

# BELLTEL RETIREE

The Official Newsletter for Union and Management Retirees and Employees of Bell Atlantic, GTE, Idearc/SuperMedia/DexMedia, NYNEX, MCI, Verizon and its Subsidiaries. Paid for by contributions from Verizon and Idearc/SuperMedia/DexMedia retirees.

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## Big Win for Retirees in Virginia

Anyone who wonders whether a persistent, dedicated individual, by harnessing and leveraging the collective support of fellow retirees, can help move mountains, meet Dave Edmunds.

A member of the Association of BellTel Retirees since the beginning and a key leader at our sister organization, ProtectSeniors.org, Dave was one of the driving forces behind recent legislation passed in Virginia that provides crucial protections for retiree pension holders living in the state. It stands as one of the fine achievements that this impactful organization has accomplished recently.

Dave was a 32-year employee of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company (C&P Tel) in West Virginia, retiring with a well-earned pension in 1991. In 2013, he was one of the 41,000 retirees whose pensions were spun off by Verizon and sold to Prudential, without warning or consent.

Like many of his fellow retirees, Dave was not only blindsided but angry at the injustice. After a lifetime of hard work to help build the company, it sold off his nest egg seemingly without a second thought.

But as the saying goes, “Don’t get angry, get even.”

Dave became even more active at ProtectSeniors.org, which leads public affairs and lobbying efforts on our collective behalf, realizing that channeling his energy into the organization was the way to affect change not just for himself, but for all the other retirees who might face a similar fate.



*Virginia Governor Ralph Northam and the Virginia Legislature say yes to retiree de-risking protection bill championed by ProtectSeniors.Org*

Two years ago, he moved to the state of Virginia and as a key leader at ProtectSeniors.org, began the long, sometimes

*(Continued to page 6)*

## Report from Verizon Shareholder Meeting

By Jack Cohen

At 8:30 am Pacific Time on May 3, the 2018 Verizon Annual Shareowners meeting in Seattle promptly began.



Early on I had an opportunity to connect briefly with Marc Reed, the company’s Executive VP and Chief Administrative Officer and Andrew Nebens, Senior VP of Global Compensation & Benefits. The auditorium was large, in fact too large. There were lots of empty seats. I suspect Verizon had no more than maybe 125 attendees.

There was a small contingent of CWA members present and lots of Teamsters. After the meeting, chairman McAdam was surrounded by them.

The speeches went very well, and a few people approached me with messages of appreciation afterward. On behalf of myself, as a shareowner, and on behalf of the Association, I presented both of our 2018 proxies.

I am personally disappointed with the Clawback proposal results, although we did increase our vote tally from 32% in 2017 to 35.4% in 2018, pending a full tally of all shares voted.

Last year our SERP proxy proposal gained slightly more than 8% in its first year on the ballot. This year we attracted 28% of the vote, more than tripling the support from 2017. Being that this was only our second year out on this proposal, it shows great prospects for 2019.

Of particular note, the Association won a very important endorsement for its two proposals from Institutional Shareholder Services. That is a shot across the bow to the company!

## Retiree Survey Results –

### WE HEAR YOU! THEY HEAR YOU!

Can you hear us now? According to a large and comprehensive survey the Association conducted of its members, the answer from Verizon ought to be an emphatic “Yes!”

That is because 74% of our members are Verizon shareholders, meaning 99,000 of our 134,000 members are co-owners of the company. With those kinds of numbers,

they better be listening.

The survey, conducted in April 2018, received some 2,400 responses, a huge sample size and more than enough for it to be statistically accurate.

Of those who own shares, 44% hold more than 500 shares, while 24% - nearly a quarter – own 1,000 shares or more.

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## President's Message

By John "Jack" Brennan

**W**hy would anyone ever bother to purchase insurance? Why do we even need it?

From a healthcare perspective, we all know that some day we or our family will have an injury or serious illness. A surgery and a few days in the hospital can easily be tens of thousands of dollars. Health insurance protects you and your family when ill health strikes.

If you have ever had to replace a vehicle or face litigation after a car accident or lived through a catastrophic weather event, as struck my family home on the New Jersey shore when Superstorm Sandy hit, you recognize the value of being properly protected.

When I first got involved in the Association some 20 years ago, pre-Verizon when NYNEX and Bell Atlantic merged, it was because I wanted to be active in protecting and fighting for the promises we were made in our working years. A promise made should be a promise kept, right?

The concerns for retirees have only mushroomed in the years since. We have all seen the corporate thinking change radically. Companies that once took pride in being among the largest employers in a community now send their jobs overseas to save a couple of bucks per hour. The incentive seems more about adding to the bulging wallets of modern CEO's making some 350 times the average workers wage, while top deputies wait for their turn at bat.

What does this all mean to us? I think the answer is VIGILANCE and to prepare ourselves for when financial

misfortune can strike again at the hands of Verizon.

Regardless of how Corporate America got to this point, institutionally it's what we are left with now, as corporate titans are advised by fleets of CPA's and lawyers whose job it is to find new loopholes to profitability, often at the expense of retirees, the easiest targets.

At Verizon it has meant the diminishment of investing in modernizing wireline. It's led to selling off legacy assets and dispatching workers (retirees too) to new companies that stumble and face financial hardship. Another scheme is outsourcing our earned pensions and converting those to insurance annuities to save a couple of bucks.

**My wife and I donate  
to the Association  
because I see firsthand  
the impact they make  
and recognize that it is  
the only thing standing  
between us and  
the steamroller**

It's exactly why we need the vigilance only offered via the Association of BellTel Retirees.

I see the Association as an insurance policy to protect my retirement. It is a security blanket, or perhaps a bullet-proof vest, allowing us to sleep at night, knowing that if some executive with a new cost cutting scheme wants to mess with the retirement security I worked 38 years to earn (I was age 17 when I began), our Association, together with its professionals and volunteers, will punch them right back in the nose.

When the company fully expects retirees to be easy pickings, there is

zero counterbalance. Look at all of the other great companies and how worse off their retiree have it than us. They were steamrolled!

If Verizon execs need to watch their step and consider the consequences of their actions, because they understand how ferocious we will be in countering them – as shareholders, in the federal courts, Department of Labor, Congress or through ProtectSeniors.Org's growing presence at the state level - then we are ever-present having an impact.

In the coming weeks when you make decisions on organizations to support and be involved with, please think of this. Like you, I am a retiree and I support many good causes and charities. My wife and I donate to the Association because I see firsthand the impact they make and recognize that it is the only thing standing between us and the steamroller.

Please join me and the board in having a big impact now and in the future years of our retirement and its protection.

### KEEP INFORMED

Do we have your current email address on file? If it has changed, please email us at [association@belltelretirees.org](mailto: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."

### — ADVERTISEMENTS —

All representations made in advertisements are solely the responsibility of the advertiser. The Association of BellTel Retirees is not responsible for any such representations. The Association does not endorse any advertiser.

# Shareholder Proxy Campaign is a Marathon

Association Chairman Jack Cohen is used to traveling across the country to make sure he is at Verizon’s annual shareowners meeting, which the company often holds as far away from the majority of its former employees as possible.

This year, Mr. Cohen was in the Pacific Northwest in (surprisingly sunny) Seattle to present our proxy proposals to fellow shareholders and try to get some face time with senior executives to make sure they understand that the hundreds of thousands of retirees remain an important part of the Verizon family.

“Retirees are an entity underutilized by the company and that is to the company’s detriment,” he said during a sit-down interview just hours before the annual meeting.

The trip out West is the culmination of a months-long campaign, pursued and sustained by the top leadership of the Association to win support for the proxy proposals we sponsor.

While the meeting took place in early May, for BellTel the proxy season begins the previous fall, as Mr. Cohen and Association attorneys file with Verizon and the federal Securities and Exchange Commission to put the proxies on the ballot. This year, our provisions were to claw back excessive compensation for executives whose actions harm the company and to prohibit above-market earnings for senior executives on certain retirement and deferred income accounts.

After the filings are made, the real campaign begins.

Each year the Association researches the important question of who, exactly, are the biggest owners of Verizon stock. Our board leaders track down the largest institutional investors and write personal letters from a shareowner’s perspective.

In Mr. Cohen’s case, he outreached by writing to the heads of the 13 institutional

funds with the biggest holdings, which own a combined 30 percent of Verizon.

That includes Vanguard Mutual Funds, which, with a staggering holding of 290 million shares, owns approximately 7 percent of Verizon. Mr. Cohen made the case for the proposals, which would better align the interests of the company with the interests of shareholders, benefiting all Verizon stock owners.

This very logic convinced the prestigious and independent Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS) one of the most respected voices on Wall Street, to endorse both proposals put forth by the Association, a major victory for an advocacy group such as ours and a clear signal to the company that we are a force to be reckoned with.

At the same time, Verizon has an entire team of paid professionals seeking to wrangle votes from the very same shareowners.

“You need to go out and make your case and that’s what we did and will continue to do,” said Mr. Cohen. “We don’t just talk about these proposals, we track down the influencers and we put it in front of them and stand toe-to-toe with the company in presenting our arguments.”

Throughout this process his fellow members of the Association Board do their part as well. Board members fan out, targeting appeals to other major institutional shareholders and pension funds, such as the New York State Teachers Retirement System and TIAA Cref, which controls 21 million shares.

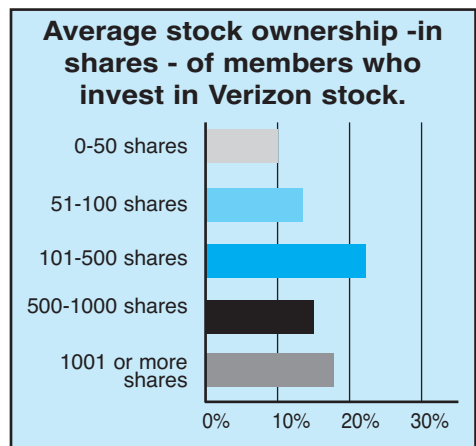
“We tell our story, share our perspectives, as shareholders and retirees, on what we have seen and what, in our judgment, will most benefit the corporation and its owners as a whole,” said Mr. Cohen.

As the Association’s leadership is campaigning among the most influential financial and investment powerhouses in the nation, our members are hearing a similar pitch.

Through videos on our YouTube channel, our Facebook page and via Twitter, we are sharing the latest with you and explaining why our proposals are in the best interests of shareholders. We are also reaching out via US Mail, email, reminding members that as co-owners of the company, we have the power to make our voices heard.

Our Chairman, who delivered a strong argument in favor of the proxies to the meeting, also made sure to track down top Verizon executives and remind them that retirees are the company’s co-owners, ambassadors and institutional memory. The Association’s proposal to claw back compensation from executives who engage in misconduct earned 35.4% of the vote, up from 32% in 2017. The other proposal, to limit above market earnings for senior executive retirement plans, gained 28% of the vote, more than triple what it received in 2017. Both proposals were backed by the independent Institutional Shareholder Services.

**BellTel proposals won support of the massive California & Texas Teachers Retirement Funds and Florida State & Canadian Pension Plan Investment Boards.**



The ideas we put forward are in the interest of the long-term health and stability of Verizon and its employees, shareholders, retirees and customers.

At the end of the long proxy campaign, our proposals were supported by institutional shareholders including, the \$222 billion California State Teachers’ Retirement System; the \$205 billion Florida State Board of Administration; the \$151 billion Texas Teacher Retirement System and the \$262 billion Canada Pension Plan Investment Board.

# Come to the 2018 Member Meeting June 6 in Atlantic City, NJ

If you are reading this and the first week of June is not yet over, then there may still be time to join us in sunny Atlantic City for the 2018 Association of BellTel Retirees annual membership meeting.

Why stay home when you can come and connect with old work friends and meet new friends from the Verizon retiree community?

Our 22nd annual member meeting is Wednesday, June 6, 2018 starting at 8:30 a.m. at the beautiful Golden Nugget Casino Hotel & Marina located at 600 Huron Avenue and Brigantine Boulevard in Atlantic City, NJ.

It is an easy location to get to by car or public transit, hotel rooms are very reasonably priced, and it is in the middle of the second week after Memorial Day, considered the kick off to summer.

After the meeting concludes, grab some old work colleagues or meet some new ones to share a cocktail or lunch overlooking the spectacular marina.

This year we pushed the date of the annual meeting back by about one



*The beautiful harbor-marina of the Golden Nugget and the Atlantic City boardwalk, at night.*

month and we hope the warmer weather and the shorefront location provide many of you a nice respite from the rigors of daily life.

Arrive by car, Amtrak, Jitney bus or Greyhound, but most certainly come and be a part of the vibrant activities and discussion.

Call the Golden Nugget at 1-800-777-8477 to see if they might be offering any last minute, mid-week special discounted room rates

Reservations are required to attend the BellTel member meeting. To reserve a seat, please complete and send the RSVP reservation form below and return it without delay with a \$5 per person registration fee. Or if you must, bring it with you and hand it in at the door.

Please note that hotel and event reservations are separate and a reservation to one does not mean a reservation to the other.

See you in Atlantic City June 6!

## RSVP for Association of BellTel Retirees Annual Meeting

Wednesday, June 6, 2018 at \_\_\_\_\_ Atlantic City, NJ

A Ticket Is Required To Attend

I will attend the meeting in Atlantic City, NJ - # in party \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is a Check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$5.00 per person)

Please list your guest's names and addresses: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

(You can list invitees names on a separate piece of paper if more than 2 are attending)

A ticket will be mailed to each member and guest for admission. Please return this registration form and fee ASAP to:  
Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. c/o Stef Baker P.O. Box 33, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724

## BellTel Petitions Verizon Leadership for 2018 COLA

Regardless of each of our own political ideology, most everyone wants a tax cut that benefits them, right? If it put more money into the pockets of regular Americans, it makes everyone feel a bit more prosperous and could stimulate the economy on the small and large scale.

So with the enactment of the President's 2018 tax reform, changes to American corporate tax rates were substantially slashed downward to 20 percent.

Leaders in Washington surmised that this savings would result in the creation of new and needed corporate reinvestment to prime the nation's economic pump higher and drive more companies to offer raises and bonuses to their staff, along with spending more on infrastructure reinvestment.

The tax package resulted in extremely substantial cash savings for Verizon. In response, the company announced at the end of January that it was awarding 50 shares of restricted stock to all full-time, non-executive employees, which at the time was worth about \$2,650 each. What's more, non-U.S. employees were simply awarded the cash payment. Again, great for them.

Recognizing this opportunity, your Association of BellTel Retirees took immediate action and petitioned some of Verizon's highest ranking corporate officers, all the way up to Chairman and CEO Lowell McAdam, requesting a special pension payment or lump sum for our retirees. Verizon increased its cash flow this year by an estimated \$4 billion as a result of the tax cut.

"Extending a cash payment of say \$2,000 to \$2,500, or equivalent in Verizon stock, to each retiree participant could total a substantial amount, probably in the area of \$500 million," said Association co-founders Bill Jones and Robert Rehm in a letter to McAdam. "However, we know this is rather small compared to the total tax savings which accrue to Verizon; and the positives it would bring to Verizon would be enormous. Hence, we are asking you to

reconsider the issue and award the bonus payment to retiree participants."

They continued, "Your initiative in awarding the bonus payment to the employees, which we applaud, speaks volumes on making Verizon a leading employer. Our request is that you expand the bonus payment to all retirees/participants currently receiving retirement benefits from Verizon. Retirees spent their working lives dedicated to the companies that now

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comprise Verizon. Think about the employee response to the 2nd Avenue Central Office fire in New York and the World Trade Center bombing and 9/11 terrorist attacks and you realize how dedicated the employees have been over the years"

The request recalled a time going back to AT&T when that company placed a premium on its employees and the employees in turn became dedicated to

the company. The same letter was sent to Marc Reed, an executive vice president.

Jack Cohen, Chairman of the Association of BellTel Retirees was the one who originally wrote to petition Andrew H. Nebens, Senior Vice President - Global Compensation and Benefits at Verizon suggesting the company provide a bonus payment to all retirees.

Mr. Nebens indicated the Verizon bonus payment was limited only to active employees. Mr. Reed responded in the same manner, reiterating that retirees would receive no additional compensation.

Mr. Cohen said, "Washington DC passed tax reform suggesting that a good economy and a strong corporate America leads to increased prosperity and a rising tide that lifts all boats. While giving the active employees a bonus is positive and commendable and is something we believe is right, retirees have been shortchanged for far too long. We are here to say while corporate officer's boats are riding high, the life rafts retirees were dealt could use a paddle, let alone a COLA to help get us off the beach."

Leaders of the Association of BellTel Retirees are committed to continuing to address the company about retirees demands.

### Morgan Stanley



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# Big Win for Retirees in Virginia

arduous but necessary work of educating public officials about the harmful effects of pension de-risking.

He began reaching out to his local elected officials, as ProtectSeniors.org urges all its members to do. Many calls and emails went unanswered, but Dave did not give up. He knew that elected officials do pay attention to their constituents, especially when they represent large groups.

He finally scored a meeting with Virginia House of Delegates Rep. G.M. "Manoli" Loupassi, explaining to the legislator's staff that he was new in town and eager to meet with his representative in state government.

Dave explained to Rep. Loupassi that when his pension was de-risked he lost the protections guaranteed to him under the federal ERISA law, and that now his assets were controlled by an insurance company subject to weaker state regulations.

Rep. Loupassi, a Republican, was surprised, telling Dave that he couldn't understand how companies are allowed to get away with it. This is what ProtectSeniors.org does: Elected officials often only hear from insurance companies and their teams of lobbyists and receive a skewed picture of what is going on.

ProtectSeniors.org gives them the retirees' perspective and reminds leaders that many of their constituents are impacted or potentially impacted.

A new election came and Rep. Loupassi was replaced by Rep. Dawn Adams,

who was also receptive to Dave's communication. Once again, it took enormous persistence to begin again from scratch with a new legislator, but Dave, with the guidance and power

of ProtectSeniors.org and its membership behind him, once again got in the door.

Adams, a Democrat, joined State Sen. Glen H. Stuyvesant Jr., a Republican, in championing the cause, showing that protecting retirees is truly a bipartisan endeavor.

After several trips to the state capital, committee meetings and other work, legislation took shape. Like similar bills pending in other state capitals, the new Virginia legislation – which take effect July 1, 2018 - provides that de-risked pension assets be exempt from creditor claims and that any subsequent transfer of pension assets by the insurance company be subject to approval by the Virginia Bureau of Insurance, a division of the State Corporation Commission.

Even Dave was shocked by what happened next. The bill our friends at ProtectSeniors.Org championed passed unanimously in the State Senate, 38-0, and unanimously in the House of Delegates, 96-0. Virginia Governor Ralph Northam has indicated he will approve



BellTel member Dave Edmunds led the fight with ProtectSeniors.Org for a major legislative victory in Virginia

the legislation.

What an incredible victory for retirees and a testament to the effectiveness of ProtectSeniors.org's advocacy and can-do attitude. Retirees may not have the budget or the army of lobbyists that the insurance industry deploys to influence state governments.

What it has are people like Dave, who understand the power of persistence. Elected officials listen to us when we speak with one voice and they pay attention when we show we can deliver – or withhold – support.

Retirees can be a force at the ballot box and we need to make sure elected officials know we are willing to work diligently to make sure our retirement is secure and protected.

"We need to build a sense of momentum," said Dave. "We cannot allow Verizon or any other company to act with impunity."

James Casey, president of ProtectSeniors.org and also a retiree of C&P said, "we will continue to work in Virginia for even stronger legislation and in Washington, D.C. and other state capitals to ensure retirees are better protected. With Dave as an example, all members need to make sure they are off the sidelines and in the fight."

# Massachusetts Retiree Leading on the Front Lines

One Verizon retiree is leading the fight in Massachusetts to enact legislation that would better protect retirees whose pensions have been sold off or transferred by the company to which they dedicated their careers.

Bill Braunlich has been speaking up for the needs of Massachusetts retirees, advocating for legislation that would restore legal protections that are lost when companies "de-risk" retirees' pensions by selling them to insurance companies

Mr. Braunlich has been doing this together with our sister advocacy non-profit ProtectSeniors.Org, which is focused on achieving legislation and regulatory action to protect the more than 36 million retired and older working Americans against corporate tactics that harm, eliminate, or erode the security of their hard earned pensions and healthcare benefits.

The group has nearly 5,000 members in Massachusetts.

Mr. Braunlich saw his pension de-risked in 2012, when Verizon transferred it along with the pensions of 41,000 fellow Verizon retirees to Prudential.

"If anything goes south with your insurance company, pensioners could find themselves in severe financial trouble. This legislation is necessary to provide transparency and basic protections to retirees," Mr. Braunlich

said.

He retired from New England Telephone as a General Manager in 1990 and later worked for the Volt Telecommunications Group, a subsidiary of Volt Information Sciences, Inc based in New York City, serving as president from 1990 to 2005.

Retirees whose pension assets have been sold off or spun off to investors via corporate group insurance annuities, are harmed by losing the federal protections guaranteed to all Americans under the ERISA law of 1974.

Massachusetts House Bill 476, known as the Pension De-risking Act, would

## Massachusetts House Bill 476, the Pension De-Risking Act, would restore protections for thousands of BellTel members in Massachusetts.

restore many of those protections for thousands of BellTel members living in Massachusetts. The legislation was introduced by Rep. James Arciero (D-Middlesex). The bill would provide creditor protections, limit insurance companies' abilities

to further sell-off or transfer the retirees earned pension assets to a substandard company that is in bad financial standing, and, critically for transparency, require regular financial disclosures by the insur-



Massachusetts Retiree Leader Bill Braunlich

ance companies who hold our pension assets.

"We must pay attention to what companies are doing financially to retirees and take a stand," Mr. Braunlich said. "How can it be legal in America, that our nation's oldest citizens can now be stripped of a right granted by Congress and signed into law by president Gerald R. Ford. It's why retirees call this type of sell-off of their retirement assets "pension stripping."

Over the last few years, many of American's largest companies have been transferring their pension obligations to third parties, often insurance companies, which results in converting those pensions to annuities.

Annuities are not fully protected in case of a financial shortfall by state guaranty associations, which are often underfunded or not funded at all. Massachusetts residents have a lifetime coverage limit of only \$250,000, should the insurer managing their pension annuity fail.

Mr. Braunlich first joined ProtectSeniors.Org when it was founded in 2006, to advocate for the pension and earned retirement benefits of retired Americans.

If you are not already involved in our campaigns for retiree protection legislation in your own state, what are you waiting for? Be a part of the action and success. To get involved, or to donate or learn more about ProtectSeniors.Org

# Retiree Survey Results – WE HEAR YOU! THEY HEAR YOU

(Continued from page 1)

If Verizon often isn't responsive enough to us as retirees, as the people who built the company into the corporate behemoth it is today, how can they justify not listening to its own co-owners?

That is why, every year, we support proxy proposals aimed at benefiting the shareholders of the company, sometimes at the expense of the fancy perks and excessive payments lavished on senior executives.

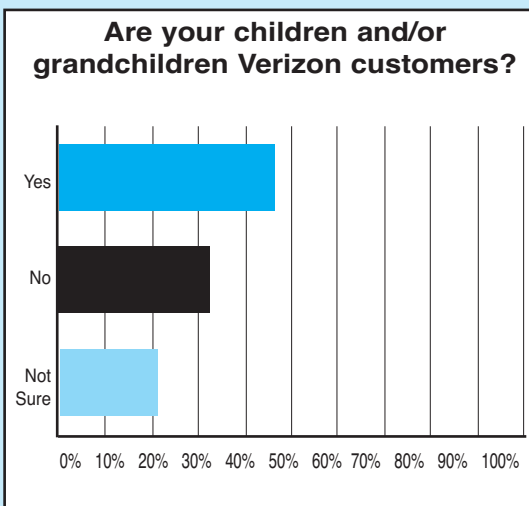
Because of our strong advocacy, the company fights our proposals, but because we are so organized and stick together, they cannot ignore us.

In fact, we have defeated the company three times by ballot and, on another eight occasions, they agreed to do what we were asking before the vote, knowing we would pressure them into action.

That's the power of the shareholder. We don't simply talk about the changes we want to see, we use

our position as co-owners to affect that change.

Of course, the Association members, as our survey revealed, are not just stock owners but customers as well. A whopping 86% of members are current, loyal Verizon customers, an estimated 115,000 retirees who use Verizon phone service or Fios or both. In fact, the vast majority purchase



multiple Verizon services.

In addition to this robust customer base among our fellow retirees, 32% of Verizon retirees responding to our survey say their spouses additionally buy Verizon services, working out to

roughly 43,000 more customer accounts. On top of that, another 46%, or over 61,000 more accounts, are also held by the children and grandchildren of our retirees, for a total of 220,000 customers that start with us!

What an army! We are not only a dedicated group of co-owners, organizing in order to bring needed reforms to the company so that it better serves shareholders, we are also a strong force to be reckoned with as paying customers.

We helped create the many valuable products and services Verizon

offered during our working lives and now, in retirement, we continue to play an important role as customers and stock holders. It is essential that we continue leveraging that power into improving the lives of fellow retirees.

When Verizon tries to steamroll us, sell off our pensions or cut our benefits, they need to hear from us, loudly and clearly. With the impressive results of our latest survey, we know beyond a doubt exactly where our power resides. Yes, they must hear us now!

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

You can start today through your financial advisor, lawyer, accountant or family members to begin setting up a charitable donation.

- Consider donations including cash, stocks or property.
- Make the Association a beneficiary to life insurance, pension plans and IRA accounts.

Talk to your family about these wishes.

Call us at 1-800-261-9222.

### Types of Bequests to Help Current and Future Retirees and Surviving Spouses.

- **Residual** – a remainder of your estate.
- **Percentage** – lists the amount you wish to leave to the Association.
- **Specific** – an amount of money or asset.
- **Contingent** – naming the Association as the recipient in case another beneficiary does not survive.



## Planned Giving Having an Immediate Impact

Recently the Association of BellTel Retirees was gifted a generous contribution from the estate of one of our members who was recently deceased.

Mrs. Elsie Johnson of Long Island, NY was a long-time member of the Association of BellTel Retirees, who had retired from the New York Telephone Company in 1969. She was a contributing member of our Association going all the way back to 2002.

Since that time our impact for retirees and their surviving spouses has been tremendous including multiple pension COLA's for retirees at the minimum pension level, fighting back the cancellation of health benefits for some retirees and of course our Verizon pension de-risking federal litigation that rose all the way up to the United States Supreme Court.

Without the generous contribution that was spelled out in Mrs. Johnson's will, we fear that our

## — OUR APPEAL TODAY —

Dear Friends,

Considering we have been in the business of advocating for you for 20+ years, we are grateful that we are only now experiencing a downward trend in contributions.

We consider the generosity of our members a vote of confidence in our work. **The work of the Association of BellTel Retirees board is totally volunteer;** we invest in professional support – and that is provided to us at reasonable and competitive rates.

Some of that trend can be attributed to member losses, and some to members thinking unfortunately that the fight is over. Believe us when we say the fight is never over. If anything, the landscape is even more hostile to retirees with de-risking on the rise.

You have seen our reports year to year ... in great detail, and many members have complimented us. We are professionally audited each year as part of our IRS 990 filing; you can access our Form 990 at [Guidestar.org](http://Guidestar.org) for us/or and for any nonprofit.

It is easy for us to beg for support: **no guilt involved!** We know first-hand that most of our work is done by a dedicated volunteer board. We know that they are always working hard – and traveling – to research what new knowledge you need about trends in the retirement industry and what battles we must wage on your behalf. We know the dangers involved in not being able to factually research the details we need to report to you.

We put in a lot of our personal time to write articles, recruit new members, travel to local and distant meetings, research what is happening to all retirees ... because dumping corporate pensions has become “fashionable.” When one company comes up with some new way to cut corporate costs, it gets out there pretty fast. In other words, we keep up with the dangerous changes that are happening in other fields that could eventually impact us. That is, what “bad omens” are raising their ugly heads, and how can we begin to fight back before it is too late?

Our contributions are starting to come close to not covering our expenses. So we do what we all do in our personal budgets: review, see where cuts can be made, and beyond good budgeting we work harder to convince you to support us.

**THAT TIME IS HERE.** We need your most generous contribution to continue the volunteer work of your board. We pledge to continue to protect your retirement benefits to the best of our ability, and to research and anticipate dangers in the corporate world – and well as in Congress, with our partner nonprofit advocacy organization, ProtectSeniors.Org.

**Please be generous. Please provide a contribution to let us know you hear us.**

Thank you in advance. And have a wonderful summer!

*Bob Gaglione and Eileen Lawrence*

### ASSOCIATION OF BELLTEL RETIREES INC.

P.O. Box 61, Glen Head, NY 11545-0061

Yes, I want to support the Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. in our fight to protect the pensions and benefits of all retirees and active employees. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation:

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_  \$100  \$75  \$50  \$36.50  \$30 We appreciate any amount you can donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Or use your credit card.** Visa Discover Amex MasterCard Credit Card

Acct.# \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Security code on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

I am a: Management retiree \_\_\_\_\_ Union retiree \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Company Retired from: \_\_\_\_\_

You can also donate online by going to our web-site [www.belltelretirees.org](http://www.belltelretirees.org) and click on the DONATE NOW button. Consider a recurring donation—which is an easy and safe way to budget your contribution.

**I am interested in learning more about Planned Giving. Please contact me.**

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.

Summer  
2018

organization would have already had no choice but to significantly curtail the advocacy efforts our team of volunteers and professionals undertake for the Verizon retirees we represent.

With that in mind, we ask, have you considered the Association of BellTel Retirees in your estate planning?

The Planned Giving Program is an opportunity to help insure that the good work the retiree association does on your behalf will continue long after you are no longer able to actively participate.

The reality is that although we are strong, each year the challenges facing retirees and surviving spouses grow in number, priority

and persistence. Our earned pension and benefits become more of a target every year. By leaving a bequest, you will insure that our Association will carry the important effort to aid surviving spouses and current and future retirees.

To find out how YOU can make a lasting contribution to the Association, please call us at (800) 261-9222 or go online to our website to download our planned giving program information and brochure.

Thank you to Mrs. Johnson for leaving a legacy that has already provided positive protection and advocacy for the members of your Telephone Company family.

**LANGUAGE FOR LEAVING A LEGACY:**

“I give and bequeath the Association of BellTel Retirees Inc., 181 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for their planned giving program.”

or

“I give, devise and bequeath to the Association of BellTel Retirees Inc., 181 Main Street, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724, \_\_\_\_\_% of the rest, remainder and residue of my estate for its planned giving program.”

**— 2018 FINANCIAL REPORT —**

**A**n overview of our 2017 year-end financial data will have been presented to the membership at our annual meeting in Atlantic City on June 6<sup>th</sup>. If you couldn’t join us, here is a brief review.

As with any business organization the size of the Association of BellTel Retirees Inc., considerable resources are expended on accounting for financial transactions. Our office staff and accountant track contributions and expenses by type and record or journalize this activity each day. Periodic reports are then provided to our stakeholders – Association members, our board of directors and various regulatory organizations.

Our financial results are audited each year in compliance with individual state requirements. The audit of our 2017 activity by certified public accounting firm BDO is underway at the time of this writing. When completed, tax returns will be filed, and results reported to the state regulatory agencies through the annual state registration process.

The following are brief highlights of our pre-audit financial results for fiscal year 2017:

**REVENUE**

Our total revenue for 2017 was \$771,748, an overall increase of 6% for the year compared to the prior year.

**EXPENSE**

Total operating expense for the year totaled \$760,466 — an overall increase

of 15% compared to 2016. Key category results are as follows:

<b>Lobbying</b>	<b>\$143K</b>
<b>Salaries</b>	<b>\$158K</b>
<b>Consulting and professional fees</b>	<b>\$208K</b>
<b>Printing and Postage</b>	<b>\$143K</b>

Additional financial details can be found online for all non-profit entities including the Association of BellTel Retirees at Guidestar. A copy of the Association’s tax return (990) once filed will also be available online.

Your Association’s media communications effort has continually provided us a taller stage and brighter spotlight than would be otherwise possible. With a record as one of the most successful groups bringing attention to the plight of retirees, we have drawn critical attention for the Verizon shareowner proxy victories, the annual member meetings, pension spin-off fight/litigation, and the need for state-wide protections against pension stripping or de-risking.

Maintaining a visible presence in key online, broadcast and print articles, your Association’s efforts make regular headlines in America’s most frequented news outlets including the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, US News & World Report, Institutional Investor, Bloomberg News, PBS Television, CNBC-TV and many more. News coverage in the past year has resulted in our Association being compared with some of the financial industry’s biggest activist investors and hedge funds, specifically because of our success with our shareowner proxy campaigns.

The Association has continued to create a series of online videos that can be found on the BellTel YouTube channel and on our Facebook page, attracting much online attention and providing a regular interactive dialogue with our most important stakeholders – YOU!

The BellTel Channel has been viewed nearly 160,000 times!

Our lobbying allocation to ProtectSeniors.Org (PSO) remained at 2016’s level or \$140,000. Together, BellTel and ProtectSeniors.Org continue to pursue legislative victories on retirees’ behalf to protect against loss of our earned healthcare bring oversight to Medicare and Social Security issues and protect against the harmful effects of pension de-risking.

ProtectSeniors.Org continues to actively pursue state legislation to establish financial protections lost because of pension stripping. Our goal, as reported in other newsletter columns, is to establish uniform protections at the state level.

The Association ended 2017 with pre-audit total assets of \$232,147. A very generous contribution made by the Estate of Mrs. Elsie Johnson in 2017 made a significant impact and allowed us to show a year-over-year increase in total contributions. Without Ms. Johnson’s thoughtful and generous contribution the BellTel retiree community would have declined in 2017 by 9.2%.

Robert F. Gaglione, Treasurer



# Fiduciary Rule That Benefited Retirees Killed By Court

When you go to your financial adviser for retirement investment guidance, do you expect to be given advice that is in your best interest? It seems like a no-brainer.

But a recent federal appeals court decision means financial advisers will be permitted to once again serve two masters, without having to tell you – the owner of the assets - whose interests they’re really serving. Back in 2016, the Association, together with ProtectSeniors.org, in its tireless advocacy work surveying the retiree landscape, noticed a rule being debated at the federal Department of Labor (DOL), under the Obama Administration.



The agency was in the process of deciding whether financial advisers who serve as fiduciaries should be required to act in the best interests of their clients when giving investment advice. It hardly seems worth debating!

Under the old rules, an adviser could secretly take fees from mutual funds or other investment vehicles and then steer clients’ money into those investments, whether it was in the best interests of the

client or not. The adviser would be “double dipping,” getting paid to give you advice while not disclosing that they were also getting paid – perhaps even more - to send your money to their second master.

At the time, the White House Council of Economic Advisers determined that conflicts of interest among investment advisors directly lead to about 1 percentage point in annual losses for retirement savers, costing investors to lose about \$17 billion per year of their savings and investments. The Council also calculated that an individual could lose an astonishing 25 percent of his or her savings over the course of 35 years of investing were this to continue.

The Association and ProtectSeniors.Org quickly petitioned the Department of Labor for standing in the matter and registered the point of view in the best interest of our members. Investment advisors acting in their own best behalf and not retirees best interest was unwelcomed.

We also got the word out to members and registered strong support for changing this rule to require that financial advisers only serve one master: Their clients. The DOL did change the rule

but was then sued by several financial industry associations.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals – the same court that ruled against our de-risked Verizon retirees – vacated the rule, holding that the DOL did not have the authority to require financial advisers to act in the interests of their clients.

Most recently under the term of President Trump, the Department of Justice (DOJ) chose not to appeal the ruling, allowing it to stand and sending the issue to federal Securities and Exchange Commission to decide whether to impose a similar rule.

With no one to defend the vacated rule, AARP, as well as the attorneys general of the states of New York, California and Oregon, tried to jump in, filing to join the case as defendants of the 2016 DOL rule change. In May, the Fifth Circuit ruled they did not have the legal right to join the case and left the rule for dead.

While the DOJ had until June 13 to appeal the ruling, given its past decision to let it stand, that seems unlikely.

The Association, and its sister advocacy organization ProtectSeniors.org, serves not just as your voice in your interactions with Verizon, but as a lookout, advocate and surrogate in the public policy arena, be that in Washington, in state capitals or in the courts.

## 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/Dex Media 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.

## MEMBER MAILBAG



Dear Association:

Thank you for all your hard work over the years to protect retirees. I have been retired for 23 years, never have gotten a nickel raise, but grateful I have a retirement check and insurance. For the last three years I have not gotten a raise in my social security and food prices keep going up. This is very discouraging.

Thank you again for all of this Association’s work. Forever grateful.

Hope Powell

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To all of the hard-working people at our Association also to all our members who donate each year. A big thank you for donating and all our staff for their time and hard work.

Jim Conway

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To the Association:

Thank you all for the wonderful work you are doing to keep up the benefits we have earned. Enclosed is a donation to help in your continued effort.

Regina Healy

# Pace of BellTel Mini-Meetings Grows

By Una Kelly

Verizon retirees from across Long Island gathered in late April for an open discussion about key retirement issues that impact them. The free event was sponsored by the Association of BellTel Retirees. Among the Association board members in attendance were: Chairman Jack Cohen, Tom Steed, John Hyland, Lionel Brandon and Una Kelly.

The guest speaker for the event was BellTel co-founder Robert Rehm who captivated the audience with history and humor and salient details about the Asso-

ciation and its sister advocacy non-profit, ProtectSeniors.Org.

Tom Steed explained the Verizon Sickness Death benefit. As has been typical, many members were not aware of this benefit and were eager to know more. Tommy provided critical details, including copies of the official benefit overview document and a copy of his own personal letter. The retirees gathered were also verbally provided the Verizon Benefit contact number and instructions.

Jack Cohen covered many critical issues for retirees, both current and historical. The attendees followed along with helpful handouts as Jack explained our proxy proposals and the impact of pension de-risking.

Jack's information on Verizon Annual Funding Notice, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp (PBGC) and Medicare Advantage was well-received. The attendees commiserated with Jack as he described the deliberately remote locations Verizon selects to hold shareholder meetings. This year shareholders had to travel to Seattle to be heard. Our Association was there and we brought our A-Game.

John Hyland presented a compelling and humorous delivery to the "Dignity Benefit" which provides a considerable funeral home discount for BellTel member families grieving the death of a loved one or doing advance funeral planning. Dignity Memorial is North America's largest provider of funeral, cremation, and cemetery services.

A group of our contributing members asked how they could also contribute to

ProtectSeniors.Org, given that its advocacy work is so critical for retirees' economic protection, working in the Halls of Congress and State Capitals.

Our special thanks to VFW Post #7763 in Massapequa Park for hosting.



Association of BellTel Retirees Inc.

UNITED, TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

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**HAVE A QUESTION?**

Call 800-261-9222 or

Email: [association@belltelretirees.org](mailto:association@belltelretirees.org)

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(631) 367-3067

## UPCOMING EVENTS

The Association of BellTel Retirees in conjunction with ProtectSeniors.Org announce the following regional member mini-meeting schedule for the second half of 2018.

It is our goal to branch out and have more local and regional meetings for our member who can not attend our big annual meeting. Pick a date and location convenient to your home and turn out to meet members of your Associations Board.

June 26 - 1p.m. Pittsburgh, PA  
Elks Lodge #2213  
2789 South Park Road  
Bethel Park, PA 15102

July 25, 2018 - 1PM to 3PM  
Elks Lodge #49  
25 South Allen Street Albany, NY 12208

August - Queens & Suffolk County NY  
Date and location to be announced

September 26, 2018 - 1PM to 3PM  
American Legion #1361  
1951 West Fayette St.  
Syracuse, NY 13204

October 2018 - Northern NJ,  
Rockland & Orange NY  
Date and location to be announced

November 13, 2018 - 10AM to 12PM  
All Saints Church  
2329 Victory Blvd.  
Staten Island NY, 10314



## ProtectSeniors.Org

[www.protectseniors.org](http://www.protectseniors.org)

We are fighting to keep our earned retirement benefits secure:  
**HEALTHCARE PENSIONS SOCIAL SECURITY MEDICARE**

**HELP US BY:**

◆ Sign on and contribute at  
[www.protectseniors.org](http://www.protectseniors.org)

◆ Receive timely updates

◆ Become a Grassroots Leader

◆ Respond to "write to Congress" requests.

◆ Take part in our surveys

Call: 800-398-3044 /email: [info@protectseniors.org](mailto:info@protectseniors.org)

Donate Today to:

**ProtectSeniors.Org, P.O. Box 476, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724**

We appreciate your financial and grassroots support.

ProtectSeniors.Org is a 501(c)4 organization. Contributions are NOT tax deductible.  
Paid for by ProtectSeniors.Org

# VERIZON BUSINESS NEWS

Verizon Communications Inc. announced that it generated \$126 billion in 2017 revenues operating from what it terms, “America’s most reliable wireless network” and the nation’s premier all-fiber network, delivery in integrated solutions to businesses worldwide. The company states that its Oath web content and marketing services subsidiary reaches about one-billion people around the world with a “dynamic house of media and technology brands.”

\*\*\*

Verizon’s Oath recently sold off a well-known division of its online services, Flickr to SmugMug, a family-run company that operates an online photo-sharing service that goes by the same name, USA Today reported. Flickr is a photo-sharing service that became part of Oath following Verizon’s 2017 acquisition of Yahoo. Oath is Verizon’s digital media and advertising arm. It consists of Yahoo and AOL assets, which Verizon acquired for about \$10.0 billion.

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Legacy Wireline Assets Sold to Frontier Lagging: Frontier Communications Corp (NASDAQ:FTR) is being criticized by its industry, many of its customers have walked away and Wall Street analysts call it, “an aging telecom business in an age where technology was rapidly changing, the company and FTR stock were facing a whole bunch of challenges,” according to Lawrence Meyers of InvestorPlace.

Two years ago Frontier purchased Verizon’s wireline business for more than \$10 billion. “It seemed like a pretty good move,” said InvestorsPlace. “After all, it came with some 3.3 million voice subscribers, 2 million broadband subscribers and 1.2 million FiOS subscribers...This deal turned into an albatross. FTR has since lost over three quarters of a million subscribers. With the loss of subscribers came a loss of revenue, as well as declining cash flow, and that meant that the dividend had to be cut. And the dividend was indeed cut by almost 60% to four cents per share.”

In response, Frontier had to engineer a 1-for-15 reverse split to even stay listed on the stock exchange. Net margins for FTR are literally less than 1%. The company generated \$20 million of net income in the most recent quarter on \$2.2 billion in revenue.

Frontier stock is generating operational cash flow of \$251 million in the most recent quarter, on top of \$665 million in Q4 of 2017. Frontier suspended its common dividend months ago.

## GO GREEN

This newsletter is available to you on-line. If you wish to receive ONLY an on-line copy, please email us at [association@belltelretirees.org](mailto:association@belltelretirees.org) and put in the Subject line of the email –GO GREEN. Please give us your name, mailing address and email address so we can make the change.

## Verizon Workers Exposed to Toxic Dust after 9/11 Attacks Eligible for Healthcare, Compensation

The Verizon community was significantly impacted by the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York City and played a crucial role in the recovery efforts by restoring communications for all of Lower Manhattan as well as getting the Verizon Building at 140 West Street back online.

If you were working south of Canal Street on September 11, 2001 or at some point during the 8 months that followed, you are eligible for federal health screenings, healthcare and compensation, but you must apply. 68 cancers and many respiratory illnesses have been linked to World Trade Center toxins. The federal government also has earmarked \$7.3 billion for compensation to individuals with negative health effects.

We can help! Barasch McGarry PC has advocated for more than 10,000 individuals impacted and secured over \$1 billion for those who turned to us.



See a 4 minute informational video: <http://tinyurl.com/y8geb4wq> or call us  
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