

CWA news



United in the Fight



By CWA President Claude Cummings Jr.

What makes our union powerful is our willingness to show up and show out for one another. I was elected President of our great union with a promise to unite us and, by doing so, increase our reach. That process is already underway and the results are in: unity is strength.

Right after our convention in July, we began mobilizing folks from every district and sector to support CWA passenger service agents who were bargaining with Ameri-

can Airlines. Our national pickets in August and November jumpstarted bargaining. And in December passenger service workers at American won an historic contract! That doesn't happen with a bunch of people all doing their own thing. It takes a single, unified team to go straight to the heart of the issue and turn our hopes and dreams into reality.

I promised that I would bring together top AT&T executives and our district leadership to discuss our common issues. This had never been done before. Another "big dream," some people said. I'm proud to report we held that meeting and we've been working closely with AT&T to hold them to the commitments they made. But I couldn't have done it without my team, including Chief of Staff Sylvia J. Ramos, and the input and support of District Vice Presidents, staff and local leaders.

This is just the beginning. I am working with our entire Executive Board to identify ways that we can work more closely together across districts and sectors to win strong contracts and grow our union. We have so much we can learn from each other if we focus on what unites us rather than what divides us.

One example is in the area of Artificial Intelligence. AI is going to affect every

one of us in ways we are only now starting to understand. Our Advisory Committee on Artificial Intelligence has representatives from all CWA sectors. They are developing tools for bargaining and advocacy related to AI and other digital technologies. Most significantly, they will establish a CWA-wide forum that will enable members and locals to share best practices and knowledge.

That's the power of unity. That's the power of our union.

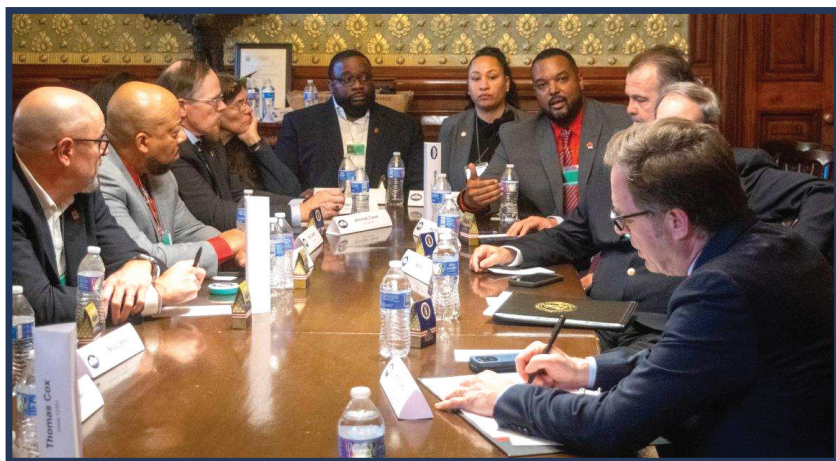
And while we're focused on enforcing our contracts, bargaining new agreements, and helping workers organize to join CWA, we cannot ignore the national election. In the coming months, I am counting on all of you to not only listen to the candidates' words, but to look at their deeds. We must elect people who are committed to working with us to make sure that hard work is rewarded and that everyone has the support they need to build a better life. People who want to make it easier to join unions and negotiate collective bargaining agreements, which are the best tools we have to defend ourselves against those who pursue profit at any cost.

At the top of the ticket we have Joe Biden, who has kept his commitment to be the most pro-union president in history. No other sitting president has ever stood on the picket line with workers. But we're not just focused on the Oval Office. CWA members and retirees have to be involved at the local and state level as well, from governors to school boards to dog catchers, every election should be about who has our best interests at heart. Our job, now more than ever, is to ensure that, at every level, our values are being reflected and our needs are being met.

This is going to be a year of rapid and unprecedented change. CWA will hold strong, will move as one, and we **will** continue to be champions for working people everywhere.

We are CWA and when we fight, we win.

With President Biden, CWA



Over a dozen members of CWA's Broadband Brigade met with senior Biden Administration leadership to provide feedback on the best way for officials to ensure that federal broadband infrastructure funding goes to companies that **employ well-trained union workers and not low-road contractors**. "I wasn't sure if they'd really be interested in what we had to say," said CWA Local 4108 member Marty Szeliga. "I thought it might be some phony political photo op. But we were there for over three hours, and they really listened to us."

As all of us in the labor movement know, if you politicians have traded away our jobs for corporate profits.

When Joe Biden was running for president, he talked about being the most pro-worker and pro-union president in American history. He made this visible way by joining members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. Joe Biden was the first sitting president to join a union.

Joining a picket line is an impressive show of solidarity. But for CWA members, it's a daily reality. Time and again, Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, and other CWA members—to share their expertise and knowledge.

With Joe Biden in office, we finally have a seat at the table.

Fast Facts

The Biden Administration:

- ▶ Allowed Medicare to directly negotiate to lower the price of the highest cost prescription drugs and capped the cost of insulin for seniors at \$35 per month, helping save millions of seniors over \$1,200 per year.
- ▶ Prioritized the creation of good jobs by including the first ever labor rights protections as part of over \$40 billion in broadband infrastructure investments.
- ▶ Fought to keep hundreds of thousands of state and local employees, Flight Attendants, and passenger service agents on the job during the COVID crisis.
- ▶ Provided support to protect over 10,000 CWA members whose pension funds had been in danger of insolvency.
- ▶ Strengthened Buy American rules and closed loopholes to create good union manufacturing jobs here in the U.S.



Tech workers Jenn Chow, Autumn Mitchell, and Alex Speidel, who organized their workplaces to join CWA, met with President Biden, Vice President Harris, and other key administration officials to share their experiences and advocate for **stronger rules to protect our organizing and bargaining rights** as part of the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment. "Everybody is entitled to be treated with dignity," President Biden said during one of the meetings. "And as my dad used to say, sometimes you have to demand it if you don't get it. And the way to demand it is you organize."

CWA Local 351 Sherrod testified about the **impacting software representative** be great for help tasks, but without it, it won't be a cated tasks that help the customer unfair that AI is invaluable experience. It's even worse training our rep to help the customer better at doing

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Produced by
CWA Communications Department

Director/Executive Editor
Beth Allen

Senior Writer/Editor
Luis Rodriguez

Technical Specialist Sarah Daisy Splitt

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CWA Local 7212 member and splicing technician Jeremy Przybilla demonstrated proper fiber splicing techniques at the White House Talent Pipeline Challenge, an event designed to **promote labor-management partnerships for training**.

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ers Have a Seat at the Table

don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu. For decades, corporate-backed corporate profits, and we were on the menu.

oked a lot about his vision for restoring the American middle class. He promised to n American history. Since taking office, he has made good on that promise. One very Auto Workers on their picket line while they were on strike against the Big Three auto nt to ever join a picket line.

clarity, but a lot of what makes the Biden Administration unique has happened away amala Harris, and members of their administration have invited union members—including advise them on the best way to create good union jobs.

the table.

9 Vice President Ylonda d at a White House meeting ct of automated moni- re on customer service es' jobs. "I think AI could oing workers with simple ut the use of human creativ- ble to do the more compli- are usually needed to truly ers," Sherrod said. "It is being used to replace the rience of human workers. that us workers are basically lacements and being asked tors make these systems our job."



Vice President Kamala Harris met with CWA Local 7304 members who make electric buses when she visited a New Flyer bus facility in St. Cloud, Minn., to learn how **renewable energy manufacturing can support family-sustaining jobs** in communities across our country. "Electric buses are key to the future of public transportation in America—which is why, since taking office, together with Democrats and Republicans, we have invested over \$5.5 billion to put thousands of new electric transit buses on the streets of our nation," Vice President Harris told the crowd. "And we've also done that to create jobs—so people can have decent work hours and have good-paying union jobs."



CODE-CWA members Briana Thomas and Mohammad Saman shared their experiences winning union representation with President Joe Biden and Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), along with other administration officials, at a White House roundtable. "Workers in the video game industry care deeply about our work, and **a union contract gives us the leverage to negotiate** to make this a sustainable career," Saman told the group.



CWA President Claude Cummings Jr., CWA Local 3642 member Sebrenda Clifton, AFA-CWA International Vice President Keturah Johnson, and AFA-CWA Frontier Airlines MEC Secretary-Treasurer Toi Scott joined Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su and other senior members of the Biden Administration at a Black Labor Leaders Roundtable designed to amplify the voices of Black workers and labor leaders and share information about **the benefits of union membership**. "Through my union, I have experienced firsthand the power of collective bargaining, the protection of worker rights, and the tangible benefits that come with it," said Clifton, a Trained Observer and Travel Professional at American Airlines.



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CWA's Policy on Mutual Respect

CWA's Policy on Mutual Respect calls on all members to fight discrimination, including sexual harassment, whenever and wherever we see it. The policy states:

Freedom from discrimination within our Union is a right and privilege of all CWA members. Any abridgement of this right and privilege shall be subject to a complaint under the CWA Internal Appeals Procedures and should be investigated immediately without fear of reprisal and retaliation.

Members who experience or witness discrimination or sexual harassment, whether by another CWA member, a supervisor, or customer should immediately report it to

their steward, Local Officer, or member of the Local's Human Rights committee. If the Local's governing body fails to take appropriate action to address the complaint, or if the member wishes to appeal the decision of the Local about how to address the complaint, the member should contact their CWA District office for further specific guidance on how to proceed. To learn which CWA District covers your location, visit cwa.org/about.

A full copy of the Policy on Mutual Respect is available online at cwa.org/mutual-respect. Information on CWA's complaint and appeals process is available online at cwa.org/appeals.

Union Member Rights and Officer Responsibilities Under the LMRDA

The Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) guarantees certain rights to union members and imposes certain responsibilities on union officers to ensure union democracy, financial integrity, and transparency. The Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS) is the Federal agency with primary authority to enforce many LMRDA provisions. More information is available at www.dol.gov/agencies/olms.

Union Member Rights

Bill of Rights – Union members have:

- equal rights to participate in union activities and meetings.
- freedom of speech and assembly.
- a voice in setting rates of dues, fees, and assessments.
- protection of the right to sue.
- safeguards against improper discipline.

Copies of Collective Bargaining Agreements – Union members and nonunion employees have the right to receive or inspect copies of collective bargaining agreements.

Reports – Unions are required to file an initial information report (Form LM-1), copies of constitutions and bylaws, and an annual financial report (Form LM-2/3/4) with OLMS. Unions must make the reports available to members and permit members to examine supporting records for just cause. The reports are public information and copies are available from the OLMS Internet Public Disclosure Room at www.dol.gov/agencies/olms.

Officer Elections – Union members have the right to:

- nominate candidates for office.
- run for office.

- cast a secret ballot.
- protest the conduct of an election.

Officer Removal – Local union members have the right to an adequate procedure for the removal of an elected officer guilty of serious misconduct.

Trusteeships – Unions may only be placed in trusteeship by a parent body for the reasons specified in the LMRDA.

Prohibition Against Certain Discipline – A union or any of its officials may not fine, expel, or otherwise discipline a member for exercising any LMRDA right.

Prohibition Against Violence – No one may use or threaten to use force or violence to interfere with a union member in the exercise of LMRDA rights.

Union Officer Responsibilities

Financial Safeguards – Union officers have a duty to manage the funds and property of the union solely for the benefit of the union and its members in accordance with the union's constitution and bylaws. Union officers or employees who embezzle or steal union funds or other assets commit a Federal crime punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment.

Bonding – Union officers or employees who handle union funds or property must be bonded to provide protection against losses if their union has property and annual financial receipts which exceed \$5,000.

Labor Organization Reports – Union officers must:

- file an initial information report (Form LM-1) and annual financial reports (Forms LM-2/3/4) with OLMS.

- retain the records necessary to verify the reports for at least five years.

Officer Reports – Union officers and employees must file reports concerning any loans and benefits received from, or certain financial interests in, employers whose employees their unions represent and businesses that deal with their unions.

Officer Elections – Unions must:

- hold elections of officers of local unions by secret ballot at least every three years.
- conduct regular elections in accordance with their constitution and bylaws and preserve all records for one year.
- mail a notice of election to every member at least 15 days prior to the election.
- comply with a candidate's request to distribute campaign material.
- not use union funds or resources to promote any candidate (nor may employer funds or resources be used).
- permit candidates to have election observers.
- allow candidates to inspect the union's membership list once within 30 days prior to the election.

Restrictions on Holding Office – A person convicted of certain crimes may not serve as a union officer, employee, or other representative of a union for up to 13 years.

Loans – A union may not have outstanding loans to any one officer or employee that in total exceed \$2,000 at any time.

Fines – A union may not pay the fine of any officer or employee convicted of any willful violation of the LMRDA.

Notice Regarding Union Security Agreements and Agency Fee Objections

As a general matter, employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement containing a Union security clause are required, as a condition of employment, to pay an agency fee equal to normal Union dues (and, where applicable, initiation fees). While the wording of these clauses is not perfectly uniform, none requires more than the payment of this agency fee to retain employment.

The Communications Workers of America policy on agency fee objections is the Union's means of meeting its legal obligations to employees covered by Union security clauses and of effectuating those employees' legal rights as stated in the applicable decisions of the United States Supreme Court (including *Beck v. CWA*) and the companion lower court and labor agency decisions. Under the CWA policy, employees who are not members of the Union, but who pay agency fees pursuant to a Union security clause, may request a reduction in that fee based on their objection to certain kinds of Union expenditures.

The policy provides an objection period each year during May, followed by a reduction in the objector's fee for the twelve months beginning with July and running through June of the following year.

Briefly stated, CWA's objection policy works as follows:

1. The agency fee payable by objectors will be based on the Union's expenditures for those activities or projects "germane to collective bargaining, contract administration, and grievance adjustment" within the meaning of applicable United

States Supreme Court decisions. Among these "chargeable" expenditures are those going for negotiations with employers, enforcing collective bargaining agreements, informal meetings with employer representatives, discussion of work-related issues with employees, handling employees' work-related problems through the grievance procedure, administrative agencies, or informal meetings, and Union administration. In the past, approximately 70-75% of the International Union's expenditures have gone for such activities. The percentages of Local Union expenditures on "chargeable" activities have generally been higher.

Among the expenditures treated as "nonchargeable," which objectors will not be required to support, are those going for community service (including participating in charitable events), legislative activity, cost of affiliation with non-CWA organizations, support of political candidates, participating in political events, recruitment of members to the Union, and members-only benefits (including members-only social events). In the past, approximately 25-30% of the International Union's expenditures have gone for such "nonchargeable" expenditures. The percentages of Local Union expenditures on "nonchargeable" activities have generally been lower.

2. Objectors will be given a full explanation of the basis for the reduced fee charged to them. That explanation will include a more detailed list of the categories of expenditures deemed to be "chargeable" and those deemed to be "nonchargeable," and the independent certified public accountants' report showing the Union's expenditures on which the fee is based. In addition to any other avenue of relief available under the law, objectors

will have the option of challenging the Union's calculation of the reduced fee before an impartial arbitrator appointed by the American Arbitration Association, and a portion of the objector's fee shall be held in escrow while he or she pursues that challenge. Details on the method of making such a challenge and the rights accorded to those who do so will be provided to objectors along with the explanation of the fee calculation.

3. Objections for the period of July through June must be sent during May. Objections will be honored for one year unless the objection specifically states that it is continuing in nature. Continuing objections will be honored for as long as the agency fee payer remains in the bargaining unit. Agency fee payers who are new to the bargaining unit, or who are returning to the bargaining unit, may object within thirty days of receiving this notice. In addition, employees who resign Union membership may object within thirty days of becoming an agency fee payer. Employees filing these objections in either circumstance should so state that circumstance in their letter of objection. New bargaining unit members are to receive this notice prior to any demand being made upon them for the payment of agency fees. If, however, for any reason a new unit member begins paying agency fees prior to the receipt of this notice, he or she may object retroactively to the commencement of such payments and for the duration of the current annual objection period.

The letter of objection should include name, address, CWA Local number, and employer. Objections must be sent to the Agency Fee Administrator, CWA, 501 Third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-2797.