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T Mobile USA and AT&T Merger Means Faster and More Widespread Broadband

Following is a statement by CWA President Larry Cohen on the planned acquisition of T-Mobile USA by AT&T:

Washington, D.C. -- For more than a decade, the United States has continued to drop behind nearly every other developed economy on broadband speed and build out. The Federal Communications Commission sounded the alarm more than a year ago with its broadband report and President Obama in his State of the Union address called for increased efforts to bring the U.S. back to global parity as a key stimulus for economic development.

Today's announcement of the acquisition of T-Mobile USA by AT&T is a victory for broadband proponents in both the U.S. and Germany. For the U.S., it means that T-Mobile customers will get quick access to the AT&T network, soon to include LTE or data speeds of at least 10 megabits downstream. More important, as part of the deal, AT&T is committing to build out to nearly every part of the US within four years. Both AT&T and T-Mobile use GSM technology so there will be the immediate benefit of shared spectrum. Other reported deals involving T-Mobile would have joined incompatible networks; not only would that have forced a rebuild but would have required new phones for T-Mobile customers.

In Germany, the cash deal will provide investment in parent Deutsche Telekom's own fiber network, particularly important for DT's principal owner, the German government.

CWA and ver.di, the largest union in Germany, have partnered to support T-Mobile workers in the US, and the global union movement has been a strong supporter of this effort. CWA and ver.di formed a joint union – TU – that represents T-Mobile workers on both sides of the Atlantic. Hundreds of TU members in the U.S. will welcome this news since of all the possible partners, AT&T will mean better employment security and a management record of full neutrality towards union membership and a bargaining voice. For T-Mobile USA workers who want a voice in their workplace, this acquisition can provide a fresh start with T-Mobile management. Some 42,000 ATT mobility employees are union represented.

As with any merger or acquisition involving large entities, oversight issues will be raised. We ask all those involved to balance the inquiry with adequate weight for broadband speed and build out, and employment and workers rights.

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