being installed in many company vehicles they can be found in many cellular devices and electronic testing devices we use.

Your employers have the ability to watch everywhere you go during your work schedule. Management can tell when you're in or out of route, sitting too long at company facilities or if you don't show up at customer locations. This information can be retained indefinitely and can be used to discipline you. Some of the more severe cases we see involve employees who are accused of theft of time. This charge when proven, is difficult to defend. Usually, arbitrators side with an employer when it comes to theft, even theft of time.

Understand that GPS monitoring is here to stay; employers know it is effective when tracking employees. Knowing that you are being watched and your every move is being tracked, make sure you are where you are supposed to be doing what you are supposed to be doing.





## Hello Mrs. Sunshine

They say change comes quickly, even at Local 21. This year we lost two long time employees; we were sad to see them leave us but Barb Kossak and Rita Petersen are in a better place.... Retirement! Ironically, they both started in 1998.

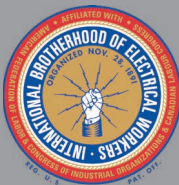
Barb was our long time dues clerk for members not employed by AT&T. She also worked on steward trainings, mailings and setting up our 77 union meetings every year as well as organizing our Great America ticket discounts. The title she most proudly held was Enforcer! If anything could be recycled, she made sure it found its way to the right bin and after work she would even drive items to recycling facilities. My favorite conversations with her concerned my bad recycling habits. I owe her a big thank you for making me more conscientious about my recycling and we all owe Barb a thank you for making our planet a greener place.

Rita was part of our Bell family before joining the Local 21 staff. She started as a service representative at Illinois Bell and was a member of the Commercial Telephone Workers' Union. Few know that she was the influential force when the CTWU voted to join the IBEW. She told me the story about the time she met with CWA representatives when they were pushing for her people to join them. She was none too impressed and with her sharp

tongue told them to "hit the bricks," those are the only words fit for publication! She went on to become the Vice-President of IBEW Local 188. She was instrumental in organizing our office staff with UFCW Local 881. Rita said, "I worked union my whole life, there's no reason we shouldn't be union in this place too."

We welcome our newest ray of sunshine, Kim Antonio. She brings her many years of experience in accounts payable to our staff. Kim is in charge of payroll and making sure all of our bills are paid on time, she's our new "Rita." Kim is married with one son and happens to be the sister of our AT&T dues clerk, Jean Sullivan. It's often hard taking over for someone who's been a staple at an organization but she has already brought a new energy and spirit to our office. She is always smiling and you never know what may come out of her mouth that makes you shake your head. With lofty goals for her new job, Kim is aiming to put the fun back into dysfunctional. To say I'm worried would be an understatement. While change is good, she continues Rita's policy; if you don't get your payroll or expenses in on time you're NOT getting paid!

We wish Rita and Barb well and hope that Kim enjoys a long career with us. With any luck she will be here just as long as both of them and I can read about her retirement in a future edition of *Frontline*. I'm hoping I'm not the one writing about her, if so that means something went wrong and I'm not enjoying my retirement!



Every year over 800,000 children go

# MISSING

The IBEW has partnered with the National Child Identification Program to help members if their child goes missing by purchasing Child Identification Kits.

Tragedy strikes when we are least prepared. If a child goes missing, the IBEW is determined to help our members. The ID kit contains a fingerprint medical information DNA card, applicator and storage envelope, which you can give to law

Contact Bob Przybylinski 630 960-4466 ext.477 [bobp@ibew21.org](mailto:bobp@ibew21.org)

## It Starts Now!

Your IBEW 21 Political Department (COPE) is already hard at work for 2020, gearing up for what we anticipate being the most intense Election year that many of us will ever witness. There is much to do and the time to get started is now!

E-Board members Devon Jennings, Sue Elder and I attended a conference hosted by our International geared toward implementing the many GOTV (Get Out the Vote) tools available at our disposal to maximize member participation in the political process. Seminars and webinars have been set up to ramp up Voter Registration, direct mailings, door to door canvassing, phone banking, volunteerism and mobilization. If we as working people, most especially UNION members, are going to turn our economy and Country around, it has to start at the ballot box!

In Indiana, the Northern Indiana Area Labor Federation has partnered with both the National and Indiana State AFL-CIO's in launching the "Path to Power" initiative. We are recruiting and assisting Union members to not only run for office but to WIN. Nothing has been more frustrating through the years than to find very worthy candidates who are not rewarded on Election Day only because of the (D) or (R) next to their names. This cycle has to stop and we believe that the "P2P" program will help us achieve that goal. This past election cycle we were able to elect 13 Union members to local and municipal offices, and this is just the beginning. We will be making a major expansion to the program next year and I truly believe the sky is the limit, but only if we get engaged!

Sisters and Brothers, through the leadership of Organized Labor all over this great Country of ours, working people are not just fighting back against the

powers that be but we are winning! We need to use our collective voices and fighting spirit to take back what is rightfully ours. It's there for the taking folks, let's show those who think our best days are behind us that they couldn't be more wrong!

If you want to be part of this historic effort, please contact me at (708) 227-0973 or by email: [dmac@ibew21.org](mailto:dmac@ibew21.org) to find out how.

### Lake County 911 Center

You'd be hard pressed to find a group of more caring, dedicated and compassionate professionals than our Sisters and Brothers employed at the Lake County 911 Dispatch Center. They demonstrate every day the value they bring to serving the public and trust me when I say, their heroic efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Back in April, the Lake County Commissioners recognized the group by proclaiming it Public Safety Communicator Week. Then in September, State Representative Lisa Beck (HD 19- Crown Point) paid tribute with a visit to the Center where she presented a State flag that had been flown over the Capital Building during the last legislative session for display in the call room. Take care and GOD Bless!



Lake County 911 members are honored during Public Safety Communicator Week.



## Five Real Superheroes

When you see an IBEW 21 technician, most people only see a repairman, installer or a service person. They wear uniforms and badges. They don't have S's on their chest or capes on their backs. They carry

a pair of snips, wear hardhats and carry ladders on their shoulders. The public doesn't know they are selfless, chivalrous, real life unsung heroes of IBEW 21. I am proud to be able to honor them by sharing their stories

Our first hero is Brother William Rodriguez, and at the time, he was a Franklin Park Premises Technician. One morning while working at a fiber X-box in Chicago he heard excessive moaning. He decided to investigate and found an elderly woman on the floor of a second-floor balcony. William rushed toward the woman and noticed she was hemorrhaging at her head. He immediately called 911. The woman only spoke Polish so William went beyond the call of duty and contacted a fellow tech Andrzej Jankowski, who spoke Polish to help calm her down until help arrived. The paramedics and police had no idea how long the woman had been struggling for help, but if William had ignored her cries, her outcome could have been devastating. As she was being wheeled into the ambulance, she was crying, smiling and waving to William.

Our next hero is Brother Noah Arroyo, a Customer Systems Technician in Lyons. Some call Noah a guardian angel. He's been in the right place at the right time three times. The first story takes place in 2001 when he was working at a building that caught fire and exploded. Noah ran over and saw a man sitting on the floor joists trapped under a chair. Noah was hesitant but approached the man nevertheless. He told him he would need his help to get them out of there. The man stood up but as they began to move across the floor, the man collapsed onto Noah, almost causing them both to fall through the floorboards. Somehow, Noah got the strength and adrenaline to pick the man up and get them both to safety, saving both of their lives.

A few years later in Joliet Noah was on the front porch answering a customer's questions about the work he just finished. It was then he happened to look down Ruby Street and caught a glimpse of a baby stroller being pushed by a toddler. It caught his attention because the child's parents were not around and the stroller was heading into oncoming traffic. Without thinking Noah sprinted so fast that his customer couldn't keep up! Noah saved the toddler just before it was in the middle of the busy street and then contacted the police who took care of the child.

Noah's most recent story of heroism won him AT&T's Theodore N. Vail Award and a Letter of Commendation from the La Grange fire department. On the first day of December 2017 Noah pulled up to the corner of Brainard and Bell Avenue where he spotted kids hovering over a jogger. At first, he thought they were messing with the runner, until he noticed the woman's feet were horizontal. This was a red flag indicating she was unconscious. He pulled over and the woman's son told Noah his mom collapsed. Noah checked her vitals. She had no pulse, wasn't breathing and was already getting cold. He told the kids to call 911 and began performing CPR and chest compressions to get her breathing again. At that moment, an off duty nurse came to assist Noah. Soon a paramedic in training who happened to have breathing equipment with him saw the scene and the three of them worked together and were able to keep her breathing until the ambulance arrived. She lost consciousness and the paramedics used a defibrillator to resuscitate her. Because of their heroic actions she made a full recovery. Today she is with her family; she and Noah are Facebook friends, all because of his willingness to assist a total stranger.

Our third hero is Brother Ray Hernandez a Harvey TFS technician who was working on a pole early one morning when he heard a loud argument in yard a few doors away. Starting to feel a little uneasy, he felt it best to remove himself from a potentially dangerous situation. So he descended the pole and was in the process of putting his ladder on his truck when suddenly a man approached him screaming, "Call 911, this guy just stabbed me!"

Ray immediately dialed 911 and discovered that the man was bleeding from his neck. He instinctively grabbed towels to help control the bleeding when the victim made an unusual request. The man asked Ray to help him call his mother because he was afraid he was going to die right there in that alley. He needed her to know that he loved her. Not knowing if the assailant was still in the vicinity, Ray very bravely and unselfishly dialed and held the phone for the victim and comforted him until help arrived.

Our last heroes are Brothers Tom Morrissey, Jr. and Rich Browne. While on a routine construction assignment with their Hammond, IN. crew, they went above and beyond to save the life of a distraught woman who attempted suicide. Tom was carrying his lashing equipment back to the truck when a coworker called his attention to a whimpering woman slumped on her back porch across the street. She appeared to be wounded. Tom approached her, asking if she was okay.

He discovered that the woman recently lost custody of her son, and in her distress stabbed herself. When Tom saw the knife handle protruding from her abdomen, he immediately dialed 911 and asked her to stay put. Ironically, that emergency call was answered by another IBEW 21 member from the Lake County 911 Dispatch Center. Beside herself with grief, the woman became sullen and crawled back into her house, closing the screen door behind her.



Noah Arroyo receives the Vail Award.

Rich arrive just in time to watch the incident unfold; he ran to the door to assist the woman as Tom gave information to call taker. Once inside, the woman tried hurting herself even more, but Rich managed to keep her attention by talking her down until authorities arrived. Tom and Rich were lauded by paramedics, who were certain that the woman's suicide attempt would have been successful if they had not intervened. Tom and Rich were awarded AT&T's Theodore N. Vail Award in recognition of their quick efforts and ability to work effectively in an emergency.

The definition of a "hero" is a person who is admired or idolized for courage, outstanding achievements or noble qualities. When people in the community see the men and women of IBEW 21, they aren't just seeing the person who is going to fix their phone line or install TV services, this could be the person who saves your life and doesn't think twice about it. We may not look like Marvel or DC comic heroes with meta human hammers or magic flowing through our veins, but we all have the power inside us, to do what is right. So, we want to thank our heroic Brothers William, Noah, Ray, Tom and Rich.



Richard Browne and Tom Morrissey and their Families





## City of Chicago 911 OEMC Members Achieve National Honors

Our Union recognizes that its IBEW 21 members are the best at performing their job duties as emergency call-takers and dispatchers. We're proud

to have two of our **Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC)** members recognized by the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) as the best amongst their colleagues in the Nation.

We congratulate Sisters **Marissa Leezer** and **Patricia Griffin** for their extraordinary accomplishments. I am very proud to represent these two remarkable women and all of our OEMC members.

The APCO recognized Marissa and Patricia's skills to work through periods of high call volumes in a wide variety of emergency situations. They acknowledged their ability to communicate with callers to obtain accurate and essential information necessary to establish priority and initiate a timely response to emergency calls to ensure a successful outcome.

Our Sister PCO II Dispatcher, Marissa Leezer was awarded the **2019 APCO National Telecommunicator Award**. Sister Leezer has been an OEMC dispatcher since June 2001.

OEMC Executive Director Rich Guidice said, "To have staff recognized at all levels is truly remarkable, and OEMC is proud to have such outstanding employees dedicated to helping residents, visitors and first responders during emergencies."

Sister Patricia Griffin PCO II Dispatcher received the **APCO 2019 Illinois Telecommunicator of the Year Award**. According the City of Chicago press release Patricia, "began her career as a Chicago Police Dispatcher in September 1995. Her past achievements, which include multiple awards of merit and team performance honors, are a testament to her exceptional performance and devotion to duty."

Sister Griffin appears on our *Frontline* cover, receiving her award.

We're equally as proud of our Police Communications Operators I/II, Alternate Response System, and Aviation Communications Officers whose hard work, dedication and leadership were recognized at the Telecommunications Week Awards Ceremony at the OEMC. IBEW 21 is proud to say your commitment to assist us in times of need keeps us all safe. Thank you for your dedication and hard-work and congratulations to all of the recent OEMC retirees.

### City of Chicago Unit II Contract Negotiations

On December 31st it will be two years since the eighteen month OEMC contract extension expired. Frankly, it's not unusual for City of Chicago contract negotiations to drag on for over two years. Negotiations have been highly contentions. The City is seeking to move our membership backwards with their concessionary proposals. The biggest regressive proposal concerns compensatory time. The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) gives our members an option to take cash or to bank worked overtime hours at the appropriate overtime rate. The CBA allows the accrual of unlimited compensatory time until October 16th at that time the employee must decide if they want a cash payout or to retain eighty hours of their compensatory time. The City negotiators are demanding the elimination of accrued compensatory time on all worked overtime. Your Union bargaining team has been holding firm on any regressive changes to the current agreement.

### Transfer of ARS to OEMC

We served notice to OEMC management demanding to bargain the decision and the effects in what appears to be an attempt to dismantle the Alternate Response System (ARS) from the jurisdiction of IBEW 21. We are fighting to protect the jurisdiction of the work for our members. The job duties primarily consist of writing police reports and call taking. IBEW 21 captured the jurisdiction of this work in 2015, under the title of Police Communications Operator I (PCO 1). We expect a resolution to this dispute will not come swiftly. We will keep you posted.

*continued on next page*



## Working Hard

### For members at Altura:

We are still awaiting a determination from the NLRB on our charge(s) against Altura, on which the Union has prevailed so far. Your leadership understands the frustration rising to peak levels as this process has unfortunately dragged on for years. This is a stark reminder to us all that elections have consequences; since 2017 the NLRB has been under the control of anti-union forces appointed by a Republican president.

### For members at Avaya:

Congratulations on ratifying a new, 2-year contract extension. Members have all received detailed summaries of the extension, including information on negotiated pay increases. If you have questions about the new terms please contact the Union office.



### For members at AT&T:

As of this writing, we are in the midst of the final steps of the surplus process which began with AT&T's notification of job cuts back in June. During the process, the Union worked hard to mitigate the full effects of the company's actions, including negotiating to lower the numbers announced as surplus.

After over a year of on and off discussions with the company, AT&T has announced plans to bring stand-alone DTV work to IEFS from the contractors, helping to strengthen job security for Prem Techs.

We recently agreed to a trial with AT&T to allow management to open up installation windows for some bonded-pair installs to be scheduled on Saturdays for what was TFS. The trial has been going well, and has meant increased job security for technicians in TFS.



## OEMC Members Achieve National Honors (continued)

### Comcast Contract Negotiations

The Comcast West contract expired September 30, 2019. Not much progress has been made so far. In light of the lack of progress, both parties feel that the current negotiations will not be as prolonged as they have been in past negotiations. The first agreement with Comcast took seven years. The commitment made by our Comcast bargaining unit members to stand in solidarity with their negotiating committee puts pressure on the company to bargain in good faith. Ultimately a fair agreement will be achieved. Our proposals consist of a living wage, better benefits, working conditions, and the hiring of more employees in the classifications.

At Comcast this year grievances have been reduced tremendously, we are attributing this to internal changes made by both parties (Company and Union) to seek resolutions through transparency and better dialogue.

## Downstate Negotiations

I am currently in negotiations with **Vermillion County** for both the Judicial and Non-Judicial contracts. We are making progress, but there are a few issues left

to discuss. **Gardenview Manor** negotiations continue to be difficult due to the high turnover rate in management and members. We are still working on the wage opener that is well past due. At **AT&T** we continue to see contractors installing Fixed Wireless Loop in our footprint. The grievance has just been denied at third step, we are currently weighing our options for our next step.



By Byron Bonham - Business Representative



## Very Busy Year

This summer I participated in the negotiations for three IBEW agreements. Members in the **DirectTV Yellow** and **Out of Region** agreement overwhelmingly ratified their new contracts after Local 21 and Representatives from the

International Office and IBEW Locals across the country met in Downers Grove. After weeks of long days and nights we reached new contracts with AT&T.

At the same time **Lake County 911** Emergency Center members were negotiating their contract. The Local 21 bargaining team was composed of Heather, Dennis, Stephanie, Amy, and me. We had many challenges and goals for this second contract and an extremely short window to bargain because Lake County government officials needed to complete their budgets. We reached agreements on pay raises and a new scheduling process with guaranteed days off as well as an increase in

dispatcher staffing. These moves should bring some long overdue help starting in January of 2020.

Across the board, we made plenty of improvements in working conditions in each of these contracts. I am thankful to have been a part of these teams and I look forward to working with you all in the future.

Things at **AT&T** have been eventful this year. There were surpluses and layoffs. As a result, members were transferred into different positions, titles, and locations. Unfortunately, we lost some very good union members. We are currently in the middle of multiple disagreements with AT&T around the fourth quarter automotive equipment technician surplus announcement. Garage consolidations and budget cuts continue to create chaos and dysfunction.

In 2020 we likely will see the lingering effects of AT&T's announcements. We'll be seeing the implementation of contract improvements. In our many work locations, new members will be hired while others are transferred. We'll deal with the new challenges that come. We'll answer the call, face the conflict, and act united because we are UNION.

By Devon Jennings - Executive Board Chairman - Unit 2



## The Fight for Equality

Politics is never anyone's favorite topic, but the Byron Allen vs. Comcast legal case highlights this point. The television mogul and former comedian is suing Comcast for refusing to air his content on their network. This is not Allen's first time suing a network

for denying the use of their platform as a violation of the 14th Amendment which protects against discriminatory practices.

The 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868 to provide African Americans full citizenship and to protect against discriminatory practices. It has since been expanded to other minority groups and now includes protections related to fair housing practices, equal employment opportunities, pay equity, bank loans, education, etc.

The Networks are arguing for the Supreme Court to dismantle the 14th Amendment and its safeguards as a means to undermine and guard against suits such as

Allen's. Networks like Comcast argue that one should have to prove without a reasonable doubt that one has been discriminated against; an almost impossible burden of proof.

This case came before the Supreme Court and gained very little media attention. Heads of government agencies appointed by your state and national elected officials govern laws like these and others that protect union members and their interests. Changes proposed to this Amendment could affect the EEOC, Department of Labor and the National Labor Relations Board which protect employees from discrimination and represent the interests we fight to uphold and defend.

Elections really do have consequences. The recent appointments to the Supreme Court and their ruling in this case could push all minorities even further back from bridging the gap of economic equalization. The Court has already reversed decade's old case law that protected union members and their rulings can jeopardize our fight for a strong inclusive middle class. If we do not fix the problems we have today, our children will pay for them tomorrow.



# Reminiscing

Many many times over the past few years management from many departments and many levels have asked me how to improve morale, how to make it a happier work environment. How to get people to care again. A lot of the time it's after a meeting that led to some form of discipline to one of our members. I always struggle with the answer, trying not to sound condescending in my reply.

A lot has changed in the 30 years I have been with Ma Bell. We used to be a family, everyone cared, and everyone had each other's back. Management looked out for their technicians and their technicians looked out for them. You were allowed to make mistakes and that helped you learn, it helped you become a better technician. It was all about making the customer happy, and if it took all day it took all day. We cared about not missing work, the hook was clean at the end of the day, every day. It was truly for the most part one big happy family, we had our disagreements and fights but at the end of the day it all worked out.

A quick story of the past. When my father died the cemetery was in the area I worked, as I pulled into the cemetery for the gravesite service there were at least 20 company trucks and a few manager coups that got in at the tail end of the procession to the gravesite for the final service. It was overwhelming. A few years later the same thing happened when my mother passed away. Those were the days.



Local 21 hero Ray Hernandez

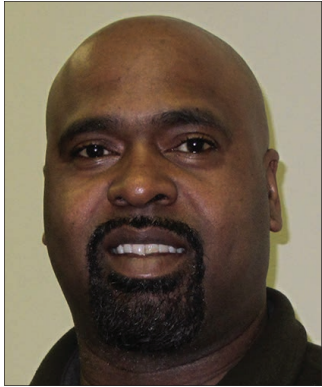
Fast forward to now. If you get hurt you get disciplined, management seems to look for every reason to give you a day off. If you have an accident, they look three days into the past to try to catch you on something. We went from working together and trying to find solutions to everyone worried everyday about whether they will get a day off for forgetting to lock their truck, or forgetting a test or a post call.

And the company actually wonders why morale is bad, I sometimes struggle with what to write in these articles, we all know that the company reads the articles and in fact has mentioned what we write in discipline meetings or dismissal panels. So, it's always a challenge to get a message out. But here is a message that I don't mind them hearing:

If you truly want a relationship with your employees and you care about morale, if you truly want a better work environment then you need to realize that the current way of doing business isn't working. The rush to discipline has not made better techs, it has made techs care less.

As we enter another year please take a moment to remember our friends who have left employment here. Remember the ones who have passed away. Say a prayer for the ones who are battling illness and disease. I hope you were able to take time to celebrate the holidays with your family and friends. And hopefully someone with the power to change things reads this and realizes that there is a better way.





## One Business Rep's Opinion

Hello everyone. Once again I am being asked to add a couple remarks to this fine publication. While this is not in my wheelhouse, allow me to offer a couple of thoughts. But first, let me start with a disclaimer. The

opinions expressed in this article are mine alone and do not necessarily represent the opinions of anyone else at Local 21.

Since this is being written between Thanksgiving and Christmas, I hope everyone had a fun and festive holiday season. I hope everyone has an enjoyable and prosperous new year.

Now, to my thoughts. As I was thinking about what I'd write, I queried the other Business Reps on issues they planned to write about. I didn't want to duplicate what they were going to say. I am sure someone is discussing the reorg that brought IEFS and TFS back together. It's going to be some very interesting times with two different cultures connected at the area manager level. I usually focus on some violation in particular. Drivers' license issues and on/off duty conduct notification issues are down. OP78 is down as well. I was stumped. I considered not writing an article. Then I got a call.

A member wanted to talk about one of their coworkers who they were having trouble with. The coworker wasn't doing their job properly, making errors, etc. and others were having to follow up behind. They didn't want to discuss it with their manager, but didn't want the person to lose their job, however their coworker was aggressive in their conversations with others. The caller said, they were contacting the union hoping we could do something before it gets out of hand. I thanked them for calling me instead of the manager and I told them I would reach out to the coworker and see if I could do anything.



There has been a rash of complaints about coworkers telling on other coworkers recently. I was glad this person didn't. However this isn't the first call like this I have taken. Occasionally I get these calls. Usually management is already involved, and is already investigating something that happened. There are usually accusations of members talking to management. That wasn't the case here. Every time it is a difficult issue to deal with because both people are members. Their stories usually mirror each other. The other person is always the problem. As a Business Representative you don't want things to escalate.

So what I want to say is this, "Remember, Good union members don't tell on their union Brothers or Sisters." I understand the problem. Maybe they didn't do something right or maybe anything at all. Maybe they aren't pleasant to be around or are just a-holes. So what. None of us are perfect. Everybody has a bad day. You never know what someone is going through in their personal lives. We're all here to make a living, to take care of our families. Let's not hurt each other. Even when someone possibly deserves it. Kudos to the person who called me! I will try my best to reach the coworker. Maybe there is something I can do to help them.

Anyway, that's just One Business Reps Opinion!



Congratulations Sister Marissa Leezer you are the best in the Nation. We are extremely proud of you!



# Are You Exercising Your Union Rights?

My last article addressed AT&T's "new definition" for Code of Business Conduct (COBC) Violations. It seems that any mistake made by an employee today is a COBC violation. In the past COBC was reserved for something drastic like theft, violence in the workplace or some other event that is more egregious than simply making a mistake.

With that in mind, let me take a minute to remind everyone to exercise their WEINGARTEN RIGHTS!!! It seems that even the more tenured members in our call centers are forgetting to request a Union Steward during what could be an investigatory meeting. If management asks questions about how you handled a call, your attendance, what happened at work, or if Asset Protection wants to talk to you...You need a Steward! They can be your witness and protection in all of these situations and many others. You **MUST ASK** for your STEWARD.

Weingarten rights guarantee unionized employees the right to Union representation during an investigatory interview. These rights were guaranteed in 1975 by the Supreme Court, in the Weingarten Inc. case. It ruled employees have the right, but they must ask for union representation. The supervisor has no obligation to inform an employee that they are entitled to Union representation.

Look at the wording below. If this discussion **COULD IN ANY WAY LEAD TO** is pretty broad and perhaps a little subjective. Almost any discussion with management **COULD** lead to disciplinary action or cause an effect on your working conditions. The real key is "Without representation present, I choose not to participate in this discussion." Ask for your Union Rep and CLAM UP!



Don't misunderstand your rights. If management calls you into a room, it is a directive and you must go or be in peril of being charged with insubordination. Once in the room you still maintain the right to remain silent until your union representative is present.

Younger, newer members told us they have asked for a Steward, but continued to talk without one present. Now when a manager says that you never asked, you have no witness to say otherwise, so continuing to talk before your Steward is present could be detrimental to your job.

Some members say that they didn't think they needed a Steward, or the supervisor said they didn't need one. First, never assume you don't need a Union Representative. Secondly, don't let any manager tell you what you need when it comes to your rights. If nothing else, you **ALWAYS** need a witness and a note taker in an investigatory meeting. Generally if there are two managers in the room they are there as a witness or note taker for the company.

The two sentences in your Weingarten Rights are very clear. Don't let someone else interpret them. Your part of exercising your rights is to simply say you want Union representation and then stop talking. If management didn't hear you and continues to ask questions, repeat your request and stop talking and wait for your Steward!

Every member should take full advantage of their rights as a Proud Union Member. Your job could depend on it.

IF THIS DISCUSSION COULD IN ANY WAY LEAD TO MY BEING DISCIPLINED OR TERMINATED OR CAUSE AN EFFECT ON MY PERSONAL WORKING CONDITIONS, I RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT MY UNION REPRESENTATIVE, OFFICER OR STEWARD BE PRESENT AT THIS MEETING. WITHOUT REPRESENTATION PRESENT, I CHOOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS DISCUSSION.

**LOCAL 21**  
INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS  
(630) 960-4466

**"WEINGARTEN RIGHTS"**

Under the Supreme Court's Weingarten decision, when an investigatory interview occurs, the following rules apply:

1. The employee must make a clear request for union representation before or during the interview. The employee cannot be punished for making this request.
2. After the employee makes the request, the employer must choose among three options. The employer must either:
  - a. Grant the request and delay questioning until the Union representative arrives and has a chance to consult privately with the employee; or
  - b. Deny the request and end the interview immediately; or
  - c. Give the employee a choice of: (1) having the interview without representation or (2) ending the interview.
3. If the employer denies the request for union representation, and continues to ask questions, it commits an unfair labor practice and the employee has a right to refuse to answer. The employer may not discipline the employee for such a refusal.



## The Game Has Changed

In 2019 we came through one of the biggest layoffs since the first one back in 2002. Members dodged other “expected” layoffs because of the hard work of our Local 21 leadership. The brunt of that

burden has fallen mostly on CWA.

This should be a wake-up call to all of us! AT&T’s business is changing rapidly along a timeline driven as much by advances in technology as it is by customer demands for innovations in communications. Many of us are guilty of still thinking we work for a utility. We must be disabused of that idea. The multi-national company that employs us is now 2/3 an entertainment enterprise. It spent like a sailor in port, with massive corporate takeovers that saddled the company with significant debt.

Now we are the third leg of a bigger corporation. One that has dumped so much money on Springfield and Indianapolis as to render its status free of regulation. Back when I started in I&R a week of rain would generate 3 weeks of overtime, because we had regulations demanding that we restore out of service customers within 24 hours. Well that is no more. The big fiber buildout push ended suddenly in December 2018. Why? The only reason for the massive buildout was the Federal demand that AT&T place fiber past 12 million living units as a requirement to buy DirecTV. The buildout was halted once the 12-millionth home was connected.

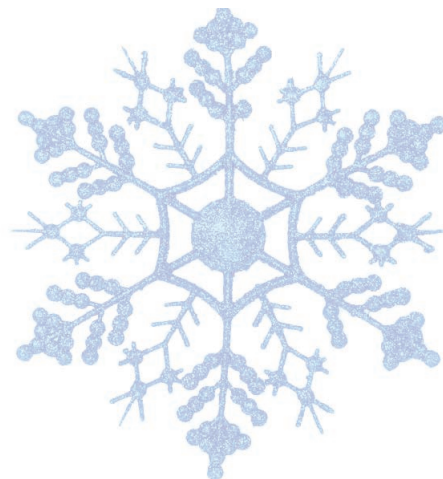
With these changes comes a Culture of Compliance. One could say the company doesn’t care if you can fix a metallic fault, but rather, you were compliant every step of the way. They talk a good game about customer service but are less concerned about your present customer and are more focused on how fast you can get to the next customer.

The same thing applies to safety; the culture to drive down to find the root cause of any incident results in a culture of finding blame. Blame equates to discipline, for the smallest finding of fault. This is shortsighted policy, because employees now think of safety in the context of not getting disciplined, rather than working safely for their own welfare.

When man landed on the Moon, AT&T was the largest employer in America. There were fewer accidents and hardly anyone was disciplined. Today employees are disciplined for rubbing against poison ivy, wasp stings and dog bites. Things nobody does willfully. Still, the company culture is to assign blame. It’s unfair in many regards and I believe it will never deliver the company to the Safety Nirvana it desires.

What are we to do? The lessons are all in the history of our country’s labor movement. Unions were the first ones to demand safety on the job! Call out your employer on the worst idiocy and hypocrisy. But understand the compliance culture. Do not give your managers the low hanging discipline fruit of an unlocked vehicle, a lost or expired driver’s license, or a forgotten pre or post call to a customer or giving only a cursory glance to the Code of Conduct or Tech Expectations.

It’s a dangerous time to be an employee in our industry. In times like these, the company is clearly looking at headcount and all labor costs. But using discipline as a back-door kind of layoff achieves the same thing. So, don’t be complicit in letting the company hang you up with petty discipline. Be smart about the long game and understand how the game has changed.



# UNIT MEETINGS



Get involved—attend an upcoming Union Meeting!

	JAN	FEB	MARCH
<b>UNIT 1</b>	<b>9th - 7 pm</b> Irish American Heritage Center 4626 N. Knox Ave. Chicago, IL 773-282-7035	<b>13th - 7 pm</b> Best Western Hillside 4400 Frontage Rd. Hillside, IL 708-544-9300	<b>12th - 7 pm</b> Gideon Welles 4500 N. Lincoln Ave. Chicago, IL 847-209-1417
<b>UNIT 2</b>	<b>14th - 7 pm</b> Lansing American Legion #697 18255 Grant St. Lansing, IL 708-474-5906	<b>11th - 7 pm</b> Gaelic Park Banquet Hall 6119 W. 147th Oak Forest, IL 708-687-9323	<b>10th - 7 pm</b> Slovak Club 6920 Broadway Merrillville, IN 219-756-5101
<b>UNIT 3</b>	<b>16th - 7 pm</b> IBEW Local #364 6820 Mill Rd. Rockford, IL 815-398-6282	<b>20th - 7 pm</b> Marriott Chicago Northwest 4800 Hoffman Blvd. Hoffman Estates, IL 847-645-9500	<b>19th - 7 pm</b> Gurnee American Legion 749 Milwaukee Gurnee, IL 847-244-9282
<b>UNIT 4</b>	<b>8th - 7 pm</b> Lemont VFW 15780 New Ave. Lemont, IL 630-257-9859	<b>12th - 7 pm</b> IBEW Local#145 1700 52nd Ave. Suite A Moline, IL 309-736-4239	<b>11th - 7 pm</b> Elk's Club 1250 SE Frontage Rd. Joliet, IL 815-744-3355
<b>UNIT 5</b>	<b>15th - 5:30 pm</b> IBEW Local # 538 1290 N. Michigan Ave. Danville, IL 217-442-0996	<b>19th - 6:00 pm</b> U.A.W. Local #974 3025 Springfield Rd. East Peoria, IL 309-694-3151	<b>18th - 7:00 pm</b> IBEW Local #146 3390 N. Woodford St. Decatur, IL 217-877-4604
<b>UNIT 6</b>	<b>21st - 5:30 pm</b> IBEW Local #193 3150 Wide Track Dr. Springfield, IL 217-544-3479	<b>18th - 5:30 pm</b> IBEW Local #193 3150 Wide Track Dr. Springfield, IL 217-544-3479	<b>17th - 5:30 pm</b> IBEW Local #193 3150 Wide Track Dr. Springfield, IL 217-544-3479
<b>UNIT 7</b>	<b>20th - 7 pm</b> Central City Lions Club 107 S Morrison Central City, IL 618-532-9475	<b>17th - 7 pm</b> American Legion Post 365 1022 Vandalia St. Collinsville, IL 618-345-2508	<b>16th - 7 pm</b> IBEW Local #649 4051 Humbert Rd. Alton, IL 618-462-1627



## FRONTLINE



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Comments and articles are welcome and should be sent to the editors. Local 21 reserves the right to edit submissions, and to use items as space allows.

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*Happy  
Holidays*