

# Rosa Samaniego

**Customer Service Representative  
AT&T Wireless/Cingular Wireless  
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My name is Rosa Samaniego. I was part of the organizing campaign at Cingular Wireless in 2005. I first began to work there while it was AT&T Wireless on July 6, 1998.

I was hired as a Customer Service Representative, Level I. I was paid \$10.20 per hour.

A few months after I started working there, I saw people at the entrance to the parking lot handing out leaflets about the union and it had a tear-off card at the bottom to get more information. I remember showing it to one of my co-workers and she said to me, "you don't want management to see you with that paper." Just as she said that, my manager came up and asked us what we were doing. I said I just got this and I don't know what it's for. She replied, "you really don't want to fill it out because if you do that'll make you a member of the union automatically and that's something you really want to consider before doing that." I gave the leaflet to my manager wanting her to think that I had no interest in the union. At that time, I really didn't know too much about unions and what they meant.

Everyone was afraid to mention the word "union." At our team meetings, we were told that we really needed to do our homework about unions because they are not as beneficial as you think. Therefore, some co-workers wouldn't use the word union but referred to it as the "U" word.

There were other times. I recall one time when a manager found leaflets in the bathroom on the floor I worked on. The manager asked us, 'do you know who left this in the bathroom?' I was aware that all managers knew of the leaflets and would be looking to find who brought them inside. Later, word went around that they had found the person responsible and we didn't see that person anymore.

Sometime around the first quarter of 2004, we began to hear talk of Cingular Wireless being sold. Rumors were flying such that the CEO of AT&T Wireless came to Sacramento to hold an all-employee meeting, and he reassured us that we were not for sale. A month later, it was announced that Cingular would be buying AT&T Wireless.

Once Cingular took over and we were given the statistical measurements for representatives to meet, we could see changes were coming. We learned that call handling would change which made employees nervous. Workers began to quit and go elsewhere.

I became aware that most of Cingular's call centers were union. I was approached by a co-worker who whispered that there was going to be a union meeting and asked me to go along, which I did along with another trusted co-worker.

I became interested in the union because I felt the union would address the issue of fairness in the workplace and learned of the grievance process to address problems.

From there I became actively involved once the CWA union organizer recruited me to talk to co-workers. I set up a table in the cafeteria with union literature. To those who approached I would quickly explain the difference having a union would make. Our health care benefits would cost far less, our hourly wage would remain the same, not lowered. Raises would be set by the contract, not by favoritism. Seniority would count towards changes in our job resulting from the merger.

We began to circulate cards in early September. On the first day we collected 168 cards out of a workforce of 720. By mid-October, all three call centers in the state had signed up majorities and the union was granted recognition on October 13, 2005.

There's no way this would have happened so quickly if it wasn't for card check. The process to indicate your agreement to have a union was to sign the representation card. No employer hostility. No fear tactics. No mandatory employer meetings to attend. No waiting period to get to an election. If this were to become the process to decide union representation, then in no time workers everywhere would choose to have a voice in the workplace. This is what is needed.