

T-UNION, A NEW UNION IS FORMED BY CWA AND VER.DI

The Communications Workers of America (CWA) announces the formation of a new union named T-Union through an alliance with the Ver.di, Germany's largest union, to represent workers in the United States and Europe. Through T-Union, the CWA and the Ver.di will work as joint affiliates to organize some 15,000 employees of Bellevue, Wash.-based T-Mobile USA Inc., a subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom, Germany's largest telecommunications company. T-Mobile supplies wireless voice and data communications services to U.S. subscribers.

Calling T-Union "a new step in global solidarity," CWA President Larry Cohen says the new union will organize workers to gain their collective bargaining rights around the world. With the launch of T-Union, the CWA and Ver.di have activated a Web site at <http://www.t-mobileunion.org> where T-Mobile workers can share information and discuss workplace issues, as well as a text messaging system—TUNION—to get messages about the CWA organizing campaign.

In Germany, the Ver.di has had a long relationship with Deutsche Telekom, representing workers at the company and holding seats on its supervisory board, according to Candice Johnson, a CWA spokeswoman. The union also represents T-Mobile workers in Germany and the United Kingdom. Workers at T-Mobile locations in the United States have expressed interest in the CWA, but U.S. T-Mobile managers have opposed collective bargaining rights for the company's U.S. employees. T-Mobile says its workers are among the "most satisfied employees in the country." According to a T-Mobile spokesperson, "T-mobile's high employee satisfaction rates are near the top of leading U.S. companies." She adds that the company has "always respected and continue to respect the rights of our employees, including their right to choose a union to represent them; but their high level of job satisfaction truly reflects T-Mobile as a terrific place to work."

The CWA says Ver.di will use its influence with Deutsche Telekom to help neutralize the anti-union attitudes of T-Mobile's U.S.-based management. "This new union sends a message to T-Mobile management in the U.S. that workers at Deutsche Telekom and at other T-Mobile operations who have bargaining rights will fight hard to protect them and to support their U.S. counterparts who also want the right to collective bargaining," Cohen says.

Lothar Schroder, who heads the Ver.di's telecommunications and information technology sector, praises T-Union as a good basis for German-American labor relations. "We believe that through this new union, we will contribute to the working conditions for workers in both countries. Management must get used to the idea that we are representing the interests not only of German workers but of American workers as well."

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