

CWA news



KEEPING CWA STRONG



By CWA President Chris Shelton

Make no mistake: The past decade has been extremely difficult for the labor movement in the United States. Several extremely wealthy CEOs and investors have

made it their mission to make sure nothing stands in their way as they cut jobs, drive down wages, reduce benefits, and gut health and safety regulations. What has been at the top of their list? Destroying unions so that working people can't fight back.

CWA leaders anticipated these challenges. At the 2005 CWA Convention, delegates passed the "Ready for the Future" resolution, which launched a union-wide discussion about strategies to improve our union. Those discussions led to many new initiatives, including the establishment of our Strategic Industry Fund to increase bargaining power within the industries where CWA members work.

The Strategic Industry Fund allows our union to create bold campaigns that would not otherwise have been possible, like "Speed Matters" to advocate for broadband buildout, programs to make sure that

green jobs in manufacturing are union jobs, and coordination of organizing efforts across major media chains. But the limitations of the industry-based approach soon became clear. So, in 2013, Convention delegates voted to increase the union's capacity by establishing the CWA Growth Fund.

The Growth Fund builds our power across industries and in the larger movement for economic justice. It allows us to think big, respond creatively, and work together no matter who our employer is or where we live. Through the Growth Fund, thousands of CWA members have participated in innovative educational programs, organizing campaigns, and legislative initiatives. This issue of the *CWA News* highlights some of these successes—like our multi-year campaign to defeat the job-killing Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, our Political Boot Camps and Reversing Runaway Inequality training, and internal organizing programs that pioneered the ideas that became CWA STRONG.

In July, we will gather in Las Vegas for the 77th CWA Convention. We must once again ask ourselves how we can strengthen our union to meet the challenges we face. Delegates will consider proposals to balance and stabilize the funding for the Strategic Industry and Growth Funds so that we can continue to strengthen all sides of the CWA Triangle: organizing,

movement building and political action, and bargaining and representation.

We will also take a close look at the backbone of our union—our stewards. We will discuss how to make sure we have enough stewards to support our membership and how to provide those stewards with the training and resources they need to lead our union into the future.

By looking toward the future, we prepared ourselves for the challenges and opportunities of today. Last year's Supreme Court decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* was meant as a body blow against unions. Instead, our public sector membership has grown and the country has seen a wave of working people fighting back against corporate power. CWA members would not have been able to fight back against the attacks of corporate CEOs and the 1% so successfully without the forward-thinking action of the members who participated in Ready for the Future discussions and the convention delegates who established the Growth Fund.

When we fight, we win. Growth Fund campaigns bring us together and make CWA stronger every day. I urge every one of you to get involved in these campaigns, participate in training, and join the fight. Your future, and the future of our children and grandchildren, depends on it.

Growing Our Union Power a

What Is CWA's Growth Fund?

CWA's Growth Fund supports union-wide programs that help members build power across all districts and sectors of our union. Growth Fund projects enhance our union's organizing, legislative and political, and education and leadership development efforts. They also enable CWA members to connect with members of other organizations who are fighting for economic justice and democracy, so

that we can increase our effectiveness by working together to build our movement.

Growth Fund programs have made it possible for CWA members to fight back—and grow stronger—during a time when corporate CEOs and the 1% have focused on destroying unions.



CWA's "Reversing Runaway Inequality" program has educated thousands of CWA members on the cause of the wealth gap in our country and what we can do to address it.

Organizing

With labor unions facing an onslaught of attacks from right-wing special interests, CWA members are working hard not only to defend against these anti-worker attacks, but also to grow and strengthen our union through organizing.

CWA STRONG, our comprehensive national plan to build workplace power, strengthen bargaining, and resist outside efforts to destroy our union, is based on ideas developed as part of the "CWA Stronger" Growth Fund project in 2015. Anticipating the Supreme Court decision in *Janus vs. AFSCME* that made the entire public sector nationwide "right-to-work" for less, CWA public and education workers across the country learned how to talk to non-members about joining the union, connected with each other using a new text messaging system, and held organizing "blitzes" to sign up thousands of new members.

"CWA Growth Fund support made it possible for us to respond to the threat of *Janus* not by cowering—but by organizing and mobilizing members to build worker power," said CWA Local 1180 President Gloria Middleton.

CWA Growth fund projects have provided critical support for other organizing work, including:

- Boosting the NewsGuild-CWA's successful efforts to **give media workers a voice in the workplace**. Workers at media outlets are improving their working conditions and strengthening their ability to serve their communities by organizing to join the NewsGuild-CWA. With media conglomerates like the hedge fund Alden Global Capital-owned Digital First Media and Sinclair Broadcast Group buying up local newspapers and slashing jobs to maximize profits, workers need a voice at the table now more than ever.
- At **ABC Sports and NBC Sports**, NABET-CWA aimed to sign up at least 600 new members with assistance from a CWA Growth Fund. They managed to exceed that goal by 1,000 members!
- Bank workers formed the **Committee for Better Banks** to fight for better

working conditions. In the wake of the massive Wells Fargo fraudulent account scandal, the bank workers have highlighted the poor working conditions at major banks and how unreasonable sales quotas have harmed both workers and consumers. This project has laid the groundwork for a wave of organizing in the financial sector.

- Organizing **public higher education employees at state universities** across CWA District 3. CWAers in D3 recruited nearly 500 new members at state universities in 2018—a wave of organizing that is challenging the anti-union reputation of Southern states.



CWA members partnered with Good Jobs Nation on a Midwest Pickup Tour, raising public awareness about the continued offshoring of American jobs.

Building a Movement

A core principle of our labor movement is that when working people join together, we have more power to make positive change than we do on our own. The same principle applies to CWA's work with other organizations and constituency groups. When CWA members and retirees join efforts with other unions, civil rights, labor, environmental, government reform, and advocacy organizations, we can remake our democracy and push back against the 1%.

CWA Growth Funds help facilitate these connections between CWAers and our allies such as the Change to Win Strategic Organizing Center, a coalition of labor organizations fighting for economic justice. As part of that coalition work, CWA members partnered with Good Jobs Nation to organize numerous stops on a Midwest Pickup Tour raising public awareness of how, despite

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CWAnews

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and Keeping CWA STRONG!

Education

As labor union members, how can we build solidarity to fight corporate greed? At CWA, we start with education on how the economy and our democracy are being rigged in favor of the 1%—and the ways we can fight back. Whether it's through CWA's renowned "Reversing Runaway Inequality" program, our political boot camp trainings, or our Fight Forward trainings focusing on human rights, Growth Fund projects are helping educate and mobilize thousands of CWA members.

With support from CWA Growth Funds, CWA's "Reversing Runaway Inequality" program has enabled dozens of CWA members to become highly-skilled educators about the growing gap between the super-rich and working families. These members have conducted trainings for thousands of CWAs who learn how Wall Street hedge funds, private equity firms, and CEOs are financially strip-mining our country, causing millions of children to live in poverty, underfunded schools, infrastructure in desperate need of repair, and impossible levels of debt. "Reversing Runaway Inequality" trainings help build a broad-based movement for economic justice by increasing members' understanding of the enormous wealth gap between White, Black, and Latino working people, and how we must work diligently to close it.

"Thanks to a CWA Growth Fund, members of CWA Locals 13500, 13000, and 13301 were able to participate in a 'Reversing Runaway Inequality' training that helped shape our understanding of how the 1% is rigging the economy and attempting to divide working people," said Jennifer Szpara, a CWA District 2-13 trainer. "These trainings are life-changing for those who attend, and they help us understand how we have to work together to reverse these harmful trends."

CWA Growth fund projects have provided critical support for other education programs, including:

- CWA political boot camps, which consist of multi-day training sessions followed by a six-week follow-up political education and leadership development program that gives activists hands-on experience building working-class power. Participants develop their skills in member-to-member organizing in the workplace and communities, volunteer recruitment, creating organizing plans, and much more. The program gives members a chance to collaborate by sharing tips and best practices from their locals with each other.
- "Fight Forward" trainings through CWA's Human Rights program. The training gives CWAs tools to stem the dangerous assaults on the working class and to move forward toward a more just and equitable society. Members receive training on the ways the 1% have used race, gender, immigrant status, and sexual orientation, among other things, to divide the working class. Participants learn how to build power through establishing local human rights committees, developing relationships with community groups, local activism, and mobilization. The Human Rights training program also supports leadership development of members of color, women, and LGBTQ members.

Legislative and Political

CWA members and retirees are leading the fight to pass legislation to protect call center jobs, hold members of Congress accountable for supporting the Republican corporate tax cut bill that only made Wall Street richer, lobby Congress to oppose bad trade deals, and defeat anti-worker legislation.

CWA's Growth Fund projects fuel this work by facilitating coordination among CWA locals, supporting coalition work with our allies, enhancing communication, and providing resources for member education and leadership development.

The defeat of the disastrous **Trans-Pacific Partnership** trade deal shows how powerful Growth Funds can be. In 2013, CWA members were among the first to sound the alarm about the TPP, taking to the streets to raise awareness of the secret negotiations.

As Congress began to lay the groundwork for passing the TPP, CWA's Defense Fund Oversight Committee approved an ambitious Growth Fund project which focused on massive member mobilization against the deal. The funds enabled local CWA activists in dozens of key congressional districts to take time off the job to educate CWA members and community partners about the dangers of the TPP, and to organize town halls, call-in days, and visits to congressional offices. Growth funds also provided materials such as signs, buttons, and flyers to support those efforts. This grassroots effort included bringing together other labor, fair trade, environmental, faith-based, and consumer groups in a powerful coalition and was boosted by a sophisticated media campaign which included press outreach, paid advertising, a website for online action, and a social media presence.

"We could not have stopped the TPP without Growth Fund support," said CWA Minnesota State Council President Mona Meyer. "This job-killing trade deal would truly have had a negative effect on every person in our union. Because of CWA's Growth Fund resources we were able to use the power of collective action to go up against the giant multinational corporations backing the TPP and win."

CWA's Growth Fund has provided critical support for other work, including:

- Ensuring that the **FAA Reauthorization Bill** included top priority items for Flight Attendants and passenger service agents: instituting a minimum rest period of 10 hours for Flight Attendants to bring them in line with the flight crew, and stronger protections for airline passenger service agents from passenger assaults.
- Supporting **retiree involvement** in Arizona, which helped elect Kyrsten Sinema, a strong pro-worker ally, to the U.S. Senate in a tightly-contested election in 2018.
- Helping CWA members and retirees in Missouri defeat **Missouri's Proposition A**, a so-called "Right to Work" ballot initiative.
- Fighting to pass national legislation, the *U.S. Call Center Worker and Consumer Protection Act*, and legislation in numerous states to **protect call center jobs from offshoring**.
- Holding elected officials accountable for their **broken promises on last year's corporate tax cut bill** which has led to massive profits for corporate executives and new incentives for them to send jobs overseas.
- **Making our democracy work for everyone** by building support for legislation like the *For the People Act* (H.R.1) and similar state and local efforts that restore and expand voting rights, get big corporate money out of politics, and implement government ethics reforms.

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also supports CWA's work with coalitions that
economic justice and challenging the power of
members helped pass a Responsible Banking

Ordinance in Los Angeles last year, ensuring the city will not do
business with banks that have predatory sales goals that harm
workers and customers.

In support of a resolution passed at CWA's 76th Convention by
the National Women's Committee and the National Civil Rights
and Equity Committee, the CWA Growth Fund has provided re-
sources to fight gender and racial discrimination and harassment
on the job and in our communities. Additionally, Growth Fund
projects have expanded CWA members' work with civil rights
groups and allies. This work includes remaking our democracy by
expanding voting rights and pushing back against voter suppres-
sion efforts across the country and participation in the renewal of
the Poor People's Campaign, a multi-racial movement to address
the root causes of poverty.

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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.