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Verizon workers voice concerns about sale of landlines and abuse of workers' rights

Hundreds rally for worker justice at shareholders' meeting where employees confront Verizon's board of directors about poor management

Hundreds of Verizon workers and retirees gathered today before the Verizon annual shareholders meeting to show their lack of confidence in management's leadership at the \$88 billion telecommunications giant. Verizon employees at the rally were joined by members of the Steelworkers union and many community supporters.

"Verizon is increasingly out of step with the labor practices of most of the world's telecommunications companies," said Ed Hill, President of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. "By attacking its employees' right to bargain for a better life, Verizon is creating internal strife among its frontline workers and jeopardizing the company's value and reputation.

"Verizon is also walking away from its obligation to serve customers in rural communities, instead choosing to favor higher-income suburban and urban markets," added Hill. "The company's proposed sale of hundreds of thousands of land lines in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont to a tiny company based in North Carolina would net Verizon a big tax windfall while leaving citizens of those states with dim prospects for ever having access to high-speed Internet services."

At the Annual Meeting the IBEW and the Communications Workers of America distributed a special report to shareholders documenting how Verizon management is attacking bargaining rights, abandoning millions of customers, and eroding shareholder value.

"Verizon management is trying to isolate us from the company's unionized workforce to keep us from having a voice on the job," said John Elia, a technician who now works for the former MCI unit that was renamed Verizon Business. "Management has made blatantly false statements to us in their so-called 'union awareness' materials. All we are asking is that the company drop the intimidation and honor the neutrality and union recognition procedure that other Verizon employees have benefited from."

More than 60 percent of the 360 Verizon Business technicians in the Northeast have petitioned the company for union representation and bargaining rights. Their majority support for a union was certified by elected officials and community leaders in Boston and New York, but the company has so far refused to recognize their union.

“Most of us see through their rhetoric,” Elia added. “We know they want to keep us divided and weak -- so that we can’t be part of national contract negotiations in 2008.”

“Verizon Business is an example of why we need to pass the Employee Free Choice Act,” said Richard Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO. “Employees shouldn’t have to face this kind of coercive management interference just because they want to unite for a voice at work.”

The Employee Free Choice Act recently passed the U.S. House of Representatives and is currently pending before the Senate.

For more background info, visit www.freechoiceatverizon.com and www.stop-the-sale.org and www.aflcio.org/joinaunion/voiceatwork/efca

[For a copy of the “Report to Shareholders” visit www.cwa-union.org](http://www.cwa-union.org)

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