

# GreyMatters

*"The RMC is About Serious Business"*



CWA Retired  
Members  
Council

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## CWA, Retirees Praise Nomination of Hillary Clinton for President

Communications Workers of America members, their families, and retirees are praising the Democratic Party's nomination of [Hillary Clinton](#) for president.

Chris Shelton, CWA President, and Ray Kramer, Executive President of the Union's Retired Members' Council, called it "a historic step forward for our nation."

The Union, Shelton said, "is proud to work with her as together we build an America that works for working families."

Kramer stressed the importance of the Democratic Party's commitment to "preserve, protect and improve Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, pensions and retiree benefits."

The leaders underscored that Clinton is smart, thoughtful, and experienced with decades of commitment to working families as well as social and economic justice for all.

"She doesn't just talk, she delivers," Shelton said. "Her record of public service shows a leader who stands up for workers' bargaining and

organizing rights, for family and medical leave, and programs that help working families.”

"Secretary Clinton has pledged to 'do everything in my power to defend American jobs and American workers. Any trade deal must meet three tests to earn my support: It must create good American jobs, raise wages, and advance our national security. I do not believe that the Trans-Pacific Partnership meets this high standard. That's why I oppose the TPP -- and that means before and after the election."

"CWA has large numbers of members and retirees in all the battle ground states, and activists will be mobilizing and engaging to elect Hillary Clinton as the next president of the United States," Shelton said.

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## Surprising Effects on Retirees FMLA: Preparing for Caregiving Tsunami



*Shown on the Left is Rachel Lyons of the National Partnership for Women and Families, “We are experiencing a caregiving tsunami”*

The average retiree isn't likely to think much about paid sick days and family medical leave. After all, we no longer have to ask the boss for time off from work when we get sick. Those days are behind us. Right?

Not necessarily. A panelist at the recent CWA Legislative and Political Conference in Washington, D.C., reminded us that paid sick days and FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act) affect retirees as well as those still working for a living.

Rachel Lyons of the National Partnership for Women and Families put it this way:

“We are experiencing a caregiving tsunami – more seniors and not enough caregivers has resulted in people struggling – for example: not being able to be with their parents when they're going through cancer treatments.”

The world of work has changed, she said, and with both parents working, “your kids can't take the time off to take care of you.”

The National Partnership spearheaded the coalition that worked for passage of the nationwide FMLA. Lyons underscored that FMLA is unpaid and has other restrictions that it must be advanced to be employer-paid, and until that happens, “the action is at the states.”

According to Lyons, four states have approved paid family leave and 35 jurisdictions have approved paid sick days, creating shorter periods of off-time to take care of family emergencies.

Paid sick days and extended paid family medical leave ultimately must be taken head on nationally, Lyons said. But in the meantime, she urged CWA members to work at the local, municipal and state level to secure those benefits for families — including seniors and retirees.

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## “A Better Way” Really?

*Bill Freeda, RMC President - Media Sector*

Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan has introduced his version of a plan that will replace The Affordable Care Act (ACA), more commonly known as Obamacare. Speaker Ryan has entitled this proposal, “A Better Way.” Yeah, but for who, not seniors, and certainly not retirees.

An important provision of the ACA is the elimination of the dreaded “donut hole” in 2020. It appears to me that Speaker Ryan’s Better Way, reopens the donut hole. There are many provisions of this “Better Way” that are not friendly towards seniors. I believe there is harsh reality that some members of Congress, and corporate executives, both consciously and sub-consciously, are disappointed that we are not dying fast enough. This is exactly what I expressed to GE’s CEO Jeff Immelt at a recent shareowners meeting. Well you know what, that is too damn bad, deal with it. Retirees are here, we’re staying longer, we are growing and we VOTE!

If Speaker Ryan is really interested in cutting federal spending, let me suggest he support a bill currently in the House. It was introduced by Congressman Keith Ellison of Minnesota. If passed into law, this new law, [H.R. 2623](#), known as “**The Personal Drug Importation Fairness Act of 2015**,” would legalize importation of prescription drugs from outside the United States, from countries like Canada and Israel. Additionally there is a bill languishing in the Senate, [S.31](#) that was introduced by Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota. This bill is known as “**The Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2015**.” If passed into law, this would permit Medicare and Medicaid to negotiate directly with the pharmaceutical companies - the same way the Veterans Administration does. Both of these bills would result in billions of dollars in savings for the federal government

Let me suggest that you call your [Representative](#) and [Senator](#) and ask them if they would co-sponsor H.R. 2623, and S. 31. And if not, why not?

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## Retirees Offering Up the Best Kind of Solidarity



*Shown above: CWA RMC members from New York City, Long Island, Westchester, and New Jersey join active members picketing a Verizon Wireless Store on 42nd Street in Manhattan, just off Times Square April 27, 2016.*

CWA retirees joined their striking Verizon brothers and sisters in April and May at picket lines, rallies and demonstrations from New England to Virginia. Whether showing up at neighborhood picket or enormous public events like the Bernie Sanders speech in lower Manhattan, retirees were always welcomed. This was the best kind of solidarity. Retirees supported the active members, who in turn made sure Verizon did not get away with its demand to drop retiree health care and pensions from the bargaining table.

On occasion, retirees could take actions unavailable to the active members. Sure, we couldn't go on strike, but we also could not be fired. Creative actions at strip mall parking lots and big city garages contributed to Verizon's loss of revenue.

Two observations - First: at public events like picket lines and rallies it was helpful for retirees to identify themselves with banners, shirts, hats or buttons as CWA RMCers. At other times it was helpful for retirees to play their roles as "average citizens". Second: all effective retiree strike activities relied on good communication networks by phone or email established well before the strike. Moral: be prepared.

Tom Smucker  
President, Local 1101 RMC

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# **UPDATE: Dennis Rocheleau & Evelyn Kauffman vs the General Electric Company**

In October 2014 two GE salaried retirees, Dennis Rocheleau, over age 65, and Evelyn Kauffman, under age 65, filed suit in U.S. District Court in Milwaukee, WI challenging GE's unilateral termination of the GE Medicare supplemental plans for salaried retirees and the proposed transition to a private exchange on January 1, 2015. The plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction was denied in December 2014, in part due to the enrollment of some 40,000 retirees in anticipation of the mandated switch.

Kauffman is a former long service benefits counselor intimately familiar with the plans involved, and Rocheleau is the former chief labor negotiator for GE.

In early 2015, the parties argued GE's motion to dismiss the suit. In May 2015, Federal judge Lynn Adelman dismissed one count, but allowed the plaintiffs to continue to press their ERISA claim for misrepresentation and breach of fiduciary duty. In particular, the plaintiffs asserted that Section 5.4 of the relevant SPD would reasonably be understood as a commitment by GE to exert its "best efforts" to provide Medicare supplementary plans, subject to an intervening "force majeure." The plaintiffs denied that GE had properly reserved the right to amend or terminate such plans "at any time and for any reason" as the Company repeatedly asserted.

For the past year the parties have exchanged documents, provided interrogatories and exchanged and examined thousands of documents. Depositions were taken by both sides and expert witnesses gave testimony. In April of this year the plaintiffs sought class certification, a motion which GE opposed. In early June both parties filed motions for summary judgment and response briefs are now being prepared. Judge Adelman has indicated that he will rule on the class certification motion and summary judgement motions at the same time. Accordingly, a decision might well be expected before year's end.



*Shown above: RMC Members Stand in Solidarity at the GE Shareholders Meeting.*

**More News on the Modified Petition--Support HR 1856 in the 114th Congress- [Employee Benefits Protection Act of 2015](#)**

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## **Why Is A Retiree Newsletter Necessary?**

*By Bill Freeda, President Media Sector  
CWA Retired Members Council*

In one word, “VISIBILITY.” I have been a member of the RMC Board since 2005. First as Vice President of the Merger-Partners Sector, and then as President of the Media Sector, which consists of The NewsGuild (TNG), PPMWS, more commonly known as the Printers Sector, and NABET-CWA.

When I joined the Board, the RMC published “Journeys,” a newsletter exclusively for RMC members. It is now time to reinstate our presence and visibility to the active membership.

For several years I have been trying to accomplish just that. Then along came President Chris Shelton, who assigned Laura Reynolds as the

current CWA liaison between the RMC and CWA. CWA assisted the RMC in finding ways to create and publish “Grey Matters” and about three months ago we launched our first online issue.

I hope that this online RMC newsletter is just the beginning. I believe that far too many of our CWA retirees are not on line yet. Therefore, the RMC again needs a print presence. At our recent meeting in Washington, D.C., the RMC Board met with CWA President Chris Shelton; Secretary-Treasurer Sara Steffens; and Ron Collins, President Shelton’s Chief of Staff. At that meeting it was suggested that “Grey Matters” appear as the back page of the CWA News. That would solve the problem of additional costs for CWA and provide the retirees with the visibility we need to grow our membership. President Shelton said he would give that suggestion serious consideration. Until then, we will continue with our online presence on [FaceBook](#), the [CWA RMC Website](#) and now our “Grey Matters.” We ask that you feel free to submit items of interest to retirees for future issues.

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## NEWS YOU CAN USE

Alliance for Retired Americans, ARA, Union Retiree Health Program  
–[Affordable Options](#) for RMC Lifetime Members

[CWA – Joint Retiree Healthcare Committee, JRHC Announces Results Alcatel Lucent \(Nokia\) for 2017 Plan Year](#)

Bill Freeda RMC President Media Sector [Full Statement](#) at GE Share-Owners Meeting Jacksonville, FL.

June 2016 New RMC General Board are [Sworn](#) Into Office by CWA President Chris Shelton

RMC 1103 President Jeanette Spoor [Speaks Up](#) for Verizon Retirees

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Discounts and Benefits for CWA Members an

