



## Drive to unionize Comcast

### IBEW begins statewide campaign



By Jay Fitzgerald

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The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers yesterday launched what it called an all-out effort to unionize 1,700 Comcast technicians in Massachusetts, saying they deserve the same type of contracts that union workers get at rival Verizon.

"We've never tried anything of this magnitude" at Comcast, said Jerry Leary, vice president of IBEW Local 2222 in Dorchester.

The IBEW is launching similar organizing efforts at Comcast sites across the country.

The union, which kicked off its drive yesterday by passing out literature at Comcast facilities across the state, has made more isolated attempts to organize Comcast workers in the past - only to fail.

But Leary, who's heading up the effort this time around, said the union is more organized, determined and confident. "Comcast is a notorious anti-

union company," said Leary. "This is our first big effort."

In a statement, Comcast, both the state's and nation's largest cable TV operator, shot back that the telecom giant is a "pro-employee company" that "invests in our employees with the belief that our company can only be as strong as our work force."

Comcast said that its workers have rejected union overtures in the past - and a spokesman added that surveys show its employees are content.

But if the IBEW is successful in its organizing efforts, it would be a severe competitive blow to Comcast, which currently doesn't have nearly as many union workers across the country as arch-rival Verizon.

A successful unionizing effort might take away a cost advantage that Comcast now has over Verizon.

The IBEW is also battling Verizon, as several unions gear up for crucial labor-contract negotiations later this year.

IBEW Local 2222 recently criticized Verizon for opening new service centers across the state - while slashing jobs elsewhere. A spokesman for Verizon couldn't be reached for comment.

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Photo by Nancy Lane

Speaking up: Steve Smith, left, and Jerry Leary work on posters at an IBEW Local 2222 office in Dorchester.

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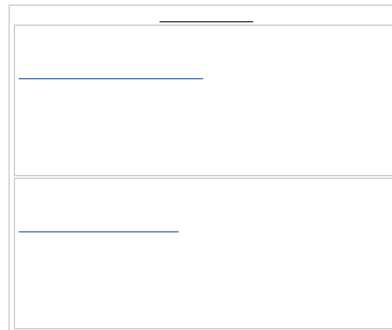
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