# Overview

**Beginnings**  
The Communications Workers of America (CWA) is a young union — it was founded in New Orleans in 1938. First known as the National Federation of Telephone Workers, convention delegates in 1947 changed the name to the Communications Workers of America.

CWA joined the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1949 and has been an affiliate of the AFL-CIO since the two labor organizations merged in 1955.

**Size**  
CWA, the largest telecommunications union in the world, represents over 650,000 workers in public and private sector employment.

**Composition**  
The CWA represents workers in telecommunications, broadcasting, cable TV, journalism, publishing, manufacturing, airlines, customer service, government service, healthcare, education, and other fields.

**Geographic Spread**  
CWA members live and work in more than 10,000 communities in the United States and Canada.

**Collective Bargaining**  
Among the largest employers are AT&T, Verizon, the state of New Jersey, United Airlines, G.E., The New York Times, state and local governments, major newspapers, and universities.

**Union Democracy**  
CWA conventions are the union’s highest policy-making body.
CWA Organizational Structure

Convention....The Convention is the highest governing authority of the Union. Approximately 2,500 locally elected delegates and alternates attend the CWA convention.

Executive Board....The Executive Board is elected at the Convention every four years and consists of:

- The President
- The Secretary-Treasurer
- Vice Presidents — Seven District Vice Presidents and Six International Vice Presidents for:
  - Telecom and Technologies;
  - Public, HealthCare Workers and Education Workers;
  - NABET-CWA
  - TNG-CWA
  - IUE-CWA
  - AFA-CWA
- PPMWS Executive Officer
- Four At-Large Diversity Board Members
- The Director, CWA-SCA CANADA

Districts....CWA is structured into seven geographic Districts.

Sectors Division....CWA has seven sectors. Five are merger partners.

Chartered Locals....CWA has more than 1,200 chartered local unions in the United States and Canada. Members elect local officers and the delegates to the CWA Convention.

All CWA members, including International Officers, Staff and Local Officers must abide by the CWA Constitution as well as their Local's Bylaws.
CWA Functions

I. Convention

CWA holds a biannual Convention. Once the Convention makes a decision, that decision stands, and it must be carried out by every single officer and employee of the Union—at both the local and international levels. Convention action can be changed only by a later Convention or by a referendum of the membership.

The Convention has the power to:
1. Interpret and amend the Constitution.
2. Establish the policies to be followed by the Union.
3. Elect the International President, Secretary-Treasurer, Vice Presidents, and the Diversity At Large Board members.
4. Act as a final court of review for appeals of decisions made at lower levels of the Union. On non-Convention years appeals are handled at national President’s meeting
5. Establish per capita dues to the International.
6. Approve or change the budget.
7. Dispose of any other matters that may come before it.

Delegates to the Convention are elected by Local unions with the number of delegates per Local determined by membership strength as specified in the CWA Convention.

II. Executive Board

The Executive Board meets regularly throughout the year and makes decisions on union matters, with these decisions being subject to review by the Convention. The Executive Board also administers the policies established by the Convention.

The Executive Board consists of:
- the President
- the Secretary-Treasurer
- 13 Vice Presidents
- PPMWS Executive Officer
- four At-Large Diversity Executive Board Members
- the Director, CWA-SCA CANADA
The Executive Board has 16 full time national officers who are responsible for recommending policies and programs to the Convention, based upon their day-to-day experience in administering the affairs of the Union.

IV. Budget Committee

The President, Secretary-Treasurer and appointed Vice Presidents make up the Budget Committee. The Budget Committee reviews Union income, expenses and budgets and makes recommendations to the Executive Board.

V. Districts

CWA is structured into seven geographic Districts. The Districts are responsible for carrying out the goals and programs of the Union. Delegates representing the Locals within each District elect a vice president every four years at the Convention. Representatives of Locals within each District must meet at least once each year as required by the CWA constitution.

VI. Sectors/Division

CWA has seven sectors/division. Five are merger partners (AFA-CWA, IUE-CWA, NABET-CWA, PPMWS-CWA, TNG-CWA) that represent and negotiate contracts in their respective industries. The Telecom & Technologies sector bargains national agreements with AT&T Legacy, Lucent, Optical Fiber Solutions, and AVAYA, and coordinates bargaining with Century Link, Windstream, and Frontier. The Public, Healthcare, and Education Sector has ongoing initiatives to promote organizing and bargaining rights for public workers and contributes to national policy issues affecting members.

VII. Canadian Region

CWA-SCA Canada is responsible for coordinating matters of common concern and interest with respect to contracts, wages, hours of employment and other working conditions within the units of the CWA-SCA Canadian Region.
VIII. Locals

With more than 1,200 chartered local unions, CWA members live and work in more than 10,000 communities across North America. All chartered locals must represent the workers in their respective jurisdictions and hold meetings at such time, place and frequency as the members may decide by vote. The locals are also responsible for representation and actively implementing all union programs.

At each level of CWA, the members set policy and control the finances. All members have the opportunity to participate in their local union by attending meetings, serving on committees, becoming a steward, joining a Legislative Political Action Team or being in the Activists Army.

Union Dues

Where Do Our Union Dues Go?

- The International Union Share (38.5%):
  (includes 50¢ Defense Fund)
  - International Union Field Services
  - Data Processing, Governance and Administration
  - Organizing
  - Legal
  - Legislative, Political and Social Action
  - Communications
  - Affiliations
  - Special Collective Bargaining
  - Education and Research
  - CWA Defense Fund to support us during bargaining

- Members’ Relief Fund (11.1%)

- The Local Union Share (50.4%):
  - Representation on day-to-day problems
  - Representation during the grievance procedure
  - Participation in union training programs
  - Local union newspaper and other communications
  - Group benefit plans for members
Note: The 2006 convention delegates established a strategic industry fund to finance large scale campaigns to increase our bargaining power. MRF contributions go into the SIF unless the MRF falls below the floor established by the convention ($372,661,769). If the MRF falls below the floor all contributions revert back to the MRF until it reaches the floor again.

How Much Are Minimum Union Dues?

Members who have the right to strike pay 2 1/4 hours dues a month based on a 40 hr. work week.

For example, if you earn $500 weekly your dues are $28.13 a month:

\[
\$500 \times 0.056\% = \$28.13
\]

$25.00 of this goes to deterational P.C. (including DF). $3.18 goes into the Strategic Industries Fund Members’ Relief Fund. The MRF fund is used to provide assistance to members on strike. This SIF is used in support of the union.

Members who are legally restricted from striking pay two hour’s dues a month based on a 40 hour work week.

For example, if you earn $500 weekly your dues are $25 a month.

\[
\$500 \times 0.05 = \$25.00
\]

Who Decides How Much Dues We Pay?

CWA members decide. The convention delegates who are elected by the rank and file members establish the *minimum* dues structure.

What Are Dues Used For?

Negotiations of contracts
Enforcement of contracts, handling of grievances, arbitration
Mobilization campaigns
Education programs and training materials
Research on employers benefit plans
Lobbying for legislation
CWA Departments

Human Rights:

CWA is a multi-racial union and accepts its responsibility to represent all members, regardless of gender, color, disability, sexual orientation, creed or nationality. CWA consistently challenges discriminatory practices and fosters enlightened attitudes throughout our union and society. This office coordinates the National Committee on civil rights and Equity, the National Women’s Committee and works with the AFL-CIO constituency groups and other coalitions and community organizations.

Communications:

The Communications Department handles CWA’s internal and external communications (including publications and video services), media programs, and provides a variety of communications services for the union.

Development, Research, and Technology:

CWA’s research and technical staff provide support for CWA bargaining, organizing, and public policy work. The Research Department develops strategic and financial analyses of companies and sectors where CWA members are employed. Department members provide research and technical support for corporate campaigns and other initiatives. The technical staff who design and carry out CWAs website and online communications functions are housed in the Research Department.
Education:

This department produces materials and programs that inform members about key issues affecting our union and prepares members for mobilization actions to improve our strength at the bargaining table, in the workplace and in the community. The department develops training for stewards, local officers, union activists, and CWA staff in the fundamentals of union representation, leadership development and contract enforcement.

Legal:

CWA has a General Counsel who oversees the needs of the union in all legal matters, including arbitration.

Legislative and Political:

Coordinates CWA’s political action funds and LPAT program. Works with District/Sector Legislative/Political Coordinators to increase CWA’s grassroots political action efforts and member support of local, state and federal candidates. CWA has one of the most active grassroots lobbying and political programs in the country.

Office of Occupational Safety and Health:

Focuses specifically on safety and health workplace problems by researching and documenting hazards CWA members face, and providing solutions and technical assistance. The office also provides training and resource material.

Organizing:

Works with the districts sectors and locals in expanding external and internal organizing opportunities. Provides resource support and direct assistance to locals in organizing campaigns. CWA has one of the most active organizing programs in the labor movement.
Association of Flight Attendants (AFA-CWA)

Established in 1945, the Association of Flight Attendants is the world's largest labor union organized by flight attendants for flight attendants. AFA represents nearly 50,000 flight attendants at 21 airlines, serving as a voice for flight attendants at their workplace, in the industry, in the media and on Capitol Hill. Through the years, AFA members have fought for, and won a number of changes in the airline industry that has led to safer airplanes and transformed the flight attendant profession. Flight attendants are now trained professionals, responsible for the safety of passengers in the airplane cabin.

- AFA-CWA negotiates the best flight attendant contracts in the industry, maintaining and improving wages, benefits and working conditions for flight attendants.

- AFA-CWA has strength in numbers and a professional staff to assist flight attendants with workplace, career and interpersonal concerns.

- AFA-CWA is a democratic union representing flight attendants at every type of carrier. All AFA-CWA officers are flight attendants who solicit member input on policy and financial decisions.

- AFA-CWA is the only flight attendant union solely representing flight attendants' concerns that is affiliated with the AFL-CIO’s 13 million-member American labor federation.

- AFA-CWA shares information and strategies, working in solidarity with flight attendant unions around the world through the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

IUE-CWA

The International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers goes back to 1933 with radio manufacturing and related industries. In 1936 they became the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE) and were part of the CIO. In 1949,
after a split of the unions, the IUE was formed. In October of 2000, the IUE merged with CWA, forming the Industrial Division of the Union.

IUE-CWA members are employed in manufacturing, private and public service-related industries, with over 100,000 active and retired members throughout the United States and Canada.

The Division is known for its progressive history, including leadership in the areas of social action and coordinated bargaining. Currently, the Division is focused on improving union members’ job security by bringing a union-friendly version of high performance, or lean, manufacturing into IUE-CWA worksites. Other priorities include ensuring that a green economy translates into high quality jobs. The Division is active in the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council and is outspoken in calling for fair trade laws and a revitalized U.S. manufacturing policy.

### National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET)

In 1994, NABET merged with CWA. NABET-CWA has 29 chartered Locals with over 10,000 members who are employed in broadcasting, distributing, telecasting, recording, cable, video, sound recording and related industries in North America. Radio announcers, technicians, clerical workers, set designers, directors, video camera operators, videotape editors, and audio visual technicians are among those represented by NABET-CWA.

NABET-CWA negotiates over 100 collective bargaining agreements for its members. Major employers include NBC, ABC and independent companies in the public and private sectors.

### Early History

In 1933, some 300 NBC workers formed the Association of Technical Employees (ATE).

In 1934, ATE signed its first contract with NBC. The contract called for a 48-hour work week and a monthly wage scale of $175.

In 1940, ATE changed its name to the National Association of Broadcast Engineers and Technicians (NABET).

In 1941, NABET negotiated its first eight-hour day contract provision.
In 1943, a Supreme Court decree splits up NBC and creates ABC. NABET adds a network to its contracts.

In 1951, NABET affiliates with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

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**Printing, Publishing and Media Workers Sector (PPMWS)**

**A Brief History**

Printers were among the first skilled workers in America to form permanent unions. An organized printers strike occurred in New York as early as 1776. Groups of local printers unions came together in 1852 as the National Typographical Union, changing the name in 1869 to the International Typographical Union. The ITU granted a charter to the first Mailers Union in 1886.

Founded in 1815, the Columbia Typographical Union #101 (now known as CTU #101-12, CWA Local 14200) in Washington, DC maintains the distinction as the oldest continuously operating union in the U.S. It played a significant role in establishing the eight-hour day. In 1866, CTU #101 won a formal contract from the Government Printing Office over the vocal protests of other printing employers in the city to guarantee $4 a day for eight hours, but only for the six months that Congress was then in session. Ten-hour work days were in effect for the balance of the year. It would take another 50 years and a strategic $3 million nationwide ITU strike before the eight-hour day became the industry standard and another 30 years before it became the universal standard workday.

The ITU merged with CWA on January 1, 1987; becoming CWA's Printing, Publishing and Media Workers Sector, combining the strong democratic traditions of both unions to fight together for the rights of workers.

**Use the Union Label**

The CWA PPMWS Label, is a variation of the familiar printing “bug.” The CWA PPMWS Label is conferred on establishments that adhere to CWA/PPMWS strict contractual standards of working conditions, safety, and work quality. Materials bearing this label are produced by CWA Sector members in good standing. The label affirms that the work has
been done by union labor. The CWA PPMWS Label exists in tandem with the Label of the Allied Printing Trades, jointly maintained by CWA/PPMWS and GCC IBT, also a legitimate label. For CWA members, the CWA/PPMWS is the preferred designation. To find a printer that has the CWA bug go to www.cwa-ppmws.org and click on Labels and Shops.

How to Read the Label

The integrity of the Label is highly prized by those establishments that hold the legal right to imprint it on documents. When it is used it must always be completely legible. Counterfeiters may try to obscure portions of a label to disguise its origin and doing so is a violation of the law.

Reading the Label is simple (although at times it may require a magnifying glass). The city where the printing was done appears in the bottom half of the loop. The number on the right side indicates the establishment that did the work. A valid label must also carry the words “Printing Sector” in the top loop and “CWA” in the center circle.

Public and Health Care Workers

CWA saw its first public worker members in 1965 when 2,300 New York city government workers joined CWA Local 1180. Public worker organizing continued over the next two decades. A major leap in membership occurred in 1980 when 40,000 New Jersey State workers voted for CWA representation.

At CWA’s Special Committee on the Future Convention in 1983, delegates saw the need to establish a separate department for its growing public workers sector and created the CWA Public Workers Department. They voted to elect a Vice President who would oversee the Department and become a CWA Executive Board member.

Since that time, public workers in 25 states along with thousands of health care workers throughout the country have joined CWA. The Public and Health Care Workers Sector represents over 140,000.
Union attempts to organize public workers began in the 1930’s but it was in 1959 when Wisconsin became the first state to enact legislation giving public workers a legally enforceable right to bargain collectively. During the 1960’s sixteen states enacted bargaining rights legislation. It wasn't until 1962 that the federal government recognized federal employees’ right to join unions and bargain collectively.

The battle for recognition continues today as only 29 states and the District of Columbia have enacted comprehensive collective bargaining laws for public workers.

CWA represents public health care and education workers across the US, ranging from blue collar workers, and social workers to computer programmers, heavy equipment operators, correction and police officers, finance managers and instructors.

**TNG – CWA**

**The Newspaper Guild**

Led by columnist Heywood Broun, The American Newspaper Guild began in 1933. Dissatisfaction with their pay was the main reason that editorial workers, traditionally independent, came together.

Often called a union of individuals, the guild affiliated with the American Federation of Labor in 1936 and the Congress of Industrial Unions in 1937. Also in 1937 it expanded membership to include commercial departments. The Heywood Broun Award for journalistic achievement was established in 1940.

1940s: War Labor Board rules Guild membership does not impair Freedom of the Press.

1950s: Canadian Region established.

1960s: Guild fights to end racial discrimination in news industry hiring, promotion.

1970s: Name changed to The Newspaper Guild; Guild confronts sex discrimination in the industry, intensifies bargaining program to accommodate increasing automation, and initiates Guild-wide portable pension plan.

1980: Guild launches safety campaign to face hazards of video display terminals.

1987: Active membership reaches more than 34,400.
1991:  Guild leads charge to protect workers from keyboard-related Repetitive Strain Injuries.

1993:  Convention adopts four-year strategic plan including recommendations for merger, greater Canadian autonomy, and membership mobilization.

1995:  Convention, membership endorse merger with Communications Workers of America; members elect first woman president.

1999:  TNG-CWA propels into front ranks of U.S. unions representing interpreters and translators when 200 foreign- and sign-language interpreters in San Francisco Bay Area affiliate.

2000:  Guild revamps collective bargaining program favoring flexible approach more responsive to local needs over standardized language.

2001:  Guild gains its first Chinese-speaking unit — only to lose it after a four year anti-union campaign and unending series of court challenges.

2002:  Guild revamps human rights program, moving from an emphasis on affirmative action to promoting greater diversity within the Guild itself.

2004:  Guild holds “Convergence II,” sequel to 1995 forum resulting in merger with CWA, to map a response to the rapidly changing news industry. After decades of opposition to non-employees, Guild constitution is amended opening ranks to freelancers.

2006:  Seeking to save daily newspapers facing imminent closure, Guild recruits financial backers for its own acquisition bids — but none prove successful. CWA/SCA Canada and CWA create a Canadian region within CWA as a first step toward full autonomy for the Canadians and its first full-time paid administrator is hired.

2007:  Guild formulates its own ethics code with separate sections for editorial and commercial/business employees.

2008:  Guild's top two officers vie for the union's presidency for the first time in more than 50 years.
2009: As one newspaper owner after another is forced into bankruptcy, Guild representaives win seats on five different unsecured creditors’ committees. As TNG encourages alternative business models, Portland Newspaper Guild — in a first for Guild locals — gains part ownership and seats on the company’s board of directors of three Maine newspapers through an employee stock option plan.

2010: Battered by ongoing job losses throughout the newspaper industry, the Guild closes out the decade with membership down to slightly more than 24,000.

2011: Guild holds its first “virtual picket line,” urging a boycott of the Huffington Post because of its widespread use of unpaid freelancers.

The Guild Today

Founded as a print journalists’ union, the Guild today is primarily a media union whose members are diverse in their occupations, but who share the view that the best working conditions are achieved by people who have a say in their workplace through collective means.

We have more than 24,000 members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico, and we are media workers of all kinds.

We are on-line writers and designers, reporters, editorial assistants, photographers, editors, paginators, editorial artists, correspondents, and typographers.

We are advertising sales people, marketing, information systems specialists, commercial artists, technicians, accountants, business, customer service reps, drivers, maintenance, mail room, pressroom, telephone operators, circulation and distribution staff.

We are translators and interpreters, labor union, public agency and non-profit organization staff members, freelancers, and technical workers.

We are part of many communication media: wire services, newspapers, magazines, labor information services, broadcast news, public service and web companies.

We are democratic. Our constitution establishes the membership as the final ruling body or locals and the international union, and provides for active participation by the membership on all matters.