Self-Reliant
Tough
Relentless
Organizing
No Retreat
Growing
That solidarity and strength is about to be tested, but I have no doubt that we’re up to this challenge.

2017 could be one of the most dangerous years in CWA’s history. Safeguards for working people are being attacked, from safety and health regulations to overtime pay. The basic right of working people to organize and bargain a contract is being threatened by members of Congress doing the bidding of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other corporate groups. Wall Street and bank regulations put in place to prevent another economic collapse like we experienced during the Great Recession in the late 2000s are being dismantled.

Right to work (for less) has been discredited by economists, but that hasn’t stopped Republicans in the House of Representatives from introducing a national right to work law that would weaken our bargaining rights. Public workers have had the right to bargain for nearly half a century, but a legal challenge set to come before the U.S. Supreme Court later this year or next threatens the right of public workers to a union voice on the job.

Missouri and Kentucky passed right to work (for less) laws this year, instigated by corporate backer, and Iowa wants to drastically restrict bargaining for public workers. It’s just the start of such attacks on workers’ bargaining rights.

2017 could be a dangerous year. But it also could be a year of extraordinary accomplishment by CWA members. It could be the year that more of us than ever before engage in resisting rollbacks in our contracts and rights and fighting for the good jobs and good benefits we deserve.

In this issue of the CWA News, we’re rolling out “CWA STRONG,” a plan to build an even stronger union with members united to protect our jobs, wages, benefits and retirement.

CWA STRONG is a challenge to all of us, to create a shared understanding of the forces targeting our jobs, living standards and rights, and to reinforce the power and strength of our unity and solidarity so that we can continue to protect our contracts and rights on the job.

Our opponents are powerful and wealthy. This is an “all hands on deck” moment with no room for bystanders.

We know how to do this. We are a tough bunch.

CWA members have stayed on the picket line one day longer and one day stronger than management ever expected at Verizon, at FairPoint, at Momentive. We’ve mobilized for tough contract fights. We have stopped contracting out and brought back jobs sent overseas. We led the fight to stop the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a trade deal that would have given U.S. workers a raw deal and cost U.S. workers millions of jobs over time.

We’ve faced challenging times and powerful opponents before. Decades ago, we faced the upheaval of telecom divestiture. Today, we’re up against mergers that combine communications companies and content companies, the consolidation of airlines, deregulation of our industries, the corporate demand for offshoring and more.

As members, we know the value of a STRONG CWA and each of us must make sure that every co-worker at every workplace knows that as well.

Our work is cut out for us, but we are up to it. Make no mistake about it. We are CWA STRONG.
Facing massive opposition from labor groups and allies, anti-worker Labor Secretary nominee Andrew Puzder withdrew his name from consideration the day before his scheduled Senate hearing. The nomination of Alex Acosta, a former member of the National Labor Relations Board, is now going through the Senate confirmation process.

For months, CWAers and allies including Good Jobs Nation and the Working Families Party flooded senators’ offices with phone calls, rallying against Puzder’s disdain for working people.

Puzder finally withdrew as more reports surfaced that his fast food companies had cheated workers of their wages and that he had illegally employed an undocumented worker as a housekeeper.

CWA President Chris Shelton said, “The withdrawal of Andrew Puzder for consideration as Secretary of Labor is a victory for working families and demonstrates the power of grassroots resistance and mobilizing against corporate greed. The Department of Labor is supposed to be on the side of working people when it comes to keeping jobs safe, stopping employer abuse and safeguarding workers’ rights on the job.”

Puzder has expressed opposition to a fair minimum wage, overtime pay, paid sick leave and other workplace benefits, and told Business Insider that robots were better workers than people. “They’re always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, they never show up late, there’s never a slip-and-fall, or an age, sex or race discrimination case.”

Standing with Public Workers. A lot’s at stake for public workers.

Iowa became the latest state to attack the bargaining rights of public workers. A law passed on Feb. 16 allows public worker unions to bargain only about base wages. Bargaining over health care, evaluations, layoff policies and other issues no longer permitted. The arbitration process also was restricted.

Public workers nationwide are bracing for similar assaults, as well as the outcome of more than two dozen legal challenges that could strip away the bargaining rights of all public workers.

Right to Work Battles. Members of Congress and several states are pushing ahead on “right to work for less” legislation.

A national “right to work” bill was again introduced in the U.S. House in February, and Missouri and Kentucky adopted state laws earlier this year.

The only real purpose of these laws is to lower wages and weaken workers’ ability to bargain good contracts, the Economic Policy Institute said in a January 2017 comparison of RTW-Indiana and non-RTW New Hampshire. (Right to work was defeated in the New Hampshire House on Feb. 16.)

Weakening the NLRB. There’s a new push in the House of Representatives to roll back rulings by the National Labor Relations Board that have enabled workers to organize unions.

Expect changes that will throw out the commonsense reforms adopted by the Board to limit employer stalling tactics for union elections. Without that rule, employers again will be able to delay NLRB elections and wage campaigns of intimidation, from holding months of forced, captive audience meetings and one-on-one pressure sessions with supervisors to illegally firing and harassing union supporters.

Executive Order Would Limit Job Safety and Health. CWA, Public Citizen and the Natural Resources Defense Council are challenging an administration order that for every new regulation issued, two must be repealed. CWA filed the lawsuit in federal court.

This order makes no sense, especially for working people, because it requires government agencies to look at the costs of a new rule but ignore the benefits of that rule. It means, for example, that in order to adopt safeguards for nurses and health care workers from infectious disease, we’d have to give up the asbestos workplace standard plus a standard regulating some other cancer-causing workplace substance.

Executive Order on Overtime Pay. President Obama’s order that extended overtime pay to an additional 4.2 million workers remains on hold. This regulation meant that salaried workers earning up to $47,476 would receive time-and-a-half overtime pay when they worked more than 40 hours a week. The previous level, set in 2004, was $23,660. The rule was to take effect on Dec. 1, but it was challenged by a federal court judge and frozen by the administration.
CWA members and all workers are facing serious challenges. Opponents of workers’ rights and elected officials who side with corporate and Wall Street interests dominate all three branches of the federal government.

Here’s just some of what we’re up against:

- The “corporate cabinet,” now mostly confirmed by the Senate, is stacked with former Wall Street (Goldman Sachs) bankers who have offshored jobs and foreclosed on working people’s homes. The Secretary of Health and Human Services wants to turn Medicare into a private insurance voucher program, putting 57 million seniors at risk.

- Presidential appointments to agencies that oversee workers’ rights, like the National Labor Relations Board for private sector workers and the National Mediation Board covering airline and other transportation workers, are openly hostile to the rights of workers to organize and bargain.

- There are at least 26 court cases attacking the right of public workers to bargain collectively, with the first of these likely to reach the U.S. Supreme Court by early next year.

- The House of Representatives has introduced national “right to work for less” legislation.

THE CHALLENGE WORKERS FACE

Tough Bargaining

The challenge to all of us is to maintain our ability to negotiate good contracts, to lead the fight to keep good jobs in our communities and to look out for CWA members and working families.

Our goal is to create a shared understanding of the forces that want to derail the gains we’ve made, and with a united and energized membership, protect jobs, wages, benefits and retirement.

Our union is tough. We have a strong foundation of member mobilization, participation and activism that will be the basis of CWA STRONG. We’ll use the smarts we’ve acquired over decades of bargaining, organizing and mobilization to reach every member, strengthen the union in our workplaces and increase our ability to fight back.

It’s an “all hands on deck” moment. To succeed, CWA STRONG requires the commitment of every member. In this pro-Wall Street climate, this is the only way we can build on our successes and continue to fight to protect our jobs, living standards, contracts and rights.

Stay tuned for a schedule of CWA STRONG materials, training and mobilization. There will be extensive communication and discussion with CWA members to build this plan as members engage their co-workers at every CWA workplace.

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20,000 new members in airlines, telecom, the public sector, Cathay Airlines, Envoy, DIRECTV, and more are making CWA STRONG.

- Negotiated an industry-leading contract for 25,000 Flight Attendants at United Airlines, following the merger of United, Continental and Continental Micronesia Airlines.

- Nearly 40,000 workers from AT&T Mobility and AT&T Wireline joined forces to mobilize for good contracts.

- 39,000 members Verizon members, with the support of allies and members across CWA, took on Verizon and won following a seven-week strike, energizing the entire union movement.

- It took a 20 year campaign, but 15,000 passenger service agents at American Airlines won a CWA voice and an industry-leading first contract.

- Negotiated a contract with the new Chinese owner of Appliance Park (formerly GE), enabling nearly 4,000 IUE-CWA members to keep their union contract protection.

- Gained a seat on the Avaya Creditor Committee to safeguard the interests of our 550 active members and thousands of retirees while the company goes through bankruptcy.

- Negotiated the AT&T National Internet Contract that provides life-changing wages and benefits to workers.

- Building bi-partisan, congressional support for our call center legislation to keep jobs in the U.S. and bring jobs back from overseas.

- Our 700 members lasted one day longer, one day stronger than management at Momentive Performance Materials in Waterford, NY, where a 100-day strike beat back giveback demands.

- CWA activists and grassroots allies forced the withdrawal of an anti-worker Secretary of Labor nominee.

- CWAers and the Committee for Better Banks blew the whistle on Wells Fargo’s use of abusive sales goals and pressure tactics. The bank dropped that quota system; the CEO resigned.
Tough Bargaining

20,000 new members in airlines, telecom, the public sector, media, and more joined our union over the past year. Workers at Cathay Airlines, u Negotiated an industry-leading contract for 25,000 Flight Attendants at United Airlines, following the merger of United, Continental and u u Nearly 40,000 workers from AT&T Mobility and AT&T Wireline joined forces to mobilize for good contracts. 39,000 members Verizon members, with the support of allies and members across CWA, took on Verizon and won following a seven-week strike, energizing the entire union movement. It took a 20 year campaign, but 15,000 passenger service agents at American Airlines won a CWA voice and an industry-leading first contract. Negotiated a contract with the new Chinese owner of Appliance Park (formerly GE), enabling nearly 4,000 IUE-CWA members to keep their union contract protection. Negotiated the AT&T National Internet Contract that provides life-changing wages and benefits to workers. Gained a seat on the Avaya Creditor Committee to safeguard the interests of our 550 active members and thousands of retirees while the company goes through bankruptcy. Building bi-partisan, congressional support for our call center legislation to keep jobs in the U.S. and bring jobs back from overseas. CWAers and the Committee for Better Banks blew the whistle on Wells Fargo’s use of abusive sales goals and pressure tactics. The bank whistle on Wells Fargo’s use of abusive sales goals and pressure tactics. The bank...
More than 1,000 CWA women and men came to Washington, D.C., on Jan. 21 to stand up for justice and dignity for all. They joined a crowd that grew to more than half a million people, rallying near the U.S. Capitol then marching to the White House.

Activists also came together in hundreds of cities across the U.S. and around the world, holding rallies and actions, and pledging to stand together for as long as it takes.

CWA President Chris Shelton told CWAers,

“Today is the first day of our fight, and we will win.”
A new CWA report is exposing more about the offshoring of U.S. call center jobs and the adverse effects on U.S. jobs and consumers.

"Why Shipping Call Center Jobs Overseas Hurts Us Back Home" is a comprehensive look at how the growth of overseas call centers has hurt our communities and hurt workers by making it harder for CWA members to bargain good contracts. Companies that send work offshore are pushing down the wages and working conditions of all call center workers.

CWA represents more than 150,000 call center workers, in telecommunications, airlines, media, health care, public service and other sectors. Members know firsthand how employers have tried to use the threat of moving those jobs overseas to force workers to accept unfair contract demands.

Adding insult to injury, many companies force the soon-to-be-laid-off U.S. workers to train their foreign replacements. Wells Fargo in 2012 laid off hundreds of U.S. workers when it closed call centers in California, Florida, Pennsylvania and other locations, forcing those employees to train their Filipino replacements.

Big corporations — and some government agencies — are looking to take advantage of well-educated and skilled workers overseas while paying them far less than U.S. workers.

The new report spotlights not only the impact on U.S. workers and communities, but the growing risk to consumers of fraud and identity theft.

The Filipino call center industry now is the largest in the world, with more than 1,000 call center operations across a range of corporations, including Verizon, Citibank, Chevron, Aetna and more. Yet the industry still doesn’t follow global data security standards, and in 2015, a Filipino call center employee sold the financial information of Australian Citibank customers to a Sydney crime syndicate, costing those customers more than $1 million.

To keep good jobs in our communities, CWA is mobilizing support for the bipartisan “United States Call Center Worker and Consumer Protection Act.” The legislation:

- Requires that U.S. callers be told the location of the call center to which they are speaking;
- Provides callers the opportunity to be connected to a U.S. based center if preferred; and
- Requires U.S. companies that off-shore call center jobs ineligible for certain federal grants and taxpayer-funded loans.

As a general matter, employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement containing a Union security clause are required, as a condition of employment, to pay an agency fee equal to normal Union dues (and, where applicable, initiation fees). While the wording of these clauses is not perfectly uniform, none requires more than the payment of this agency fee to retain employment.

The Communications Workers of America policy on agency fee objections is the Union’s means of meeting its legal obligations to employees covered by Union security clauses and of effectuating those employees’ legal rights as stated in the applicable decisions of the United States Supreme Court (including Beck v. CWA) and the companion lower court and labor agency decisions. Under the CWA policy, employees who are not members of the Union, but who pay agency fees pursuant to a Union security clause, may object to the Union’s expenditures on which the fee is based. In addition to any other avenue of relief available under the law, objectors will have the option of challenging the Union’s calculation of the reduced fee before an impartial arbitrator appointed by the American Arbitration Association, and a portion of the objector’s fee shall be held in escrow while he or she pursues that challenge. Details on the method of making such a challenge and the rights accorded to those who do so will be provided to objectors along with the explanation of the fee calculation.

3. Objections for the period of July through June must be sent during May. Objections will be honored for one year unless the objection specifically states that it is continuing in nature. Continuing objections will be honored for as long as the agency fee payer remains in the bargaining unit. Agency fee payers who are new to the bargaining unit, or who are returning to the bargaining unit, may object within thirty days of receiving this notice. In addition, employees who resign Union membership may object within thirty days of becoming an agency fee payer. Employees filing these objections in either circumstance should so state that circumstance in their letter of objection. New bargaining unit members will be provided the notice prior to any demand being made upon them for the payment of agency fees. If, however, for any reason a new unit member begins paying agency fees prior to the receipt of this notice, he or she may object retroactively to the commencement of such payments and for the duration of the current annual objection period.

The letter of objection should include name, address, CWA Local number, and employer. Objectives must be sent to the Agency Fee Administrator, CWA, 501 Third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-2797.
CWA members at DIRECTV customer call and commercial retention call centers have ratified first contracts. The contracts cover 2,000 workers in Huntsville, Ala.; Tulsa, Okla.; Huntington, W.Va.; Eden Prairie, Minn., and Denver.

CWAers at DIRECTV Technical Service Centers in Alabama, California, Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, and Tennessee ratified their first contract. The 500 technical support workers will join 1,500 CWA-represented colleagues covered by the AT&T National Internet Contract.

A unit of 300 DIRECTV technicians, warehouse and administrative workers in Delaware, Maryland, New Mexico and Oregon reached a tentative first contract; the ratification vote is set for early March.

Workers at Momentive Performance Materials in Waterford, N.Y., ratified a new contract, ending almost 15 weeks on the picket line. The 700 members of IUE-CWA Locals 81359 and 81380 spent a long 100 days on the picket line, and never stopped fighting for good jobs, their families and their community.

Momentive workers and supporters took the fight to Wall Street and demonstrated outside the offices of Apollo Global, the private equity firm that owns Momentive and tried to force drastic cutbacks on workers and retirees.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo was directly involved in the negotiations and helped bring about the tentative settlement. Many New York State elected officials supported the Momentive workers and joined them on the picket line. The strikers were bolstered by support from union members in New York State and throughout the labor movement, religious and community leaders and elected officials.

In California and Nevada, CWA members are fighting back as AT&T closes call centers and forces workers to put in long, unscheduled overtime hours. Activists have picketed AT&T events in Las Vegas, held protests on highway overpasses, and joined Mobility workers in actions at wireless stores, to make sure the public knows how AT&T’s greed hurts workers and communities. CWAers also are collecting letters of support from elected officials throughout the states and have pointed out that AT&T’s failure to fully repair and upgrade its telecommunications systems is a serious issue especially for customers especially in rural areas.

AT&T had an incredibly successful 2016, posting profits of $13.3 billion, with revenue up 11.6 percent over 2015.

CWA members, working at wireline, Mobility, DIRECTV and Internet Services, make this company successful. We’re putting AT&T on notice: “We service the customers. We sell the plans. We maintain the network. We deserve our fair share.”