

Retiree PRT Lawsuits Make Progress

By Edward Stone,
Special Legal Counsel

As more and more employers get out of managing defined benefit pensions, significant retiree-led Pension Risk Transfer (“PRT”) litigation is ongoing across the nation.

Most of these PRT cases involve two distinct legal issues. One is Article III standing under the US Constitution. Standing is a tricky issue, because even though retirees lose all of the uniform protections intended by Congress under ERISA when they get kicked out of their pension plan, the Plan fiduciaries always cry “no harm, no foul.”

They point to the inevitable fact that all pension payments due have been made and cry that plaintiffs have not shown current economic harm. In other words, you can’t sue until the building burns to the ground. Retirees obviously disagree and point out that waiting is just kicking the can down the road and denying impacted pensioners their day in court.

The other key legal issue steaming its way to the US Supreme Court involves whether Plan fiduciaries must pick a reasonably suitable annuity provider to take over payment obligations when companies like AT&T and Verizon de-risk through the purchase of a group annuity contract, or whether they can just rely on an advisor, like State Street Global Advisors to make the choice for them – even when State Street seems hopelessly conflicted.



Right now, there are a significant number of PRT ERISA cases at the Federal District Court level involving big companies, like Alcoa, ATI, AT&T, General Electric, IBM, Lockheed Martin, Weyerhaeuser and Verizon.

Positive Trend:

The Lockheed Martin case resulted in a successful outcome by the pensioners but was appealed by the defendants to the Fourth Circuit where it has been fully briefed and the parties are awaiting a decision.

A pro-plaintiff (retiree) decision in the Bristol Myers Squibb case was achieved in the Southern District of New York on both Article III standing and breach of fiduciary duty claims. That case was recently certified for an interlocutory appeal to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

On the flip side, Judge Hellerstein also in the Southern District of New York dismissed a recent case against Verizon and State Street on both standing grounds, and because he determined that plaintiffs did not meet their burden of proof with respect to the fiduciary breach claims.

The AT&T case is pending in the District of Massachusetts and resulted in a favorable decision for the retiree side as to standing, but the Judge dismissed the breach of fiduciary duty claims. Plaintiffs filed an amended complaint to address the court’s concerns and there was an oral argument on defendants’ second motion to dismiss last month. A decision in the AT&T case is pending.

Important PRT ERISA cases now in Federal Court involve major firms: Alcoa, ATI, AT&T, GE, IBM, Lockheed Martin, Weyerhaeuser & Verizon

IBEW & Two Major Universities Study Lead Toxicity

IBEW Local 2324 Sr. Business Manager John Rowley and his Massachusetts local helped to champion a vital National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) study of lead toxicity and the health impacts on communication workers.

To effectuate this, they partnered with top environmental scientists at both New York University and Boston College, including acclaimed author, epidemiologist, pediatrician and health advocate Dr. Phillip Landrigan.

John graciously addressed our membership and BellTel board about this study at our recent 2026 annual member meeting.



A 2023 survey of our members found 60% worked with lead, so this topic should matter to most retirees.

We will release John’s presentation soon.

To Our Valued Members

We bring you this condensed version of the Summer 2026 BellTel Newsletter (Volume 118). With printing and postal rates climbing, know that your volunteer board seeks to be as fiscally prudent as possible with your precious donations.

We do our best to manage and stretch every penny from our budget to remain strong and to serve as a vital resource for our current retirees, future retirees, and let’s never forget surviving spouses.

Austerity sometimes calls for all of us to exercise some extra level of discipline and prudence.

Our board’s fiscal committee looked at

member support and identified that it seems to wane in the summer, so a decision was made to produce less pages of this volume, while still spotlighting key topics and advocacy relevant to the protection of YOUR earned benefits, pension and retirement security.

We want to hear from you. We encourage your feedback.

Also be an advocate for your own retirement security. Go out and text, email or call two or three friends from your working years and ask and encourage them to join today, to be more involved with our collective cause, and finally to donate.

Verizon Moving Pension Management to Goldman Sachs

Effective July 2026, Verizon is reportedly outsourcing management of its still massive pension management function to Goldman Sachs Asset Management. This news was reported in mid-April by MarketsGroup.

In doing so, the company will reportedly be shuttering its Verizon Investment Management Corporation (VIMCO). PipelineRoad, an investor database identifies this as quite substantial pension assets hailing from, so-called legacy Bell Atlantic, GTE, NYNEX and other predecessor Bell System entities consolidated through mergers. It suggested as of December 31, 2024 the asset valuation as \$25 billion.

According to Pension & Investments, this comes as Verizon is integrating some \$2.3 billion in defined benefit assets and an additional \$2.5 billion in 401k assets, as of December 2023, linked to Frontier Communications, which it acquired in January.

In that same December 2023 analysis, Pension & Investments estimated prior holdings still under the Verizon pension umbrella at \$50.2 billion. At the time, it explained this included \$13.5 billion in legacy defined benefit assets and \$36.7 billion in 401k assets. Then in March 2024, \$5.9 billion in defined pensions were transferred to Prudential and RGA, followed by the layoff of 13,000 Verizon workers in the final quarter of 2025.

Verizon stated in its 2025 annual report, that “as of December 31, 2025, its aggregate defined benefit pension obligation was \$8.0 billion and exceeded the fair value of pension plan assets of \$7.9 billion, resulting in an unfunded defined benefit pension obligation of \$50 million. Also, at December 31, 2025, the other postretirement benefits obligation was approximately \$10.6 billion.”

Goldman Sachs is said to be considering taking on some VIMCO team members.

This division of Goldman has seen many major corporations turn over their pension investment functions. This includes pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly & Co, which turned over \$25 billion in pensions in 2025 and Shell Oil handing off the management of \$40 billion of pension assets.

Such a move differs from a pension risk transfer, as this results in simply outsourcing the management over pension investments. We will continue to find out more about this to share with you.

OUR MISSION:

The Association of BellTel Retirees is dedicated to promoting the protection and enhancement of the pensions and benefits for all retirees and for the current and future beneficiaries of the companies derived and evolving from the original Bell System.

Since 1996, the Association has worked to convince the companies to protect and guarantee, rather than raid or erode, the hard-earned retirement security for hundreds of thousands of dedicated current and former union and management personnel and their families.



Chairman's Report

By Thomas Steed

Happy Summer to Our Members

In late May, just after this edition (Volume 118) went to the printer, YOUR Association held its 30th anniversary membership meeting in Fairfield County, CT.

For many years, this area – Stamford and Norwalk - was the headquarters of Frontier, which just rejoined Verizon in a January 2026 merger. Just as 13,000 Frontier workers, plus retirees came back into the fold, 13,000 Verizon employees received pink slips. There is no honor or compassion in that.

Our workforce and retirees should never be pawns for the corporate bean counters. Our members, their families and surviving spouses matter. It's why we've maintained a presence for three decades.

Concerning dynamics surround retirees. Healthcare choices are being minimized and members are reporting skyrocketing contribu-

tions and copays, with as much as a 10-fold increase in some cases. That can drive retirees to the breaking point.

56,000 Verizon retirees had nearly \$6 billion in pensions spun off in 2024 and just 10 months earlier, AT&T kicked 96,000 retirees, with pensions valued over \$8 billion, out of their pension plan. While some might cry collusion, shouldn't that result in 152,000 new and worried BellTel Retirees joining our cause? One would hope so.

Whether you accept higher medical costs for less choice, or pensions losing their ERISA-PBGC safety net, recognize we are all stronger together.

BellTel welcomed IBEW leader John Rowley at our annual meeting, to address the membership on the health consequence of lead poisoning for current workers and retirees. It's the next chapter of BellTel's important 2023 Wall Street Journal collaboration.

ERISA, PBGC and Insurance law expert Edward Stone addressed members about possible malfeasance once private equity firms take over YOUR pension assets. If the economy goes bad, it could be dire, just as it was for Bernie Madoff victims.

These days, with both retirees and workers under siege, it's time we get angry. Let's put up our dukes and fight to protect ourselves and our families. I implore you, get off the sidelines and make a difference. Please act to protect your retirement future!

Healthcare Committee Update

Since our Spring newsletter, when we first announced the creation of a new ad-hoc healthcare advisory committee, we are happy to announce that some half-dozen members have stepped up to play a role.

These individuals come from various management and union roles across human resources and healthcare at Verizon, AT&T, and NYNEX while residing across four different states.

We are still interested in even more members being involved.

This advisory committee's goal is to assist with addressing the issues many of us are confronting as healthcare costs and premiums continue to rise while benefit options for care are reduced. While issues vary by state, region, or operating company you worked for, some report contributions or copays soaring while health options diminish.

If you have a background in human resources, healthcare administration, medical administration, and pension management/ administration, get engaged.

If you are interested in joining, please contact our office by calling either 800-261-9222 or 631-367-3067 or filling out our "contact us" form on the Association of BellTel Retirees website.

We appreciate your commitment and look forward to the progress this committee can achieve!

Reminder: Obtain Death Benefit Confirmation

The Association of BellTel Retirees is reminding its members to acquire and retain written confirmation about the Death Benefits your family may be entitled to.

Proper documentation of Pensioner Death Benefit claims is critical to ensuring that beneficiaries have an easier process filing a claim.

This is especially crucial after Verizon's most recent March 2024 pension transfer deal, where Prudential and RGA purchased a single premium group annuity contract for 56,000 of our fellow retirees and their beneficiaries.

Verizon remains responsible for Basic Life Insurance, but it is essential for you to find

out whether your Death Benefit Claims were moved to Prudential and/or RGA. Affected members should have received notification in the mail from Prudential and/or RGA explaining the transfer.

Saving these letters is wise, as it could help your beneficiaries claim their benefits later on.

Retirees in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, and New York now have 100% of their Pension Death Benefits guaranteed by Prudential. Those in all other states will have 50% guaranteed by Prudential and 50% by RGA.

WE REQUIRE YOUR SUPPORT

For 30 years, Your Association has been on the front lines battling key issues of concern that threaten retirees' hard-earned benefits and pensions — but we can't do it without you!

We require volunteer power. Do you have some fresh, new ideas and energy? If so, get further engaged!

Equally important, our loyal donors enable us to continue fighting for all of you, but rising

costs mean we need your support more than ever before. Contributing an additional \$25 or \$50 — or better yet, becoming both an online and recurring donor — can help us do even more.

Visit www.belltelretirees.org/donate to learn more.

We are stronger together.

With Gratitude,
BellTel Association Board



UNITED, TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

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

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Please consider adding \$1.00 or more to help offset costly transaction fees and ensuring your donation will fund the work we do on your behalf.

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I am a: Management retiree _____ Union retiree _____ other _____ Company Retired from: _____ Year Retired: _____

You can also donate online by going to www.belltelretirees.org and click on the DONATE NOW button. Consider a recurring donation – an easy and safe way to budget your contribution.

The Association of BellTel Retirees is a 501 (c)3 tax-exempt organization. No goods or services will be received in return for this donation.