

f o r u m



Local 32035

Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

Oct. 27, 2006

# Guild Council Nominations Open

## *Elections to Decide Top Four Officers, At-Large Delegates*

Nominations for at-large officers and at-large members of the 2007 WBNG Executive Council will be received at the local's Nov. 11 General Membership meeting. The meeting will be held in the Guild's Baltimore office.

The larger units are entitled to council representation for each 200 members. The Post (488 members) and Sun (428) each are entitled to two additional representatives and BNA (283 members) has one additional representative to the board.

Per the WBNG bylaws, an annual secret-ballot election is required for the at-large offices of president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, and for the five at-large delegate seats. The winners will take office at the **Feb. 3, 2007**, membership meeting.

Solely for purposes of representation on the Council, units with fewer than 50 members in good standing are considered to be part of an "At-Large Units" unit, which is entitled to one representative for each 50 members – with approximately 280 members, the at-large "unit" has up to five seats on the WBNG Executive Council. The at-large unit meets shortly after each biennial election to receive nominations for these seats.

Nominations for the officer and delegate seats also may be received by petition of a minimum of 25 members in good standing. The petition must be filed with the local's secretary no later than 15 days after the floor nominations have been officially reported in the Guild Forum. A Forum will be distributed via first-class mail on **Nov. 24**, giving members until **Dec. 8** to file petitions.

### *'Kaiser Coalition' Staff Joins WBNG*

Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions staff have voted unanimously to merge with the Guild. The merger agreement is similar to one the Guild signed with the staff union of the American Nurses Association in 2000.

If at the close of the "petition period" there is no contest for an office, the WBNG Elections and Referendum Committee shall declare the nominee (or nominees) for that office elected.

The CKPU staff union has a contract that runs to 2011, and it includes several provisions (health insurance, pension, vacations, etc.) similar to those in the Guild's contract with the AFL-CIO.

Nominees who have indicated in writing their willingness to serve but who are not present at the **Nov. 11** meeting will be informed (in writing) by the secretary within three days (by **Nov. 14**). They are required to accept a nomination in writing within seven days (by **Nov. 18**) or be disqualified.

The Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions was organized in 1995. It represents 82,000 workers at more than 400 facilities in California, Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Ohio, Georgia, Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. The workers belong to 29 local unions, including locals of AFSCME, SEIU, the Teamsters, and the International Federation of Technical and Professional Engineers.

The four officers and five at-large delegates are part of a 26-member WBNG board. Because they have more than 50 dues-paying members, the Guild units at the Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun, the Bureau of National Affairs, the AFL-CIO, Radio Free Asia, the American Nurses Association, and the United Food and Commercial Workers union each get to have their unit chairperson (or designated alternate) on the council.

The coalition signed its second contract – a five-year agreement – with Kaiser in 2005.

# President's Perspective

The column below, by Bernie Lunzer, secretary-treasurer of The Newspaper Guild, addresses some of the fundamental problems facing the newspaper industry. The Guild has to stand up for quality journalism, and for quality service to subscribers and advertisers. Most newspaper owners won't do it.

– Bill Salganik

## If Not Us, Who? If Not Now, When?

Should we care about the fate of newspapers? Should we be doing anything about it? If you look at some recent commentaries, the answer is no. We're told we're worrying too much and being negative. How dare we compare ourselves to the automotive and other industries that are really in serious crisis? We're scolded and reminded that we're profitable; we should just trust the owners and managers.

Ouch. American capitalists don't have a resounding record these days of preserving – much less nurturing – industry. We saw American steel sell out, to the point that it virtually disappeared. We're watching car companies build products no one wants. The "recovery" is helping only those who already have cash. And instead of reinvestment, we're seeing continued disinvestment that moves jobs elsewhere.

Look at recent newspaper sales. In several locations we were told that the new owners were different, that they were "home-town" buyers committed to a strong local paper. Yet in every single case we're seeing the same opportunistic approach to bargaining that the failed Knight-Ridder corporation pursued. There is no vision, other than to make money the old-fashioned way – by taking it from the workers.

We need reinvestment. We need everyone's participation. We need to plan for a future in which we inevitably move away from paper products toward digital ones. Has anyone figured out the exact approach that will work? Absolutely not – which is why we need everyone's thoughts and ideas if we're going to be successful.

Instead, we have this reaffirmation of an attitude that workers are just another commodity, robbing the owners of their rightful 20 percent profit margin. In a time that demands we work together, we're getting more of the same old attitude. Papers like the *Akron Beacon Journal* are being stripped down for parts. Will people still buy a newspaper with staff reductions leaving it as not much more than a shopper?

At a panel discussion on the future of newspapers (sponsored by WBNG), a news executive explained that papers have never been stable, that we'd been living through a period when you could screw up and still make money. A journalism dean explained helpfully that the 500-plus daily papers are "incubators for ideas" and all we need is for just one to "figure it out." Then the others can copy that success.

But we were also reminded, by the working journalist on the panel, that society still has nothing to replace the work of print journalists. We are the ones who dig deep, reporting local and international news that the rest of the media rely on. The whole blogosphere feeds off the "hard" news we provide. Yes, we can go back to yellow journalism and the Fox News type of ideological news. But can democracy survive when there is no trustworthy source of unbiased information?

We are correct in worrying about an industry that is teetering even as it remains important. Sadly, we also know that we care much more about it than many owners, who are willing to rip out its heart to get their profit. We need to build relationships with those who will work with us – but we shouldn't shy away from a fight with those who would annihilate us, even as they drive their newspapers into the ground.

The industry has survived for a long time on the good will of its front-line workers. We need to continue to believe in the product and to build hope for the future. But we're not required to believe in owners who have written us off, and are squandering the future in doing so.

– Bernie Lunzer

## GU I L D f o r u m

The **Guild Forum** is published by the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild, 1100 15th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, D.C. 20005-1707. Tel.: 202-785-3650 Web Site: [www.wbng.org](http://www.wbng.org)

WBNG is Local 35 of The Newspaper Guild; Local 32035 of the Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO, CLC. WBNG is solely responsible for **Guild Forum** content.

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### OFFICIAL NOTICE

**WBNG Membership Meeting**  
**Saturday, Nov. 11, 10 a.m.**  
**Baltimore Guild Office**  
**415 St. Paul Place**

*Agenda includes nominations for 2007-08 Executive Council and a "Campaign Planning and Mobilization" Workshop.*

**For further information:**  
202-785-3650

# Catholic News Unit Presses for Contract

Guild members at Catholic News Service are turning up the volume to get a new contract.

Members – all clad in red shirts – rallied Oct. 18 and again Oct. 25 outside the offices of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which operates the news agency.

About 20 CNS Guild members took part in the demonstration, and they were joined by several Conference employees who do not have union representation, as well as by supporters from other Metropolitan D.C. unions. Several dozen marched, chanted and sang songs.

Guild members have been working without a contract since Jan. 1. The Guild and CNS began bargaining for a new agreement a year ago. The key sticking point has been CNS' insistence that it be allowed to unilaterally reduce – or terminate – pension benefits during the course of the agreement.

CNS members have emphatically told management they will not give up their legal right to bargain pensions. The refusal to bargain over the pension issue “not only is against labor law,” said CNS Guild unit Vice Chair Jerry Filteau, “it’s a violation of basic Catholic teachings, which guarantee ‘old age security.’”

In addition to holding rallies, the CNS members have been wearing red every Wednesday, have launched an e-mail cam-



Catholic News Service Guild members picket in front of their headquarters in Northeast Washington.

paign targeting key bishops, and have been conducting outreach to Conference employees who are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

Catholic News Service staff has been represented by the Guild since 1972. The four-year contract that expired Dec. 31, 2005, is the first ever to have lapsed by more than a few days. Filteau, a member of the Guild bargaining committee, said that the two sides are not far apart on the rest of the contractual issues. There have been just two rounds of talks since the end of April.

## *Solidarity Center Guild Members Win New Agreement*

The 25-member Guild unit at the American Center for International Labor Solidarity unanimously ratified a new collective bargaining agreement in September that improves employees' job security and provides at least a 2 percent raise each year.

The new agreement is for three years. The Guild unit signed its first contract four years ago; that three-year deal was extended one year in 2005. The new agreement expires Sept. 25, 2009.

The wage increase in the new agreement is 2 percent per year, with employees earning at least .5 percent more retroactive if the center receives a U.S. Aid for International Development (AID)

grant that exceeds \$7.5 million. Any employees laid off in the first year of the contract due to a reduction in the AID core grant, will receive \$5,000 payments on top of the severance payment required by the contract.

The employer also will pay as much as nine months of health insurance benefits for laid-off workers who are unable to obtain health insurance.

In addition, the Solidarity Center has agreed to make employees whole for any host-country income taxes that exceed their U.S. tax liability.

The Solidarity Center is a nonprofit organization that assists workers around the

world who are struggling to build democratic and independent trade unions.

Launched by the AFL-CIO in 1997, the center receives funding from AID, the AFL-CIO, the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. departments of State and Labor, private foundations, and international labor organizations.

The Guild bargaining team included Laurie Clements, Ben Davis, Fisseha Tekie, Unit Chair Rob Wayss, and Local 35 Representative Tiffany Harris. Members are spread across several continents.

The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild has been representing workers at the Solidarity Center since 2002.

The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild represents 27 bargaining units (26 employers). These are the start and end dates of each unit's latest contract.

Catholic News Service .....	Jan. 1, 2002 to Dec. 31, 2005
UNITE HERE Local 25 .....	Jan. 1, 2006 to June 30, 2006
AFL-CIO .....	April 1, 2005 to Sept. 30, 2006
Int'l Labor Comm. Assoc. ....	May 1, 2004 to Oct. 31, 2006
Dept. for Prof. Employees, AFL-CIO.....	July 1, 2002 to Dec. 31, 2006
Working for America Inst. ....	July 1, 2002 to Dec. 31, 2006
Agence France-Presse.....	Jan. 1, 2005 to Dec. 31, 2006
E-L & Associates.....	Jan. 1, 2005 to Dec. 31, 2006
Am. Postal Workers Union .....	May 21, 2003 to May 20, 2007
Baltimore Sun .....	June 25, 2003 to June 24, 2007
Radio Free Asia .....	Oct. 31, 2004 to Sept. 30, 2007
United Food and Commercial Workers.....	Oct. 7, 2004 to Oct. 6, 2007
United American Nurses .....	March 24, 2005 to Dec. 31, 2007
National Labor College .....	April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2008
United Way of America .....	May 1, 2005 to April 30, 2008
American Rights at Work .....	July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2008
MCCSSE (SEIU Local 500) .....	July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2008
CASA de Maryland .....	Oct. 14, 2005 to June 30, 2008
Washington Post .....	Nov. 8, 2005 to Nov. 7, 2008
Jobs With Justice .....	Aug. 7, 2006 to Dec. 31, 2008
Am. Nurses Association.....	Feb. 15, 2006 to Feb. 14, 2009
Fingerhut & Associates .....	April 21, 2006 to April 20, 2009
Solidarity Center .....	Sept. 26, 2006 to Sept. 25, 2009
Research Associates of America.....	Jan. 1, 2006 to Dec. 31, 2009
Bureau of National Affairs .....	March 1, 2006 to Feb. 28, 2010
BNA Correspondents .....	July 15, 2006 to July 14, 2010

# **AFL-CIO, Guild Agree to Put Talks on Hold**

Giving everyone a break to concentrate on national-election campaigns, the AFL-CIO and the Guild decided to suspend negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement until after Tuesday, Nov. 7.

Formal negotiations had begun Sept. 6 on a successor to an 18-month contract, and there had been eight bargaining sessions into October. Most of the Guild bargaining committee, however, is heavily involved in state political campaigns.

Bargaining on non-economic items will resume in mid-November. Because of lingering funding issues, economic terms are not going to be brought to the table until after the New Year.

The federation bargaining unit currently has about 140 members. With the possibility of more de-funding and layoffs, the Guild members seek additional job security protections, parity for part-time, "fund," and temporary employees, and a wage package that makes up for the concessions in the last contract, which expired Sept. 30.

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**Address Correction Requested**