

GUILD forum



Local 32035

Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

April 28, 2006

121 Guild-Covered Workers Offered Buyouts at Post

Eighty-eight Guild-represented employees in News and 33 in Commercial departments at the *Washington Post* were offered Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program (VRIP) opportunities in mid-April.

To be eligible, the employees have to be holding full-time positions and be at least 54 years old (as of Dec. 31, 2006). If not that old, an employee can still be eligible if he or she has at least 10 years of service and the age plus years of service – plus 5 – adds up to 85 (e.g., a 50-year-old with 30 years of service).

All full-time Post employees in News who were declared eligible were offered the buyout. Retirement offers were extended to only those holding commercial jobs that the Post doesn't believe it has to re-fill.

The cash incentive for the prospective retiree is one to two times the annual salary, depending on the number of years of service. The incentive payment is based on a formula for years of service from 10 to 30 and over. Someone who has worked 10 years is offered one year's salary; at 11 years, the offer is 1.05 year's salary; at 15 years, 1.25 times an annual salary. Employees with 30 years at the Post would be offered two times their annual pay.

Employees can choose to add five years of age to increase their benefit and get 100 percent of the age-65 pension benefit if they meet the rule of 85 to add 10 percent to their annual pension. Employees already 65 or older are likely to choose to add 10 percent to their normal pension benefit.

VRIP participants who are less than 65 will have their health-insurance benefit supplement increased to \$4,000 per year. The cost of the pre-Medicare health benefit is currently split on a 50-50 basis between the Post and Post retirees younger than 65. The Post is planning to change the benefits for this group in the near future. To help deal with this, the Guild negotiated a \$3,000 annual supplement in the current contract. Participants in the buyout offer see the supplement increased to \$4,000.

A Guild committee consisting of Post employees Al Crenshaw, Ann Marie Ditchey, Robin Groom, Myra Hatala, Veronica Ingram Darlene Meyer, Dave Robie, and Rick Weiss, and WBNG staff representative Rick Ehrmann negotiated with Post management on April 5 and 10 to improve the original VRIP draft submitted by the Post on March 31.

"We were successful in improving the terms," Ehrmann said, "by negotiating a written guarantee that VRIP retirement benefits for those who accept the offer will not be reduced in the future. We were also able to increase the number of employees eligible for the buyout to 88 in News and 33 in Commercial departments of the paper. The Guild also was able to negotiate an increase in the retirement benefit for 54-year-old employees. "We were able to increase their benefit from 56 percent to 70 percent of age-65 benefits," Ehrmann said.

Not all of the employees offered the VRIP are expected to leave the paper. In late 2003, 69 Guild-covered employees accepted early retirement offers at the Post. Among the 69 who left were 43 Newspaper Guild members.

Post Refuses to Bargain Over Radio Work; Guild Files ULP See back page

President's Perspective

The labor movement lately has been busy examining itself.

Last summer, several unions, seeking a new direction, split off from the AFL-CIO. Our own parent union, the Communications Workers of America, and its Newspaper Guild sector, have been engaged in a bottom-up strategic planning exercise. When the CWA meets this summer, it will vote on the first proposals to come out of that process.

Our own local executive board and staff went through a strategic analysis process this fall. In our discussions, we recognized that the units – the workplace groupings covered by a contract, such as the Washington Post, BNA, AFL-CIO staff – are where the work gets done. The local has the responsibility for bargaining the contracts and for hiring the staff, but it's the units with which most of us have our contact. We resolved to help connect and strengthen the units.

There was also a strong consensus among board and staff that the local is doing well at bargaining, representation and administration of the local, but that we wanted to pay more attention to (and achieve better results in) four inter-related areas: mobilizing, member involvement, leadership development, and recruiting new members. These are important because the staff – and we have terrific staff – can never do all that needs to be done. An energized and aware membership is the greatest asset a union can have.

At the May 13 general membership meeting, we take a step toward achieving those goals. It's our first-ever training session for unit leaders. Some of the unit leaders themselves will join the staff in sharing ideas for bargaining, for dealing with grievances, for communicating with members. It's a chance to hear some new ideas and to share some tried-and-true ones.

From those of you not attending on May 13, we welcome new ideas from you as well. You can contact the local leaders directly (for contact information, see our Web site, www.wbng.org) or talk to stewards of officers in your unit.

– **Bill Salganik**

Unit Leader Training: On the Agenda

The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild will be holding its first-ever training for unit leaders at the general membership meeting on May 13.

The training comprises a series of 45-minute presentations. WBNG President Bill Salganik will start things off with a Guild-wide leader's perspective on being a unit leader. Next will be a seminar on "Leadership Development," led by Guild Administrative Officer Cet Parks and Amy Lampkin (AFL-CIO unit chair) and Mike Hill (Sun unit chair). In the last session before lunch, Local Representative Tiffany Harris and Sheila Lindsay, chair of the American Nurses Association unit will talk about "How to Run a Unit." The first session after a lunch break will be "Mobilizing/Organizing the Unit," presented by Guild Organizer Joanna Millhouse and Sun activist Sheila Cole. That training will be followed by "Contract Enforcement" featuring WBNG staffer Paul Reilly and John Small (former BNA activist now at the AFL-CIO). The last presentation of the day will be "Bargaining: Contract Negotiations/Midterm Issues," led by Local Representative Rick Ehrmann and Darlene Meyer, the Post's Commercial chair.

GUILD forum

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

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, May 13, 10 a.m.

CWA District II Offices

962 Wayne Avenue, Suite 500
Silver Spring, MD 20910

*Agenda includes training for WBNG
unit leaders.*

For further information:
202-785-3650

See the 'Wal-Mart Movie'

Local 32035 is offering loaner copies of the DVD, "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price." Guild members can borrow a copy of the movie by contacting their unit's local representative.

Catholic News Employees Struggle for Renewal

Facing an inexperienced management team, the 20 Guild members at Catholic News Service are in one of the toughest contract battles they have ever experienced.

No member of the CNS management team has ever been involved in collective bargaining. In trying to negotiate a successor to the four-year agreement that expired Dec. 31, the organization is not only insisting on a vast increase in the worker share of health-care premiums, but on the unilateral right to change or cancel pension benefits at any time during the length of the agreement.

When management declared that its

demand on pension coverage was “non-negotiable,” tent cards sprang up at workstations proclaiming: “Non-Negotiable? We Don’t Think So!” And when the CNS bargainers reneged on a cost-of-living clause to which they had previously given an OK, a federal mediator was called in. Even with the mediator on hand for a few sessions, progress has been minimal.

The Guild unit’s bargaining team – unit Chair (and WBNG Shop Steward of the Year) Cassandra Shieh, unit Vice Chair Jerry Filteau, Mary Esslinger, Gloria Moore, and WBNG Local Representative Paul Reilly – is not backing down. “No worker should ever agree to a contract that means less for them.”

“I’ve been in some difficult and complex negotiations before, but these talks just boggle the mind,” Reilly said of the bargaining that began in October. “I give the CNS members a lot of credit for still producing good work for the benefit of their clients through all this. There’s a lot of cohesiveness in this unit, and there’s no doubt in my mind that we’ll prevail.”

Catholic News Service staff has been represented by the Guild since 1972. “This is the first contract ever to have lapsed by more than a few days,” said Mark Pattison, WBNG treasurer and a long-time CNS unit member. “The only one to have done even that was the ‘current’ contract, four years ago.”

Nurses Association Staff Wins 3-Year Contract

In a nearly unanimous vote – there was one dissenter – the Guild staff union at the American Nurses Association ratified a new three-year agreement in mid-March.

The recent three-year contract covering about 120 workers expired Feb. 14.

Each Guild-represented employee received a 1 percent ratification bonus and an immediate 3 percent salary increase, and will see 3 percent annual increases in 2007 and 2008 as well.

With slight modifications during negotiations, the union was able to push through its proposal for equally sharing with management any increases in health insurance premiums. “We feel this prevents rising health-care costs from being shifted too heavily to union members,” said unit Chair Sheila Lindsay, “and keeps insurmountable burdens from being imposed on employees with family coverage.”

Among other contract gains, employees are granted a paid holiday for their birthday, telecommuting possibilities

have been increased by three days a month, tuition assistance reimbursement has been increased 14 percent (to \$4,000), and pay differential for employees on call were increased to \$30 per day. The Guild also successfully fought against ANA’s proposed takebacks on Family and Medical Leave, sick-leave exhaustion, and sabbatical leave.

The ANA Association Staff Union merged into Local 32035 in August 2000. This is the third Guild contract for the unit.

3 WBNG Members Win Pulitzers

Three WBNG members who work as reporters at the Washington Post were winners of 2006 Pulitzer Prizes.

David Finkel won for Explanatory Reporting. The Pulitzer judges described his winning effort as an “ambitious, clear-eyed case study of the United States government’s attempt to bring democracy to Yemen.” Dana Priest took home the award for Beat Reporting for “her persistent, painstaking reports on secret ‘black site’ prisons and other controversial features of the government’s counter-terrorism campaign.” Susan Schmidt was part of a three-person team that won the 2006 Pulitzer for

Investigative Reporting for the “indefatigable probe of Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff that exposed congressional corruption and produced reform efforts.”

New Membership Cards En Route

Communications Workers of America three-year membership cards have been received by the WBNG office. The new Newspaper Guild/CWA cards are good through 2008, and will be distributed soon – as soon as the local’s secretary signs each one. The Guild merged with CWA in 1997, with Local 35 becoming Newspaper Guild Sector Local 32035.

**NEW AND RETURNING
GUILD MEMBERS**

AFL-CIO: Katrina Blomdahl,
David Carpio, Gabrielle Coppola,
Carol Edebon, Brett Gibson,
Jay Gertsema, Helen Gonzales,
Christopher Huang, Amy Masciola,
Basav Sen, Debra M. Timko,
Patricia S. Welte.

American Nurses Association:
Adriane Evans, Joseph A. Hugney,
Donna K. Williams.

Baltimore Sun : Marcia B. Cephus,
Charles Dickerson III,
Kristen A. Griscavage, Clare K. Lochary,
Todd Richissin, Jochebed O. Smith,
Tina Turco, Spenser Weidman,
John-John Williams, Lincoln L. Wooten.

Bureau of National Affairs:
Fatema J. Babuji, Roy A. Funderburk
Jr., Joyce L. Hedges, Joanne S. Letada,
Richard Manville, Darlene N. Mitchell,
Tony Perriello, Melinda Sharareh.

CASA of Maryland : Tona Cravioto,
Alexis Desimone

Radio Free Asia : Zaw Moe Kyaw

UFCW: Olubunmi Yinka-Jaiye

UNITE HERE: Josi Langford

United American Nurses:
Griselda Mariscal, Mayra C. Ocampo

Washington Post: Paul M. Duggan,
Sholnn Z. Freeman, Dorothy D. Lancaster,
Gregory C. Matisoff, Erin M. Meadows,
Kristin Reid, William Turque,
April L. Umminger

Guild Files ULP Over Post Refusal to Bargain Over Radio Work

On behalf of employees being denied the right to have any say in their participation in the *Washington Post's* new radio venture, the Guild on April 21 filed a formal complaint with the National Labor Relations Board, claiming that the refusal to bargain violates federal labor law.

The Unfair Labor Practice complaint capped several weeks of efforts by the Guild to settle questions about compensation, training, and other issues relating to the newspaper's arrangement to provide 14 hours a day of programming to Bonneville Radio.

Since March 2, the complaint said, the Post has refused to bargain with WBNG over terms and conditions of employment related to the content-sharing relationship with the new Washington Post Radio.

The complaint said that since April 6, the Post "has refused to provide the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild with requested information regarding bargaining unit employees who have provided content" for the radio station. Post management has also rejected the notion of creating a fair and equitable schedule of payments that radio "volunteers" can be assured of receiving, the Guild complaint said.

Instead, the newspaper has been inconsistent and unfair in its offers of compensation, with some employees being promised payments and others being told nothing. "This is a very poor way to build enthusiasm for a project that everyone agrees deserves a best shot at success," Guild unit members said in a "shop" *Forum*. "Our compensation should not depend on whether we 'ask' to be paid for our 'voluntary' work."

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Address Correction Requested