



Could News Reports About Verizon's Landlines Be True?



President's Message

By John "Jack" Brennan

In the latest dose of cold water to the face of retirees and company employees, the FCC is now weighing the merits of Verizon's latest spinoff of land lines in Florida, Texas and California. Most startling is an admission from Florida Power & Light (FPL) with which Verizon shares utility poles.

It has asked the FCC to reject the sale, saying that it has knowledge that

Verizon plans to be out of the wireline business within ten years.

If what FPL has put in sworn affidavits to the FCC is accurate, it's a horrible sign for those of us that count on the company for our pensions and benefits and who are rightly proud of the heritage it represents (see story pg 5). It is yet another reminder of why Verizon retirees count on the Association of BellTel Retirees in times of trouble and uncertainty.

For the past 19 years YOUR Association has been fighting against the economic assault on retirees' hard earned healthcare and pension benefits. Our efforts over that period have achieved many positive results, changed outcomes for the better and have not gone unnoticed.

With 21 million subscribers, **AARP Magazine** chronicled for its subscribers BellTel's pension de-risking issue leadership in a centerfold spread,

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Working Together We All Win

By Mike McFadden

Working class families in America are being stripped of the very benefits that organized labor fought for and won years ago after World War II. Americans' standard of living improved rather quickly given that our nation's factories and infrastructure had not been severely damaged after the war, as was the case throughout Europe.

In addition to advancing our infrastructure, corporations after negotiations with unions, realized that workers needed more than a one-year work contract to feel secure enough to purchase a new car or house. Thus the American dream began to take shape.

America became the supply depot for most of the world. Organized labor worked hard and bargained in good

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Meet Bill Lee: Lead Plaintiff in Retiree Federal Pension De-risking Litigation

In February, Retired BellTel President Bill Jones met with Bill Lee where they discussed their careers, families, the Association and ProtectSeniors.Org. Mr. Lee is the lead plaintiff in our Lee v. Verizon case.

Mr. Lee began his career with New York Telephone in Buffalo in 1972. He worked in tech support and the engineering group and really enjoyed the work. He also worked a year at American Bell International from Feb. 1978- Feb. 1979 where he said it was a good experience and a great education for his children. In 1980, he was promoted Data Circuit Subject Matter Expert and in 1990 he was the lead engineer for the New York lottery network. He spent decades of his career and retirement, training craft people who



Bill Lee and Retired Association President Bill Jones

installed circuits.

After he retired from NYNEX in February 1997, but before the Lee v. Verizon case, Mr. Lee taught training classes in Texas, California and Florida to Verizon employees on data circuits.

Regarding being one of the 41,000 retirees whose pensions were transferred by Verizon, he said he feels betrayed and discriminated against. He noted that MCI and GTE retirees, also under the Verizon umbrella, were not touched.

He wonders what will happen to his healthcare. He no longer has the same sense of security when he took retirement. He is concerned about what else the company will do arbitrarily to himself and fellow retirees.

He agreed to be the face of the Lee v. Verizon case because "someone had to do it," he said. "They needed someone in Dallas, I'm here so why not." He said that we all need to help when we can and the Association has been fighting in the trenches for us.

President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

that warned of the increasing number of U.S. companies seeking to convert their retirees' pensions to annuities.

The **Atlantic Magazine**, also ran a lengthy feature for its half-million subscribers, about BellTel gaining new legislation in the U.S. House and Senate to make it more difficult for companies to eliminate their retired employees healthcare benefits. Editorial Pages from the **New York Daily News**, **West Virginia Gazette**, **Chicago Sun Times**, **Miami Herald**, and **Las Vegas Sun** published opinion editorials advocating the protection of our pension and benefits. Add to that, over 115,000 viewers tuning in to the BellTel Retirees' **YouTube** channel.

The media talk is about YOUR Association's refusal to back down to a **Fortune 50** powerhouse, be it in the federal courts, shareholder proxy or on Capitol Hill.

YOUR Association is currently financing two lawsuits to protect Verizon retirees. The Lee v. Verizon federal litigation involves the transfer of 41,000 management retirees whose pensions were spun-off to Prudential Insurance, and converted to annuities.

The Murphy v. Verizon case focuses on Verizon's spin-off of 2,750 Directory Operations retirees' pensions and healthcare to Idearc, later SuperMedia and now DexMedia.

We also successfully stopped SuperMedia from suing individual retirees for simply protesting the threatened cancellation of earned healthcare benefits thanks to your continued support.

The Association of BellTel Retirees IS, THE ONLY organization fighting to protect the pensions and benefits of Verizon's retirees, including both management and union retirees.

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For 18 of those years YOUR Association has wielded power of the shareholder proxy and had a big impact. Retirees have 11 proxy wins versus Verizon, three by majority vote, with eight more negotiated off the ballot. That is far better than any Wall Street activist.

Earlier this year, with our sister organization ProtectSeniors.Org legislation was introduced in both houses of the New York State Legislature to provide retirees with protections if their pensions are sold out or transferred to an insurance company. We have also achieved similar legislation in Connecticut.



I and many others would venture to say without the Association, things could go a lot worse for all Verizon retirees. What do you think?

The financial contributions of our members and volunteerism of our board have allowed us to excel, but with Verizon suggested to be getting out of the wireline business, there could be more troubles ahead for retirees.

Please make a financial contribution today and also take a few moments to each recruit two new members today. The more retirees who join, the more impactful we can be. In unity there is strength. Let's keep this movement strong!

*FPL has knowledge that
Verizon plans to be out of
the wireline business
within ten years.*

And if that is not enough, we also have new federal legislation to protect retiree healthcare in Congress, to make it more difficult for companies to cancel or reduce retirees earned and guaranteed health benefits.

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UNITED, TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

Published by: Association of BellTel Retirees Inc.

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New York Launches Legislation To Provide Retirees Protections When Their Pensions Are Sold Out Or Transferred

New legislation in the New York State Senate and Assembly (S1092/A6796) has been introduced to provide protections to retirees whose pensions are sold-out or transferred by their former employers. The Association of BellTel Retirees along with its sister organization, ProtectSeniors.Org achieved this legislation.

New York Senator Tony Avella (D-11) introduced S.1092 and Assembly Member Peter Abbate introduced Assembly bill 6796.

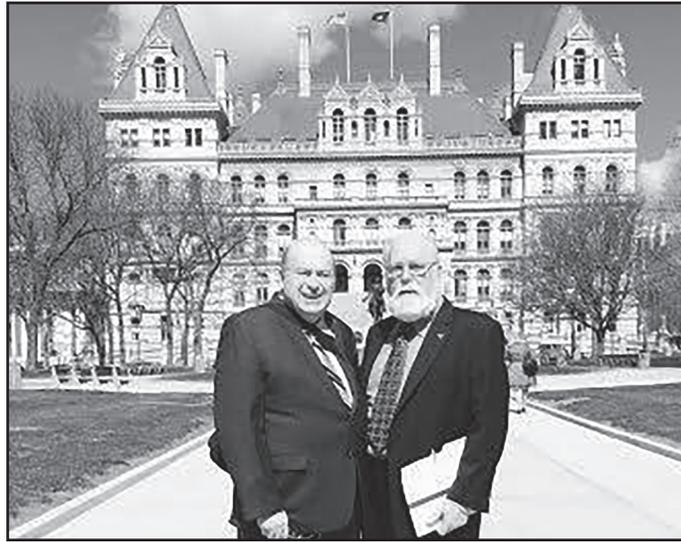
The bills require that companies, who convert pensions to annuities, provide proper disclosures related to the transaction for all impacted retirees. It also prohibits the subsequent transfer of the retirees' pension benefits without the confirmation of the New York State Superintendent of Financial Services that the insurer acquiring the group annuity contract has the financial strength to fulfill its long-term obligations to all retirees.

In January 2013, Verizon spun-off 41,000 retirees' pensions to Prudential, converting our federal ERISA law protected pensions to a group annuity, (governed at the individual state level).

Importantly, the new legislation also provides retirees with protections from creditor claims comparable to what they had under retirement pensions. It also requires that the individuals that are transferred from pension plans to annuity contracts receive a statement that they are no longer protected under the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and are entitled to coverage by the federal Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC).

Affected individuals would receive financial statements of the insurers' assets and be entitled to the identity and contact information for the New York life and health insurance guaranty association or any other substitute or replacement that provides coverage to annuitants residing in the state of New York, in case of default.

Senator Tony Avella said, "Retirees depend on their hard earned pensions



Association Chairman Jack Cohen and Board Member John Hyland at the New York State Capital in Albany.

and when companies go through the process of pension de-risking, they are playing a risky game with a retirees' pension. By leaving affected retirees with virtually none of the long standing federal pension protection mechanisms provided by ERISA and the PBGC, companies are shifting the burden of risk onto pensioners. This important legislation will provide protections to retirees whose pension plans have gone through pension de-risking and will ensure that these hard earned investments maintain the protections they had before their pension plans were transferred."

Assemblyman Peter Abbate said, "When people retire they should have the peace of mind that their pension benefits will not be stripped. By putting pension plans into annuity contracts, they strip the retirees of any of the protections that they currently have. I am proud to sponsor legislation that would put into law the necessary precautions that would help those who are subject to de-risking, ensuring retirees still have the important pension protection mechanisms they deserve."

Jack Cohen, Chairman of the Association of BellTel Retirees, and one of the 41,000 retirees whose pensions were transferred said, "Never in a million

years did any of us think we had to worry about our pension being sold out from under us. This legislation seeks to replace some of the uniform protections we came to expect under ERISA and mandates transparency for retirees regarding the financial status of the insurer holding our retirement assets."

James Casey, President of ProtectSeniors.Org said, "Retirees across New York and America are in the dark regarding

the rather new phenomena of pension de-risking. This important legislation at the state level simply provides retirees with full disclosure related to their pension assets and rights should their defined benefit pension assets be transferred."

OUR MISSION:

The Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. is dedicated to promoting the protection and enhancement of the pensions and benefits for all retirees and beneficiaries of the companies and subsidiaries that make up the Verizon and Idearc/SuperMedia/DexMedia Corporations.

The Association will convince the company to properly care for its thousands of dedicated former union and management employees.

The Association will conduct activities designed to educate elected federal, state and local representatives and promote the passage of legislation which will protect and guarantee, rather than invade our hard-earned pension and benefits fund.

Our Impact at the 2015 Verizon Shareowners' Meeting

By Jack Cohen, Chairman

Our Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. is far from a retiree social group. We are an activist organization and undoubtedly the most successful in the history of the world. Although we love to get together socially, especially at our annual membership meetings, our mission is to promote the protection and enhancement of pensions and benefits of all retirees under our umbrella. Our strategy is simple and we call it "L.L.P." which stands for: Legislation, Litigation, and Proxy.

On May 7, I represented and spoke on behalf of Shareowner Proxy Proposal #6. Both proposals deal with the subject of executive compensation.

Our retirees' Association has filed proposals for more than a decade that have improved the corporate governance of Verizon and its predecessors. Over the years, three of our proposals have received a majority shareholder vote. Eight proposals have resulted in the company agreeing to adopt the corporate governance or executive compensation policy changes we sought, in part or completely. Indeed, of the eleven "best practices" delineated by Verizon corporate management so proudly in a recent letter to their company's largest stockholders, NO LESS THAN FIVE have originated in the Association's proposals – proposals that Verizon's Board of Directors initially opposed and urged

shareholders to vote against. I mentioned this when I spoke at the 2015 annual shareholders meeting in Minneapolis, MN.

We don't always win and have had so many successes that it is very disappointing when a victory is not achieved each and every year. This year we didn't win, but our proposal gained an impressive 34.5% of all Verizon's shares voted. Association founder Bill Jones commented a clear mark of our progress, that years ago we would have celebrated that amount of votes in support of our proposal. So perhaps we are spoiled by our success.

Our proposal gained an impressive 34.5% of all Verizon's shares voted.

The annual Verizon's shareholder meeting provides a major opportunity to develop deeper lines of communications with the top brass of Verizon.

In addition to our proposal, my address to company executives, Verizon board members and shareholders concerned collective bargaining and that the



A union presence was once again active at the 2015 shareholder meeting. In this photo, retirees marched outside of Verizon's 2009 annual shareowners meeting.

coming contract talks not become another stand still between the company and its workers leading to more negotiations.

I brought up the "one-two punch" to management in the form of the sale of pension assets from Verizon to Prudential and our problems with the United Healthcare (UHC) Medicare Advantage health plan. The latter two were presented in the context that retired management should not be called upon to lend a hand in the event that talks fail, especially after being hit so hard by those doing the asking. Our union brothers and sisters were also proudly represented at the meeting.

After the business part of the meeting, I had an opportunity to meet Andrew Nebens, Senior V.P. of Global Compensation and Benefits, along with Marc Reed, Executive V.P. and Chief Administrative Officer.

Mr. Nebens, is the same person who signs your annual health care letter from Verizon. We had a long chat about the UHC Group Medicare Advantage Plan, and talked about retiree concerns. I found him very concerned about the many complaints we've had from our membership and very willing to participate in further discussions. This kind of interaction continues to be a key reason to continue our efforts.

Sometimes we do not have to have a clear and concise win at a shareholder proxy to have a win. Establishing respect with Verizon executives and building relationships make it worth attending and participating in these meetings.

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Verizon Exiting Wireline, Says FCC Filing: Follows 10 Years Of Dumping Assets & Obligations

In early 2015, Verizon announced its latest plan to sell wireline assets, this time to Frontier Communications, including fiber optic networks, phones and TV services in the states of Florida, Texas and California. The deal transfers 11,000 Verizon employees to Frontier. Verizon has yet to announce if any retirees' pensions might be sent over to Frontier.

In a stunning related admission, Florida Power and Light (FPL), one of the nation's largest electricity utilities and a company with whom our former employer shares utility poles with, has asked the FCC to reject the sale, citing Verizon's disclosure that it will be out of the wireline business within ten years. According to DSLReports.com, the utility company, which is familiar with Verizon's business plans, said Verizon told them their plans to exit the fixed-line broadband business.

In legal filings, FPL told the FCC, "Verizon has made it clear it intends to be out of the wireline business within the next ten years, conveying this clear intent to regulated utilities in negotiations over joint use issues and explaining that Verizon no longer wants to be a pole owner. Indeed, the current proposal (\$10.54 billion sale of Verizon facilities in Florida, Texas and California) proves this point."

Over the last 10 years, it has spun-off varied wireline assets, transferring current employees and even retirees and their pensions and benefits. For many involved, it has not worked out so well.

As the company divests of more wireline assets, even as it purchases AOL we all must stay vigilant about whom and what is next.

"All of the evidence shows that Verizon is abandoning its efforts to build out wireline broadband," said FPL. "There should be no doubt that Verizon's strategy to abandon wireline service in favor of wireless service extends beyond New York and Florida and beyond storm damage and rural areas."

Retirees' pension assets must not

become pawns in future spin-off transactions or de-risking transactions.

Here is a look at recent wireline asset divestiture at Verizon:

Hawaii landlines

◆ May 2005 – Verizon sells its Hawaii Telecom to Venture Capital firm, the Carlyle Group. Verizon Hawaii had 1,700 employees. In December 2008, Hawaii Telecom files bankruptcy.



- ◆ October 2006 - Verizon announces the spin-off of its Directory Operations business.
- ◆ November 2006 – Spin-off creates a new company, Idearc.
- ◆ January 2007 – Thousands of Verizon retirees receive notice they along with their earned pensions and benefits were included in the Idearc spin-off.
- ◆ March 2009 –Idearc files bankruptcy.
- ◆ December 2009 – Idearc emerges as SuperMedia.
- ◆ April 2013 – SuperMedia merges with DexOne.
- ◆ Ongoing Federal litigation, Murphy v. Verizon, sponsored by the Association of BellTel Retirees, aims to transfer the spun-off retirees back under the security of the Verizon pension and healthcare umbrella.



- ◆ March 2008 - Verizon sells landlines in three New England states (Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont) to FairPoint Communications for \$2.3 billion. 3,000 Verizon employees will receive paychecks, pensions and other post-employment benefits from FairPoint, not Verizon.
- ◆ October 2009- FairPoint files bankruptcy.



- ◆ July 2010 - Verizon spins-off 7 million customer accounts in 14 states (Arizona, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and California) for \$8.6 billion to Frontier Communications. 11,000 Verizon employees are transferred to Frontier.



Prudential

- ◆ In January 2013, Verizon spun-off 41,000 Verizon management retirees' pensions to Prudential Insurance, converting the pensions to annuities.
- ◆ Ongoing federal litigation, Lee V. Verizon is before the U.S. Court of Appeals by the BellTel Retirees and is currently awaiting a decision.

Frontier Communications...Again

- ◆ In February 2015 – Verizon announced its plan to sell-off wireline assets to Frontier, including fiber optic networks, phones and TV services in the states of Florida, Texas and California. The deal includes the transfer of 11,000 employees.

The track record, over the past ten years, proves 70,450 people were transferred by Verizon in the six spin-off transactions tabulated here. Each radically impacted the lives of all retirees and employees involved.

The history of these regular spin-off transactions, FPL's latest charges against Verizon and the history of past spin-off bankruptcies and disasters, is a reminder of why we need a strong Association of BellTel Retirees to be ready to fight for our protections.

Financial Report: Be A Reason For Our Success

Your Association of BellTel Retirees runs on volunteer power, but not that alone! To be so continuously effective on behalf of Verizon retirees we use top professionals and an office staff to support our litigation, proxy, pension review and communications efforts.

Our financial capability to pay for these professional services is necessary. Further, we rely on audited financial reports to always remain in full compliance with the law. Our office staff and accountant book the many transactions that take place each day, using accounting systems that satisfy our federal and state reporting requirements.

The Association elects to have its financial reports audited by external

certified public accounts each year. In 2013, the auditors found that our financial statements “present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. at December 31, 2013.” A copy of our audited financial reports has been filed with the New York State Attorney General.

2014

The following are brief highlights of our financial results for fiscal year 2014. Our 2014 financial records will be audited in June 2015 prior to filing IRS Form 990 which is a non-profit tax return. BellTel also complies with state reporting and registration requirements in New York and in every state in which our members reside.

REVENUE

Contributions in 2014 were \$955,000 which represents a small decline versus 2013 when contributions were \$965,000. Individual donations averaged \$33.24 in 2014.

EXPENSE

Total operating expense for the year was \$884,000 on a normalized basis representing a savings of 4% compared to 2013.

Professional fees include legal, accounting and temporary consulting services and accounted for 23% of overall expense in 2014. This category is driven in large part by the continuing need for legal support in multiple critical court actions supporting our

Working Together We All Win

(Continued from page 1)

faith with companies to EARN not only longer term contracts, but better wages and future compensation in the form of pensions and health benefits. Union and management employees and the companies benefited by that bargaining and security. Corporations were able to take advantage by providing less in cash wages then by promising future perks in the form of pensions and healthcare in retirement. It was a time of dedicated loyalty by employees.

Over recent decades, things changed. Today, the workplace and unions are under attack by a new generation of corporate greed. As workers' wages and benefits decline, corporate profits increase, and executives personally reap huge benefits in what's been called a new Gilded Age.



Mike McFadden, served on the Association's board from September 2006 - April 2010, and is an IBEW retiree.

In 1965 chief executives at large companies earned about 20 times more than the average worker. In 2013 executives made 295.9 times more than their workers according to the Economic Policy Institute.

The membership of the Association of BellTel Retirees is made up of both former union and former management people who have been working together for many years to protect the benefits that were EARNED during our careers. To my knowledge,

we are the only retiree alliance in America with the sole mission of protecting your earned benefits. WE NEED EACH OTHER NOW MORE THAN EVER. Recently, the Association was able to donate help to union telephone workers of Fairpoint, who were on strike in New England, and the workers were thankful for the Association's help.

More than ever before, we need to

continue to work together to protect our retirement years – and the earned benefits that make that retirement secure.

I completely understand that there are those of us, both union and management retirees, that harbor hard feelings from events that occurred during our working lives. But you cannot deny the fact that we built this company together. I still remember incidents on the picket lines during a strike or work stoppage that angered me greatly and still do today. **HOWEVER LIVING IN THE PAST IS A MISTAKE.**

When I started out as a union represented company employee many years ago, I was taught by my older union peers that, “In unity there is Strength.” All of us — working together in retirement — are our only chance of keeping our benefits. We do not have to love each other but we do need each other, both actively and financially.

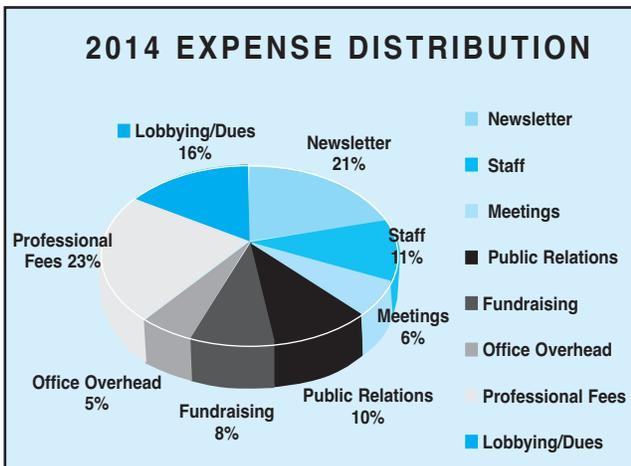
We encourage all former employees whether they are former union or management to join the Association of BellTel Retirees today and also make a financial contribution to support this great non-profit fighting to protect our EARNED retirement benefits.

Financial Report:

fellow retirees against Verizon. Details surrounding these efforts can be found on our web site and are addressed in our newsletters.

The cost of publishing and distributing the BellTel newsletter, including printing, postage and PR/media costs, was \$204,000 in 2014. To help keep printing/postage costs down, we continue to purge our mailing list of the names of individuals who have fallen out of contact with us and we rebid contracts for key services to ensure we are paying competitive rates.

Your Association's media communications effort provides a spotlight for the many and varied retiree concerns we advocate for. Our capability to rapidly generate compelling news coverage is a significant threat to the reputation of any entity thinking of bringing harm to our retirees. With a record as one of the most successful groups in our nation advocating for the plight of retirees, we have drawn critical attention to our shareowner proxy victories, to both Verizon's and our own annual meetings, the pension spin-off litigation fight, and the plight of Verizon's Directory Operations retirees, shamelessly exiled by the company in one of its numerous spinoff transactions.



Maintaining a visible presence in online, broadcast and print media, your Association's actions have been prominently chronicled over the last year in **AARP Magazine, The Atlantic and Plan Sponsor magazines, Crain's New York Business, Boston.com and Newsday.** Our messaging has also loomed large on prominent editorial pages including, the **New York Daily News, Albany Times Union, Charleston Gazette, Miami Herald, Chicago Sun Times** and many more.

As more and more people take to the internet to get their news and information, the Association has stepped up its activities on social media. For instance, in early 2015 BellTel's YouTube channel surpassed 115,000 views from our growing library of 46 original videos of

Verizon retirees expressing their opinions and the important goals and objectives of the organization.

BellTel staffing costs include wages, payroll taxes, contract and temporary help and represent 11% of our total operating expense. Wage expense is offset by 10,000 hours of volunteer labor contributed by the Association board members each year.

Our lobbying allocation to ProtectSeniors.Org increased to \$165,000 in 2014. ProtectSeniors.Org continues to pursue our important legislative agenda including the protection of our Verizon healthcare subsidy and the oversight of Medicare and Social Security issues. State legislative efforts to protect against the de-risking of pension assets took on increased importance for ProtectSeniors.Org in 2014.

The Association ended 2014 with pre-audit total financial assets of \$284,000.

Please consider a generous contribution today to support these efforts.

Thank you.
Bob Gaglione
Treasurer



ASSOCIATION OF BELLTEL RETIREES INC.

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The Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization representing retirees and active employees of Verizon, its subsidiaries and retirees who were transferred to Idearc/SuperMedia/DexMedia.

Over 200 Participate In Association's 19th Annual Meeting In Dover, Delaware

Nearly 140 retirees traveled to Dover, Delaware and another sixty-plus tuned in via a live internet broadcast for the 19th annual membership meeting of the Association of BellTel Retirees.

Chairman Jack Cohen began the 2015 meeting, held at the beautiful Dover Downs Hotel and Casino, by reminding the crowd of what he was told throughout his working career. That is, retirement was a time to enjoy yourself and to spend time with family. However, Jack and so many others present agreed it has not been as leisurely as projected, specifically because of the need for retirees to fight back against our former employer. He then spoke of the needs to run the Association, requires over 10,000 volunteer hours annually to fight for the pension and benefits of Verizon retirees.

"This is the finest group of people I have ever been associated with," he said.

Jack Cohen reminded the crowd, that the company they worked for is not the same one that exists today, "Mother Bell died long ago and we are on our own."

Association President Addresses Retirees At The Meeting

Association President Jack Brennan took the podium and read a letter from retired BellTel President Bill Jones, who offered his greetings and encouraged the membership to continue its support of the Association. He said it was the only organization out there solely looking out



Association president Jack Brennan addresses the membership.

for Verizon retiree interests.

Mr. Brennan introduced two representatives from Prudential, David Casto and Dennis Pante, who were there to field individual questions and to address any concerns the membership had regarding their annuities and Prudential. Mr. Brennan reminded the membership



Prudential executive, Dave Castro answers retiree questions.



Attorney Curtis Kennedy provides a litigation update.

that the Association's problem is with Verizon alone, not with Prudential, since Verizon did not give retirees a choice regarding the future of their pensions. Mr. Brennan explained that Prudential has been working with the Association to ensure a smooth transition for the 41,000 retirees.

He then discussed the importance of financially supporting their sister organization, ProtectSeniors.Org, which has achieved federal and state retiree friendly legislation in 2015.

"If you think that you would still have, what you have now if it were not for these organizations, you have another guess coming. A lot of your benefits would have been gone already. We have really held the lines for you folks," Mr. Brennan said referring to protecting the members' total retirement package benefits compared to many other retirees across America.

Lee v. Verizon Update

The Association's Special Litigation Counsel Curtis Kennedy addressed the crowd next. "There is a rampant indifference to retirees in the United States," Mr. Kennedy exclaimed.

Mr. Kennedy updated the crowd on the status of the Lee v. Verizon case. He argued the Lee case before the Federal Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans in February. He argued that the transfer was highly discriminatory.



Q&A session at the annual member meeting.

2015 Annual Meeting

“They carved out 41,000 people and let the others stay,” he said referring to the pension transfer. The case is still being decided. As of our editorial deadline a decision was still pending.

“There are a lot of people (all across corporate America) paying attention to this case,” Mr. Kennedy said.

Murphy V. Verizon Case Update

The Murphy v. Verizon case involves nearly 2,750 directory operations retirees’ pension and healthcare plans being sold off to a newly created spin-off company Idearc. That company later emerged as SuperMedia after Idearc declared bankruptcy and it is now one step further removed from its telephone industry heritage as a company now called DexMedia.

In the Murphy case, the Association argued how financially unstable Idearc was, claiming Idearc as doomed to fail. Idearc’s creditors had also filed a lawsuit with Verizon questioning how adequately Idearc was funded. The creditors’ case and the Murphy case was assigned to the same federal judge and Mr. Kennedy told that crowd that the judge ruled that “Idearc was adequately funded but it was a victim of economics and the case was dismissed.”

In response to that, Mr. Kennedy has appealed the lower federal court’s Murphy case decision to the United States Supreme Court, the highest court in the land. Mr. Kennedy is awaiting feedback from the Supreme Court.

He said that “if it were not for the Association, you (the membership)

would have been run over a long time ago.” He warned the crowd that the “benefits that they have now could be gone tomorrow.” All legal updates are available on the Association’s website.

Annual Membership Involvement

In his closing remarks, President Jack Brennan asked that the membership help out by visiting a local legislative office where they live, to write to their local newspapers and representatives about our retiree issues. The Association needs every retiree to help out anyway they can, whether it is by volunteering, being part of a telephone or email tree or

If it were not for the Association, you would have been run over a long time ago.

by donating their time. Importantly he reminded people that ongoing financial support is necessary to keep up these fights for retirees on so many fronts.

We would like to thank all the retirees and their families for attending the annual meeting, joined via live streaming and those who participated in our video interviews. The Association board would also like to give a special thank you to David Simmonds and everyone who helped coordinate the event and to Curtis Kennedy who traveled far to update the membership on the status of our two federal litigations.

We look forward to seeing you at our 20th annual meeting in 2016.

Voices of Our Members



Dear Association,

I thought this might be of interest to my fellow retirees. Although I was in high school, I remember the time well when eight-party lines were common. Little did I know at that point that I would have a telephone company career, and marry a "telephone man."

I received this poster from a former co-worker, an engineer for the company, in the White Plains office.

Alice Balassone
Poughkeepsie NY



Dear Association,

Just a note to say ‘Thank you’ for all you do for retirees. The newsletter gives information informing share-owners of Verizon’s shareowners proxy.

Sincerely,
Mary Deveraux



CWA member Sue Anderson speaks of retiree concerns at the annual meeting.

KEEP INFORMED

Do we have your current email address on file? Please email us at association@belltelretirees.org with your current email address. It is also important to ensure that you receive Association of BellTel Retirees email bulletins. Please make certain our email address is included in your “accepted email list.” **We do not share or sell your personal information.**

Retiree Spotlight: PURPLE HEART AWARDED 45-PLUS YEARS LATER

The story of BellTel retiree and Purple Heart recipient Eugene Lang's immigration to America sounds more like a pitch for a hot summer blockbuster movie than anything else.

The setting is 1956 Hungary in the midst of the Hungarian Revolution against communist forces re-attacking the country. A 9-year-old boy and his family flee to Austria with the hopes of coming to America. He and his family try to keep their cool through a taxi ride, that includes stops every few miles by soldiers in tanks checking the car for guns. Then they continue on foot, led by a series of escorts who communicate via whistles.

The final escort dangerously navigates them through a series of buried land mines, until finally seeing the Austrian flag in site. Next the young family must travel the rest of the route alone, hoping that they can make it without getting captured or killed.

The Lang family made it safely over the border, where they went to a police station and asked for political asylum. They then traveled to Salisbury Austria, where they lived in old Army barracks.

The family was originally told it would take a year before they could go to America, but were sent to the U.S. only two short weeks later. Finally upon landing at the New Jersey Army Base, the family would be met by a paternal Aunt, who Eugene's father had not seen in decades. The story of their journey ends with Eugene's first subway ride to his new life in the Bronx.

Eugene Lang's father would go on to meet New York Mayor Robert Wagner and the Mayor introduced Eugene's father to a Hungarian business man who owned a spice import and export factory so Eugene's father could get a job. Eugene enters school and learns English within a year. Eugene entered college with the hopes of studying Electrical Engineering. However, he lost his matriculation, so on a friend's recommendation, applied to work at New



Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) presents Mr. Lang with a Purple Heart.

York Telephone as a frame man. He scored well on the Maze exam and had an electrical background, so he was hired as a switchman straight out.

In 1967, he was only a week out of panel school when he was drafted into the U.S. Army. He chose to enlist, was sent to Fort Dix and then Germany, where he was then trained to use heavy weapons.

After the Tet Offensive in 1968, Mr. Lang went to fight in North Vietnam. Following a short visit to the U.S. Mainland and training on M16's, he boarded a flight to Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam.

"I will never forget the day. It was April Fool's Day, and there I was landing in Cam Ranh Bay," Mr. Lang recalled with a laugh.

Mr. Lang was assigned to the 1st Air Calvary Division, where his unit worked with the U.S. Marines. A month later, his life would change forever.

It was in May 1968, and his unit was attacked at the "Landing Zone Snapper." He was ordered to run up hill and fire the 81mm mortar that was waiting. Along the path up he dodged enemy fire, but he was hit with shrapnel from his right ankle to just under his knee. The young soldier was taken by helicopter to Dong Ha, where he was treated before later rejoining his unit.

Upon his discharge, like so many other soldiers, Mr. Lang took a month to recover from his time in Vietnam.



Eugene Lang, 1968 Vietnam.

"It was pure horror. Whoever said war is hell wasn't kidding," Mr. Lang recalled.

He then resumed his education and career at New York Telephone. He worked in the Crossbar 1 Panel Office as a switchman in the Bronx until 1981. He was transferred to Yonkers, NY, was in Tarrytown for six months, attending Crossbar 5 School, and then to White Plains.

1990 began Mr. Lang's 22 year journey to fight for his Purple Heart, given to soldiers wounded in battle by enemy fire. However, Dong Ha, where Mr. Lang was treated, was a temporary aid station. His medical records were lost, meaning he was not recognized for his efforts in battle.

Up until 1990, he was not comfortable talking about his time in Vietnam. However, the Gulf War led him to open up.

Then in 2009, Mr. Lang was introduced to a retired Army colonel and lawyer, Donald Singer by a mix of good luck and good nature.

By 2011, Mr. Singer managed to obtain signed and notarized affidavits from Mr. Lang's company commander and three members of his unit. His story made the front page of *New York's Journal News*, which captured the attention of U.S. Senator Charles Schumer.

"I had friends who were shocked to find out I was a Vietnam Vet, and then

all of the sudden I am on the front page,” Mr. Lang said.

The Senator took up Mr. Lang’s cause and helped him receive his Purple Heart. In fact it helped obtain a 100 page document full of unit records, and records of other soldiers who had missing medical records.

In August 2012, Sergeant Eugene Lang, was awarded the Purple Heart, presented by Senator Schumer.

“This is an important American tradition. We honor valor. We honor service. Gene exemplifies the best of America,” Senator Schumer said.

Mr. Lang retired from Verizon in 2006, a few months shy of his 40th anniversary. He felt it was time to go, because new advances with technology were beginning to remove the need for switch operators.

Mr. Lang spends his retirement volunteering with local veteran organizations. He recently participated in an event where high school students share first person perspectives on historical events with vets. He also shares a love of photography with his wife Enid.

Mr. Lang became acquainted with The Association of BellTel Retirees after receiving a letter about them from his union, CWA Local 1103.

Mr. Lang is unhappy with changes he has seen at the company. In his retirement, his main concern has been the increasing medical expenses and rising co-pays, as his medical benefits have been scaled down. He is also concerned about medical benefits for retirees’ spouses and the future of the workers still in the company.

“I had co-pays that were \$5 flat. Now some of my medications are as much as \$60 each. It’s no longer Ma Bell who cares for you. As far as I’m concerned, Ma Bell died in 1984. You put in so many years for them, why can’t they care for us? We built the company with hard work, and without us it would have went under,” he shared.

Seniors Are Still Hesitant To Use The Internet

It seems as though many people use the internet, but there are still those who have not embraced the technology.

According to the Pew Research Center, 41 percent of seniors do not use the internet at all, while 53 percent do not have broadband access at home. The survey’s findings show that lack of familiarity with the internet and skeptical attitudes are the reasons why the 65+ age demographic do not go online.

In this day in age, it is important that everyone consider ways to embrace the internet. The Association has a Twitter, Facebook and YouTube channel which encourage easy online interaction amongst its fellow retirees, (see article below).

FCC Senior groups and libraries offer many free digital literacy workshops to teach older Americans about the digital world.

Last year, Dosomething.org partnered with ‘grandparents gone wired’ where teenagers and twenty-somethings, taught people 65+ about basic internet skills and capabilities. With that in mind, why not reach out to your own grandchildren, children or neighbors and have them teach you about the internet, online shopping, web browsing, and easier access to research health information? Once you learn, you may not know how you lived without it.

The Association is committed to communications via new means of technology and we encourage you to become comfortable with the benefits of the internet. By doing so, we can communicate with you faster. Just think, you can more easily connect with your children and grandkids online who live near or far away.

Let’s Expand Our Reach Online!

Do you have a computer or a smart phone? Do you want to know the latest about retiree news and be in contact with other retirees?

If so, we urge you to visit our YouTube video channel, where over 115,000 viewers have already done so.

We also encourage you to visit our Twitter and Facebook pages. Twitter is an instantaneous short, direct to the point messaging service using less words like a telegram. Facebook encourages people to chat and reconnect with old colleagues or share vintage work photos. Please be a part of our Facebook community.

Watch our channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/BellTelRetirees>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/associationofbelltelretirees>

Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/belltelretirees>

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VERIZON BUSINESS NEWS

Verizon acquiring AOL

Verizon announced that it plans to purchase AOL (formerly America Online) for \$4.4 billion or \$50 per share. Verizon said that the transaction is aimed to boost its strength in advertising and other mobile platforms.

AOL's key assets include: The Huffington Post, Tech Crunch, Engadget, MAKERS and AOL.com.

Verizon announced its acquisition of AOL as it starts a mobile video streaming service featuring TV and original shows. According to Bloomberg, by Verizon "pairing AOL's so-called programmatic ad technology -- which uses high-powered machines to buy and sell ad space -- with mobile content, Verizon will get a new revenue stream at a time its main business faces increasing competition from challengers like T-Mobile US Inc."

Verizon CEO and Chairman Lowell McAdam said, "Verizon's vision is to provide customers with a premium digital experience based on a global multi-screen network platform. This acquisition supports our strategy to provide a cross screen connection for customers, creators and advertisers to deliver that premium customer experience."

Tim Armstrong, AOL's Chairman and CEO will continue to lead AOL after the deal closes. The deal is expected to close this summer after regulatory approvals.

Verizon first quarter 2015 results

Verizon Communications announced its first quarter fiscal results for 2015. The company reported a profit of \$4.34 billion or \$1.02 in earnings per share, due to customer growth in wireless and broadband.

Verizon Wireless added 565,000 long-term wireless contracts up 4.8 percent from the prior quarter. Verizon hosts 102.6 million long-term wireless contracts and 108.6 million connections overall.

Verizon's Wireline segment reported continued strong results. It has grown by 4% for the 11th consecutive quarter.



In this quarter, Verizon Wireline added 133,000 new FiOS internet connections and 90,000 new FiOS video connections. Verizon continues to replace portions of its copper network with fiber optics for what they say is 'a more reliable and resilient infrastructure.'

In the first quarter 2015, Verizon migrated 47,000 customers over to fiber with a goal of moving 200,000 customers by the end of 2015.

Total operating revenue in the first quarter was \$32 billion.

Verizon reaches deal with Cogent

Verizon and data traffic firm Cogent announced an interconnection agreement to improve internet quality for Verizon's FiOS and DSL customers.

"Cogent and Verizon have entered into a long-term, bilateral commercial interconnection agreement related to their public IP networks," the companies said in their joint statement. "The interconnection agreement ensures customers on the two networks can continue to exchange data in an effective and efficient manner."

Verizon also made a similar agreement with Level 3 communications.

Verizon Is Offering Skinnier TV Packages

In mid-April, Verizon's FiOS began offering a "skinny bundle" TV package option. The skinny bundle has base channels including local television networks and cable networks such as AMC and CNN, with the option for customers to choose among seven genre-specific channel packs.

Some are unhappy with the skinny packages. Disney (parent of ESPN), Fox (Fox Sports), and NBC Universal, argue that their contracts with Verizon prohibit their channels from being removed from the core TV package.

ESPN has filed a lawsuit against Verizon, claiming breach of contract. Verizon maintains it is within their rights, and are simply trying to give consumers more choice.

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