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201 Retiree's Column

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HAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS, HAPPY NEW YEAR, HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND VERY IMPORTANT MAY YOU HAVE MANY MORE OF THEM.

Unfortunately, I need to tell you of 3 recent experiences which took place last week which confirmed that VIA WAS CONTINUING IN THE SAME MODE AS THE HELL OF THE ONE EXCHANGE.

The first example was that of a 90-year-old woman who was brought down to the hall to see me by one of our members. The first words out of her mouth where (sic) "I AM TERRIFIED" about calling VIA. She said that she didn't understand what the VIA representative was saying and that they talked too fast. She showed me a form from VIA which stated she had \$2,317.00 in her RRA account. I told her we would get that money for her. We called VIA and explained that I was an advocate for GE Retirees. The VIA representative said she was also an advocate. That struck me because I have never seen anyone helped by VIA to get their benefits. It is a sad situation that this 90-year-old (sic) felt so intimidated by the phone tactics of VIA that she was willing to give up \$2,317.00 of her benefit money rather than fight for it. I told her we would fight for her.

The next case was Helen who came down to the Union Hall for help on how to change her prescription plan. She was amazed and dismayed that it took us 2 hours to change her prescription plan to a better one. Her words to me as she was leaving were that she could not believe we had to go through this day in and day out.

The last case was John who needed to get enrolled. Again a 2-hour process that involved the VIA representative asking him the same question over and over again (at least 5 times.) This representative said she was an advocate too. I would like to know how many people these "advocates" have "helped"?

These stories are endless. What would be a big help to our retirees is if GE or VIA had a team of true advocates that would notify our retirees and help them get the benefits they have earned.

Merry Christmas/Happy Holidays to all again. See you Next Year.