

# The Final Etch

March 11th, 2024, Volume I, Issue 1.

IUE-CWA Local 82162, (540) 562-9620, [local82162.org](http://local82162.org)

MEETING TIMES  
EVERY FIRST THURSDAY  
7:15am 3:15pm  
1:00pm 6:15pm  
8224 Shadwell Dr, Roanoke, VA 24019

## Message from the President

The Union has had a newsletter in the past, but it has rarely been used. We will be using it and our new website as a way to provide monthly updates and other pertinent information to the membership.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for electing your Union team. **We will work for and with each of you to create change that will enhance our work environment.**

**The most important topic right now is the contract.** Our labor contract ends July 27, 2024. Please pay attention to the Union Boards for information about the contract, found near the breakrooms in each building. Various committees will also make regular updates there. **The new Local website, [local82162.org](http://local82162.org),** will contain the same updates, as well as contact information for the local. Please come to the Union meetings every first Thursday of each month. There, the executive board and committee chairs make their reports to the local, and you can ask them any questions you would like, and possibly vote on issues that pertain to the local. Make sure you know who your Union stewards are, they are a valuable source of information about the contract and work rules, and are a good link between you and the union.

Knowing that the current contract will soon expire, it's important for everyone to know that negotiations will start soon for the next contract. **The goal of a contract negotiation is to always get a good contract without a strike.** Your elected representatives in the Negotiations Committee will be bargaining on your behalf, and will base what they bargain for on surveys that will be provided and tabulated in the coming months. Negotiations could go either way, so we need to prepare for any situation.

As we move forward, we will ensure that we provide updates and information via all the routes mentioned above, but I want to remind everyone that your Union officials are there for you. Do not hesitate to stop them and discuss issues or ask questions.

I want to send my condolences to my Union brothers and sisters that have recently lost loved ones. Please keep each of them and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

**Thank you,  
President Walt Grossheim**

## Committee Reports

### Education Committee

- Fliers are up in breakrooms and on the union boards for committee signups.
- Plans are underway for membership education on contract negotiations and how bargaining works.
- April 5th is the deadline for signups.

### Newsletter/Website

- Like to doodle? Submit your artwork to the Newsletter Committee and have it featured in the next issue!



### Updates/Events from the Western Virginia Labor Federation

- May 18th - Bread & Roses Dinner/Awards, fundraiser for CLUW honoring regional union members
- June 8th - Union Night at Salem Red Sox Baseball Stadium, \$15 a ticket, reimbursed night of
- September 2nd - Labor Day Parade

# Is It Really a Vacation?

*Written by Johnathan Dogan, member of the Newsletter Committee*

I think it's time we talk about what we are smelling: our vacation policy and the company's ability to abuse it. For those who did not attend the communication meetings on March 7th, there was at least one mention of the "Summer Shutdown" clause in the union contract. Specifically, page 42, section 20.05 which allows the company to force employees to take vacation between June 1st and August 31st each year.

## **"IT'S IN THE CONTRACT"**

For newer employees it was a shock. As for more seasoned employees, it's a reminder of the palpable bitterness and frustration that has been experienced for years. "How can they do this?" someone asked. The response from a salaried company representative was quick, and almost smug, "It's in the contract." It was their gotcha moment. It felt as if they had been waiting all day to pull that out of their khakis. The company loves to use this time to do maintenance that would otherwise affect production. So they force employees, who otherwise wouldn't be able to do their jobs during the maintenance, to use vacation days. It's a pretty sleazy way to save a buck by making union members burn through their limited amount of PTO. The result is the realization that this company has more control over our lives than we care to admit.

I would also like to point out that this specific section of the contract does not explicitly allow the company to force workers to take vacation for the sake of maintenance. It only states that the company may schedule vacation times during this period. Therefore, if the company is scheduling maintenance during this time and forcing vacation on employees to minimize production time lost, theoretically the argument could be made that this is a breach of contract. It's a stretch for sure, and one that I believe only the union's executive board could levy. I also find it coincidental that the company would schedule the communication meeting on the first Thursday of the month. A day that they knew the union executive board would be out holding their own monthly meetings throughout the day.

## **LOWER SENIORITY BLUES**

I understand this section of the union contract was agreed upon by both sides, and I am not going to criticize the union for agreeing to it as it most likely was a compromise of sorts. However, I don't think that they really knew just how much abuse could be derived from it at the time. Regardless of how this came to be, or the amount of employees that experienced this before us, we all have the right to be spiteful of this practice.

Obviously this sentiment resonates more closely with newer employees who only get 40 hours of vacation their first year. They won't get a choice in how their vacation is spent. It baffles me to hear salaried personnel state that nobody wants to work anymore yet fail to understand that there are fast food restaurants with better new hire PTO policies than this place. I would also hope that higher seniority employees would be outraged as well. After all, they have spent years working hard at this company. Some even span multiple decades. Yet even they aren't allowed to use every single vacation day they earned the way they want to.

## **SOLUTIONS NOT EXCUSES**

This issue shouldn't even exist. Is it so unreasonable to simply ask this company to go through these shutdown periods without pay voluntarily? I don't think it's asking too much to take our vacation days when we want to take them or even when we **need** to take them. If we aren't allowed to ask that, then the next time a company representative tells you they can do something sordid because "It's in the contract", ask that person if they know exactly how much longer they will be able to use that as an excuse. I think it's finally time that we, as a union, collectively admit to ourselves that the bread we are being fed is stale, and the circus we are watching sucks.



**—VIRGINIA THIEF—**



The U.S. Department of Labor's [Wage and Hour Division](#) has recovered nearly \$900,000 in back wages and damages after its investigation found a Norfolk home care employer denied 108 workers their hard-earned overtime pay.

The division's investigation found that Advantage Home Care LLC and co-owners Dondra Nichols and Phillip Simons failed to pay required overtime rates for all hours worked over 40 in a workweek and did not maintain accurate records of hours worked. The employers paid \$438,277 in back wages and an equal amount in liquidated damages for these violations of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#).