



## **WashTech Files Board Charges Against AT&T**

**By Marcus Courtney  
President, WashTech**

WashTech has filed an unfair labor practice charge against the new AT&T, alleging that the company violated federal labor law by denying access to company records the union requested on investigating potential grievances related to an issue of pay disparity between newly hired employees and tenured employees between February and May 2006.

"In a grievance meeting on September 26, 2006, we (the union) asked for information pertaining to our investigating and resolving a grievance about starting pay and the company refused at the time and has continued to refuse to submit to us the information requested to adequately investigate and pursue the grievance," wrote the union on the charging papers.

At issue is whether the company violated the contract by paying new employees based on the department they worked and not the experience they brought to the job. When the union began investigating the issue, the company stymied the efforts by refusing to turn over the relevant documents requested by the union which they are obligated to do.

The company can differentiate pay based on experience, but the union is arguing that the company was doing this but basing pay decisions based on where they worked, which would be a violation of the contract. The company after May then announced formal pay for experience guidelines.

Marcus Courtney, the local's president, met with the government attorney, to give testimony as to why the union believes the company potentially violated the law. The government will investigate the union's allegations and issue a preliminary finding in May if the union's charge has merit.

### **Stewards' Corner**

## **Members Attend CWA District 7 Conference in Boise, ID**

**By Les French  
Vice President, WashTech**

Greetings from Boise, ID, where more than 200 staff and elected CWA delegates came together to plan, question and voice your concerns, issues and desires. "Motivating, Educating and Activating" was the theme for this year's conference and there was plenty of all three. I was proud to represent you at this year's conference along with Marcus Courtney, the president of the local.

Many of you may not be aware that your local, Number 37083, is a part of District 7, which serves 170 other locals and more than 50,000 members from 15 western states. You should be pleased to know, that CWA has a well organized structure in place to advocate for you at a local, state and national level. Several initiatives and goals were presented to the delegates as well as a national proposal to increase diversity on the CWA Executive Board.

One of the key initiatives presented at the Conference was the creation of a volunteer "Stewards Army" of rank-and-file activists to mobilize for positive change, both within our industry and in American society, under CWA's 'Ready for the Future' program. Those who join won't all be shop Stewards in the traditional sense of handling grievances and enforcing contracts at the job site but will be practicing 'stewardship' in a broader sense: strengthening our bargaining and organizing rights and advocating for our other major goals. As we move into 2008, we will need to have the ability to mobilize for a show of unity in support of contract negotiations for our new contract in 2009.

I encourage all of you to show support for your Union and your fellow workers by signing up to be a member of the Stewards Army. Contact the local office by phone or E-mail for a card to sign or see a Steward.

In addition to learning about these new initiatives, I also attended workshops and a New AT&T bargaining Unit Meeting where we discussed issues of mutual concern among local union's representing AT&T Wireless Employees. I did learn that a national meeting among AT&T Wireless Employees is potentially in the works for later in the year. Finally, the local was honored with an outstanding achievement in COPE (Committee on Political Education) Award for the most new cards signed and our local president also spoke to the delegates about our many accomplishments during the past year.

### **WashTech Annual Picnic!**

Come out and enjoy fun in the sun with your fellow employees from all departments in the Seattle area! Go for a swim, toss a frisbee, hit the volleyball or just hang out and relax. There is also a playground for children as well.

When? Saturday, July 28, 2007  
Where? Martha Lake Park  
16300 E Shore Drive  
Lynnwood, WA 98037

There will be hamburgers, hot dogs, boca burgers, tofu pups, potluck salad and desert bar. Soda and water will be provided. Please, no alcoholic beverages.

# ***Gates Pushing Senate for More Controversial H-1B Visas***

**By Marcus Courtney  
President, WashTech**

Washington D.C. - Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates told U.S. Senators in March that the country is facing an "acute crisis" in its shortage of engineering professionals and those professionals with the right skills will be guaranteed a good paying job.

Gates declared, "The demand worldwide will guarantee them all jobs. Anyone in the United States, not only will they have a high paying job; they will create many around them. We are increasing our employment."

Gates' rare appearance before the Senate Health Education Labor and Pension Committee today urged passage of a bill titled "Strengthening American Competitiveness for the 21st Century." The committee only heard testimony from the Microsoft Chairman.

On a number of occasions during the hearing Gates cited the salary figure of \$100,000 as what his company is paying engineering professionals.

According to Gates, this worker "shortage" is hurting America's ability to compete in the global economy and the solutions pri-

## ***CWA National Legislative Conference Held in Washington, DC***

**By Marcus Courtney  
President, WashTech**

In 2006, the Democrats took control of both the House and Senate because of union members like you that hit the streets do to voter outreach and contributed to politics through payroll deduction. Because of that support, our issues are on the top of the agenda in Congress and that was on display at the annual CWA Legislative Political Conference held in Washington DC from March 25th-27th which I attended representing our local.

The top legislative priorities for CWA include passing the Employee Free Choice Act which would restore the freedom of workers to join union's the law of the land. In short, it would make card-check neutrality the law, which is how your union was organized at AT&T Wireless. This is the most significant labor law reform in more than 70 years. It passed the House under Speaker Pelosi's leadership with bipartisan support in the first 100 hours! When union members get involved in politics it makes the difference in getting Congress to act on our priorities.

I also lobbied every Democratic member of the Washington Congressional delegation on H-1B visa reform, passing health care for all, fair trade, and Trade Act Adjustment Assistance. In addition to lobbying, the conference also provided an opportunity to hear from presidential candidates, the Speaker of the House and other top legislative leaders.

The majority of the time was meeting with Washington's elected federal lawmakers discussion our legislative priorities of passing the Employee Free Choice Act, H-1B Visa Reform, health care reform, Trade Act Adjustment Assistance just to name a few.

marily involve reforming the H-1B visa program and the U.S. education system to improve math and science curriculum. The Gates Foundation has focused on U.S. education reform as part of their grant making efforts.

The H-1B visa program allows skilled foreign guest workers to enter the country for up to six years to fill spot labor shortages in high skilled areas. Under current law, the program allows for 65,000 new H-1B visa guest workers a year, with some exemptions that can raise that number to 120,000.

The program is highly controversial and is one of the biggest divides between labor and management in the technology sector. Labor groups argue that expanding the program creates a labor market where too many workers are competing for too few jobs which will have the effect of depressing salaries for professionals in the field.

From Gates' perspective, the majority of engineering professionals at Microsoft earn six figures a year or more, and he believes this is also true for guest worker employees under the H-1B visa program. For Gates, a \$100,000 a year salary for a guest worker computer professional means "we should welcome as many as we can get."

One Senator asked Gates about what is a good number above 65,000 that the Senate should consider. "300,000 would be a fantastic improvement," was his reply.

Despite all of the outsourcing of high-tech jobs overseas the U.S. will still have a strong IT industry said Gates. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) cited a figure of 600,000 jobs lost in the high-tech sector.

Every Senator praised the Microsoft founder for his efforts in global health and the work him and his wife are doing with the Gates Foundation.

## ***WashTech Needs Your Support***

Aren't you sick and tired of Congress only listening to one voice, Bill Gates, on visas? It's time we tell our side and we need your financial support today to do so. Please give now to help tech workers get their side of the story heard!

On Tuesday, March 7, 2007, Bill Gates testified before the Senate. Unfortunately, no one was there to counter the inaccuracies he brought up. However, a recent article in the New York Times corrected Bill Gates' lie about "\$100,000 a year jobs," so the truth is slowly trickling out. However, we need to make sure Congress knows the facts - and you can help!

Right now we're raising \$12,000 to place an ad in "Roll Call," a newspaper which is widely read by members of Congress, their staffs and policy makers and opinion leaders in Washington DC and around the country. We need to get the message out that Bill Gates' opinions are not fact. Will you help?

Contact the WashTech office or visit <http://www.washtech.org> and contribute - any amount from \$5 to \$5,000 - to help us pay for the cost of the ad. Together, we can set the record straight!