

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JUNE 28, 2007**

## **Thousands of Union Telephone Workers, Labor Leaders, Elected Officials Slam Verizon for Anti-Union, Anti-Consumer Practices**

### **Workers Rally Against Verizon Sale of New England Network That Would Cripple Regional Telecom Network and Union-Busting Campaign Among Former MCI Technicians, Now Employed by Verizon Business**

*June 28, 2007 - New York* – Thousands of telephone workers represented by the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) joined labor leaders and New York City elected officials today to protest Verizon proposed sale of its northern New England network and Verizon Business' repeated efforts to stop employees from forming a union.

The proposed network sale would fracture the rural New England telecom network, damage the economy and jeopardize 3,000 good-paying union jobs. The rally also sent a message to Verizon management that CWA is gearing up to fight any proposed cuts to salaries, health care and pension benefits at the \$88 billion telecommunications giant when the workers' contract with Verizon expires next year.

"We've come to Verizon headquarters today to make it clear that the aggressive union-busting and intimidation tactics from Verizon will not be tolerated," said Chris Shelton, Vice President of CWA District 1. "It's time for them to stop the intimidation and stop trying to take away their employees basic right to organize. At the same time, their anti-consumer proposal to sell off their network cannot go forward without endangering good-paying jobs and telephone service quality for New England consumers."

The rally follows an overwhelming demonstration of support to organize by technicians at Verizon Business—a large majority of whom want to join CWA – and have signed union cards to join the union. Verizon Business – a division of Verizon formed after the company's merger with the remnants of MCI/Worldcom – has refused to recognize the technicians' organizing rights.

CWA also warned against Verizon's pending sale of its land line network in Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire. The potential buyer for the New England network, Fairpoint, is a much smaller communications company than Verizon that is unqualified and undercapitalized. Verizon had tried unsuccessfully in the past to sell its network in Upstate New York.

"The sale of the Northern New Endgland landlines would allow Verizon to abandon its telephone customers in these more-rural states, putting their lifelines in case of emergency at risk. The sale would also jeopardize the jobs of more than 3,000 technicians, operators and service representatives throughout Northern New England. People need their phone to work – and this sale would make their service less reliable," said Myles Calvey, Business Manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2222 in Boston. IBEW and CWA are campaigning together against the New England line sale.

“Verizon Business techs make less and have worse health benefits than their peers in the rest of Verizon, even though they do the same daily telephone installation and maintenance work,” said Denis Hughes, President of the New York State AFL-CIO. “It’s time Verizon Business gives its workers the right to stand up for a fair wage and benefits.”

Verizon CEO Ivan Seidenberg, who has been the target of shareholder activists for excessive executive compensation, was paid \$23 million last year. Verizon shareholders – over management’s opposition – just passed a proposal giving them a non-binding vote on executive pay. CWA members provided crucial support for the resolution, which passed with just over 50% of the vote.

Verizon Wireless, another division of Verizon, has also prevented its workers from exercising their right to form a union. The rally came as unionized Verizon employees look ahead to August 2008, when their Verizon core contract is set to expire.

“As Verizon tries to sell off networks and prevent workers from organizing, this turnout today makes one thing clear: we are Verizon. Verizon likes to advertise that ‘it’s the network’. Well, we – the members of CWA and IBEW are the network,” said Chris Shelton. “We are the reason Verizon is the 13<sup>th</sup> largest corporation in America and made \$6 billion in profits last year. They couldn’t do that without us. As we get closer and closer to bargaining with Verizon, they need to know we are ready to fight for our rights.”

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