

# CWA news



## One Union, One Vision: CWA United



By CWA President Claude Cummings Jr.

**A**s members of CWA, you are connected to people you might never have met or otherwise known. We work in different industries and have different job titles. We live in rural areas, in suburbs, and in cities. We are of different races and genders, and we hold different political views. But we all come together in our union.

Despite these differences, we face common challenges. Corporate CEOs, trying to boost profits to reward their wealthy investors, push to keep our wages low, reduce our benefits, and

cut corners on health and safety protections. Instead of making sure that corporations and wealthy individuals pay their fair share, elected officials slash pensions for public workers and outsource our work.

**What unites us is our vision for a better future: prosperity and justice for all, not just a privileged few.**

Our union is the best tool we have to fight back against corporate greed and to claim that future. Maintaining our solidarity against those who promote hatred and division among us so that they can exploit our labor for profit is not easy, but it is essential.

That unity starts in our locals. Our strength comes from the bottom up, not the top down. We cannot effectively bargain and enforce our contracts unless our employers know that we will stand with each other no matter what. Get involved by attending local meetings and participating in committees.

We must also unite across our districts and sectors. If members of another CWA local in your area are mobilizing, join their rally. If they are speaking at a city council meeting on an issue that affects their industry, show up to support them. The more we understand about each other's struggles, the better able we are to find solutions.

I'm not going to sugarcoat it—the next few years are going to be tough. Despite distancing himself from Project 2025 during the election campaign, Donald Trump and members of his administration are aggressively implementing parts of the plan to limit our freedom to organize new members and enforce our contracts.

Trump's first step was illegally firing National Labor Relations Board member Gwynne Wilcox. With only two NLRB board members remaining, the Board cannot issue rulings in most cases. Now employers covered by the National Labor Relations Act who bargain in bad faith, change the terms of our employment without bargaining, or do other things that interfere with our ability to join or participate in our union can delay action on our charges indefinitely.

His next step comes right out of the Project 2025 playbook. The Trump administration is no longer defending the constitutionality of the National Labor Relations Board against a lawsuit filed by Elon Musk's SpaceX and other union-busting companies. They are working on behalf of their billionaire backers to destroy the NLRB and other federal agencies that protect working people against corporate executives who violate our rights and limit our freedoms.

If we do not stop this power grab, Musk and Trump will keep on going. By recklessly firing essential federal workers and gutting programs, they are putting our livelihoods and our lives at risk. Next on the list is making it easier for employers to retaliate against workers who mobilize to improve their working conditions and banning all public employee unions.

I have been working with other union leaders to fight back against these illegal efforts to hand more control and wealth to billionaires and CEOs, including by filing lawsuits. Meanwhile, we cannot be intimidated.

I am calling on every one of you to mobilize for respect on the job, to organize so that new members can join our union, and to reach out to your elected officials to tell them to put working people first.

**Together, we will fight for what we deserve. Corporate power is no match for our power when we act together. When we unite, we win.**



# Building Our

Support for unions is stronger than ever. Union membership and collective bargaining are the best tools that working people have to improve our wages and working conditions, protect our health and safety on the job, and secure our retirements. Our union contracts level the playing field and protect us from discriminatory and retaliatory firings.

**CEOs and billionaires want to divide us in order to get more control over our lives. We have the power to stop them.**

CWA members and retirees from all parts of our union are joining together to support each other and build our strength. **Here's how you can get involved.**

## Connect with Your Local

Every CWA member belongs to a local union. Local union programs and services are led and coordinated by local union officers elected by the members. Attend your local's membership meetings to stay informed about what is going on. Participate in community service opportunities or join a committee to help shape your local's priorities.

## Talk About the Benefits of Union Membership

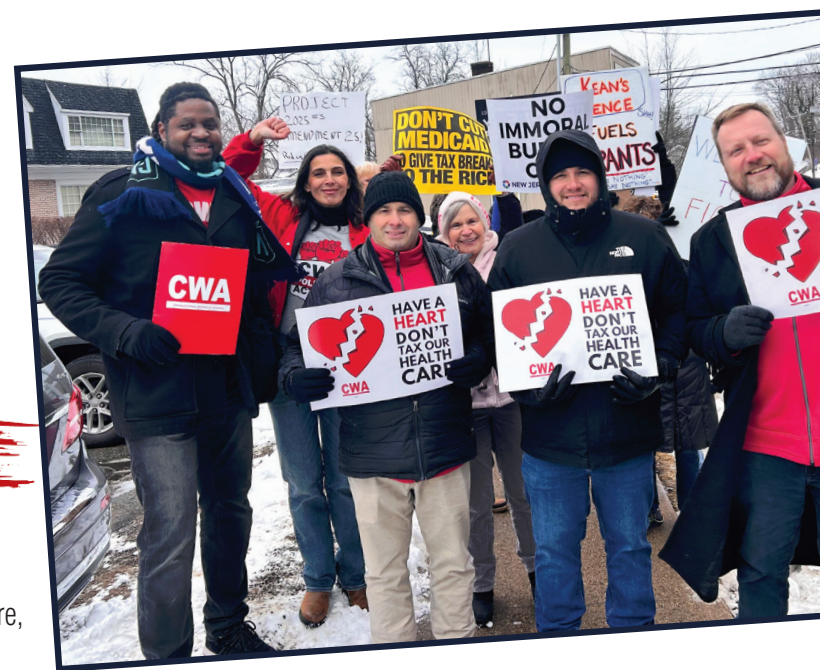
Many people are interested in forming a union, but they don't know how to get started. CWA membership isn't limited by industry or geographical area. Let your friends and acquaintances know you are a CWA member and talk about the benefits of being in a union. Encourage co-workers who have not yet joined CWA to sign up. Consider joining your local's organizing committee to help other workers improve their lives and build power by joining our union.

## Contact Your Elected Officials

Our elected government officials need to hear from us about the legislation and policies that matter most to working people. We need access to affordable healthcare, safe workplaces, secure retirements, and good jobs in our communities. If we stay informed about how they are voting, we can support them when they support us and hold them accountable when they don't. Our Legislative and Political Action Teams can help you identify the most effective ways to get your message across. Join your local's legislative committee or visit [cwa.org/volunteer](http://cwa.org/volunteer) to connect with resources and opportunities near you.

## Support Our Political Action Fund

The CWA Political Action Fund (PAF) is a nonpartisan political action committee that fights for workers' political power. It is your chance to have your voice—and the issues you care about—heard at the local, state, and national levels of government. Voluntary contributions to the fund go toward policies and local, state, and national candidates that defend workers' rights. Learn how to donate at [cwa.org/paf](http://cwa.org/paf).



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## LEARNING OUR HISTORY

How much do you know about our union's history?

CWA was founded in 1938 at meetings in Chicago and New Orleans. While our union's origins are in the telephone industry, we now have members across the globe in a wide variety of occupations.

The recently updated CWA History section of our website features historical highlights and photos. It also includes "Stories of a Changing Union," a collection of oral history interviews with CWA leaders who

led the transformation of the union into the powerhouse it is today.

Check it out at [cwa.org/history](http://cwa.org/history)





# Union Power



## Stay Informed

Subscribe to our union-wide weekly email newsletter and follow our social media accounts to learn about the bargaining, organizing, and mobilizing that is happening across our union. Visit [cwa.org/stay-informed](https://cwa.org/stay-informed) for links.



## WE ARE THE UNION!

Member involvement is key to the success of our union. Our union is not just something we belong to—it is an organization that we, as CWA members, actively participate in and direct through a democratic process. CWA members elect local officers and serve as stewards. We sit at the negotiating table to bargain contracts and vote on whether or not to approve those contracts.

CWA members also elect local union delegates to the CWA Convention, which is held every other year. This year the CWA Convention will be held August 11-12 in Pittsburgh, Penn.

The convention is our union's highest governing body. Convention delegates have the final authority over our union's budget, policy, and programs. The proceedings of the convention are posted on CWA's website.

Our union's top international officers—president and secretary-treasurer—are elected by delegates to the convention. The international officers serve on CWA's executive board along with fifteen regional/sector officers and four at-large members who are local officers.

Seven of those officers come from our geographical regions across the country—CWA Districts—and the other eight are officers representing CWA members from our union's "sectors"—industry or occupational groups—including a Canadian Director.

CWA's structure and rules are outlined in the CWA Constitution, which can be amended by convention delegates. A copy of the constitution is available at [cwa.org/constitution](https://cwa.org/constitution).



## SPOTLIGHT ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The rapidly expanding capabilities of Artificial Intelligence applications are affecting almost every aspect of our lives, including our work.

CWA's Committee on Artificial Intelligence, composed of members from across the union, has been working to address the challenges that AI presents through both bargaining strategy and public policy. CWA has taken a member-led approach to AI, harnessing the expertise of CWAers with direct experience working with AI programs from diverse industries, including call centers, telecommunications, journalism, and tech.

The committee's first step was to develop a set of principles and recommendations for CWA's Executive Board. The principles direct CWA

bargaining committees and leadership to be proactive in bargaining contract language that protects members against the negative effects AI tools can have in workplaces, including invasive surveillance, unfair automated employment decision-making (including hiring, discipline, and pay-setting), unsafe and stressful work intensification and speed-up, the reduction of compensation or benefit levels, and the reduction of union members' work.

The committee is now working on educational materials and a toolkit with resources for members, local officers, and bargaining committees which will be launched this summer. You can read the CWA AI principles and recommendations at [cwa.org/ai-principles](https://cwa.org/ai-principles).



Workers participate in a National Operator Awareness Week demonstration in Memphis, Tenn., in 1991.

Information of our multi-industry is today.

Visit [cwa.org/history](https://cwa.org/history).

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## STAY INFORMED!

Keep up with the latest news from your union by signing up for our weekly eNewsletter or by finding us on social media!



Sign up for our weekly email newsletter at [CWA.org/eNewsletter](https://CWA.org/eNewsletter)



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Follow us on TikTok [@cwaunion](https://tiktok.com/@cwaunion)



Follow us on Bluesky [@cwaunion.bsky.social](https://bluesky.com/@cwaunion.bsky.social)

Or you can scan this code for all the ways to connect with CWA.



### 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](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/olms).

### 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 as a violation of

the Policy on Mutual Respect 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](https://cwa.org/about).

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

## 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 are not perfectly uniform, none require 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.

Agency fee payers will receive an advance payment in July following the beginning of CWA's fiscal year to reimburse them for the nonchargeable amount of their dues for the coming year. This advance is a projection based on the current information available to CWA.

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 and current in their dues. 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 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 mailed to the Agency Fee Administrator, CWA, 501 Third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-2797.