

**Testimony of
Clarence Adams**

**Before the Subcommittee on
Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions**

**Hearing on
“The Future of Union Organizing”**

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Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Andrews and members of this subcommittee for giving me the opportunity to testify.

My name is Clarence Adams and I have been a field technician for Cablevision in Brooklyn for over 14 years. I am also a proud veteran of the US Marines. Ten years ago, I was among the first wave of American troops who invaded Iraq. I was proud to serve my country and I was prepared to do whatever was necessary to defend the basic

freedoms that make this a great country.

I want to tell you today what I and my coworkers have gone through just to try to join a union.

In the fall and winter of 2011, I and a large group of my co-workers decided to organize with the Communications Workers of America.

Company management viciously opposed our efforts. I was forced to attend literally dozens of meetings where Cablevision management told me CWA was corrupt. They lied to me about the cost of dues and the likelihood of strikes. They threatened that my wages and benefits would actually go down if we joined together into a union. But on January 26, 2012, an overwhelming majority of my coworkers in Brooklyn voted to join CWA.

We were so excited. We thought, now we'll sit down with Cablevision and negotiate a contract that reasonably addresses our concerns.

We were wrong. I soon learned that management had no intention of bargaining with us in good faith. They continued their campaign of pressure and intimidation. As a union supporter, I felt like I was under a microscope every day I went to work.

A few months after we won our election, my Cablevision coworkers in the Bronx decided to begin organizing as well, to join us in CWA.

In late April, James Dolan, the CEO of Cablevision, made it clear that he would stop at nothing to prevent more employees from joining our union. Dolan gave every single employee in the entire company – about 10,000 people – significant raises. Except for us in Brooklyn. He improved the health plans of every single employee in Cablevision. Except for us in Brooklyn. He allowed techs all over his company to install Wi-Fi in parks. Except for us in Brooklyn. The only difference between those of us in Brooklyn and the rest of the company was that we exercised our legal rights to join a union.

And then, right before my coworkers in the Bronx held a vote on joining the union in late June, James Dolan personally visited them and stated that they shouldn't make the same mistake we did in Brooklyn. He told them that Cablevision would now “abandon” Brooklyn. He told them Brooklyn would be left behind in terms of investment and the workforce. Management succeeded in frightening enough workers so that a majority voted against the union.

Early this year, on January 30th, I was among 70 Cablevision workers in Brooklyn who decided to take advantage of the company's “Open Door Policy”, which encourages employees to go to management at anytime

to discuss issues of concern.

I arrived before my shift started to meet with a manager, any manager, for only five minutes to express my frustration that the company was stalling during bargaining. That morning, management eventually agreed to invite 22 techs into a conference room. I was one of those techs.

I was shocked when the Vice President, Mr. Rick Levesque, came into the room and told us we were being “permanently replaced.”

Cablevision’s “Open Door Policy” specifically says that the company “does not tolerate retaliation against employees for having views different from ours,” but on this day, that policy wasn’t worth the paper it was written on.

Thanks to a massive pressure campaign, the company has been forced to hire all of us back. I am proud that my 21 co-workers and I who were fired stayed strong through this ordeal. And when we walked back in the door, we showed our fellow workers that this is still a fight that we can win.

But I have to say I am very, very upset about what happened to us and what has happened since we voted in the union. The NLRB has filed charges against Cablevision, and we still await justice. Cablevision

threatened my livelihood by illegally firing me, and they have shown utter contempt for the rule of law. And so far there have been no consequences for them. Cablevision has hired over 50 lawyers, literally, to defend their unlawful actions. It is simply obscene for them to spend so much on lawyers, instead of sitting down to negotiate with their employees.

I just want a shot at the American Dream. I want some job security. I want to know that I can't be fired without just cause.

Ten years ago, I put my life on the line 6,000 miles away from home in the name of protecting the basic rights of American democracy. I believed I was fighting so that the rights of every American would be protected. I never thought that I would see the day that I, as an American citizen, would have my basic rights trampled on and no one would do anything about it. I never thought that a big corporation could violate my rights and the government would let them get away with it.

I am sad to say that my experience has taught me that our current labor laws are broken. Workers who dream of reaching the middle class and who hope for some job security shouldn't have to endure months and even years of fear and intimidation at work.

I was there when my country asked me to risk everything in Iraq. Is it

too much to ask for my government to protect my right to join a union at work?

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story with you today.