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IBEW Continues Negotiations With AT&T

AT&T's current contract with the IBEW will expire at midnight on Saturday, June 27, 2009

Washington, DC – As the clock winds toward the expiration of their current collective bargaining agreement, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and AT&T continue their talks. The union remains committed to negotiating a fair and equitable contract with the nation's largest telephone company, whose net income in 2008 rose 7.7 percent to \$12.9 billion.

The bargaining began on May 18, 2009 in Hoffman Estates outside Chicago, and covers about 10,000 IBEW members in New England, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California and the Northwest. These historic negotiations include workers who were original AT&T employees and remained working for the company after it divested its original Bell Telephone units as a result of a 1984 federal anti-trust enforcement order.

On June 24, the members of IBEW's largest unit of AT&T workers, represented by Chicago area-based Local 21, overwhelmingly passed a resolution authorizing a strike.

"Our goal remains the same as it was on day one of these talks – working with the company to achieve a contract that is fair to workers and helps the company thrive in today's competitive telecommunications industry. While we have been disappointed with the tone adopted by the company at the outset of the negotiations, we intend to keep at it until our goal is achieved," said Ronald Kastner, chairman of the IBEW's negotiating committee.

The issue of health care has been a source of contention in the IBEW/AT&T talks, as it has in negotiations that have been underway since March between the company and the Communication Workers of America (CWA). The IBEW has vowed to work with the company on the issue of cost containment while protecting benefit levels.

IBEW International President Edwin D. Hill has said that the problems with health care facing America will require a national solution and cannot be solved by individual companies slashing coverage for their workers. "Today, members of numerous unions are rallying on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., in support of national health care reform. We have invited AT&T to work with us before Congress to pursue legislation to that end, and that invitation is still open."

The IBEW and AT&T are also discussing the future of the bargaining unit workers in the rapidly changing telecommunications industry. "Our members look forward to new work opportunities brought by AT&T's investment in new technology, and we will be seeking an equal investment in job security and training," Kastner added.

For more information, visit:

www.ibew.org

<http://www.ibew21.org/attcontract/index.html>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/local21ibew>

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