

Report of the CWA National Women's
Committee to the 68th Annual
Convention



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Las Vegas Nevada

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The CWA National Women's Committee met in Washington, D.C., June 5 and 6, 2006. We reviewed, discussed and updated the CWA National Women's Committee Mission Statement. We met with President, Larry Cohen, Secretary Treasurer Barbara Easterling and Executive Vice President Jeff Rechenbach.

We continue to have good representation of women at most levels within our union and women's issues are represented well on all sides of the CWA triangle.

The Committee also began preliminary planning for our 2007 National Women's Conference, which is targeted for the first quarter of 2007. As soon as information is available notification will be sent to all Districts, Locals and Staff. We are looking forward to a terrific conference and ask that you begin your preparations for attendance now.

The Committee would like to recognize and thank Rosa Bernal, Secretary-Treasurer, Local 9588, Susie McAllister, Secretary-Treasurer, Local 7704, Debra Brown, President, Local 3706, and Anne McCauley, Secretary-Treasurer, Local 1106, for their service and hard work and welcome new representative, Mary Lou Schaffer, President, Local 13550, to the Committee.

In addition, the Committee would like thank Janine Brown for the support that she gave to the committee for the past five year. Janine has been selected by the Atlanta-North Georgia Labor Council, AFL-CIO as the AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison for the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. Thank you Janine, we appreciate all you do in the labor movement for working families.

This years report highlights issues of specific importance to women in the areas of Education, Health and Safety, Legislation and Domestic Violence.

Education

Local Women's Committees

Local women's committees across CWA are involved in a large range of activities designed to educate members on women's issues and motivate members to develop strategies to address these issues.

An active Local women's committee identifies the needs and opportunities within the local and the community. They work with other locals and organizations in the community on women issues.

Examples of successful programs are:

- ▶ Voter education, registration and get-out-the-vote;
- ▶ Community Service projects, i.e. women shelters, literacy programs and donate-a- phone campaigns;
- ▶ Health Issues: i.e. breast cancer awareness, cervical cancer screening and AIDS Awareness, and;
- ▶ Education: i.e. seminars & workshops on domestic violence, pay equity & Family Medical Leave.

The primary mission of the CWA's National Women's Committee is to educate and assist CWA Districts and Locals to develop programs and strategies that make women's issues a priority in our Union.

Action for CWA Locals: The CWA National Women's Committee strongly urges all CWA Locals to establish an active Women's Committee in their Local as outlined in the "CWA Women's Program" brochure. The brochure is available at the National Women's Committee booth and from your District Women's Committee representative.

Ask A Working Woman Survey

The AFL-CIO Civil, Human and Women's Rights Department is currently conducting the 2006 *Ask A Working Woman* survey. In 2004, this survey collected more than 15,000 responses from union and non-union women across the country. More than 20 affiliate unions participated in the survey by disseminating it to their members and placing the link on their websites. As a result, affiliates were able to collect more than 5,000 e-mail addresses of their women members.

This year, the number of online response to the survey is expected to increase. Now more than ever, working women want to sound off about their workplace and economic priorities and women members of unions want to be more active within their unions.

Action for CWA Women & Locals: The CWA Women's Committee encourages all CWA working women to participate in the survey through the link provided on the CWA website at www.cwa-union.org.

Further, all CWA locals are asked to publicize and promote the *Ask a Working Woman* survey in meetings, newsletters, bulletin boards and local websites and all communications with their women members.

CWA/NETT

CWA/NETT was formed in 2000 and is owned and operated by CWA. The mission of CWA/NETT is to provide educational opportunities that CWA members and their families need to access the jobs of the future and to provide those resources in a cost effective, flexible and easily accessible manner.

For many CWA women, CWA/NETT has helped them upgrade their skills to keep up with the latest technology changes. For others, the on-line practice tests have enabled them to pass the requirements to move to another job. For those women pursuing a degree, CWA/NETT courses provide college credits towards a Certificate or Associate degree.

CWA/NETT provides the maximum flexibility women need to advance their career without sacrificing the quality of education.

Action for CWA Women & Locals: The CWA National Women's Committee urges women to take advantage of CWA/NETT opportunities to further their education, whether it is for job advancement or personal gain.

Further, all CWA Locals are asked to advertise and promote CWA/NETT at meetings and on their websites. For additional information log on to www.cwanett.org.

CLUW – Coalition of Union Women

The primary aim of Coalition of Labor Union Women is to unify all union women in a viable organization to determine common problems and concerns and to develop action programs within the framework of our unions to deal effectively with women's issues.

CLUW's goals are to promote affirmative action in the workplace, strengthen the role of women in their unions, organize the unorganized women and increase involvement of women in the political and legislative process.

While working women have overcome many obstacles with CLUW's involvement, there is still much work to be done. With your help, CLUW can use the collective strength of union women to make a difference right here, right now.

Action for CWA Women: Because women supporting women is essential to the growth of the labor movement, your CWA National Women's Committee recommends that all CWA women join and actively participate in a CLUW chapter in their area. If there is not one in your area there is help available to start one through the Women's Committee representative in your district or visit the CLUW website, www.cluw.org.

Women's Health and Safety

Breast Cancer

Every two minutes a woman in the United States is diagnosed with breast cancer. Breast cancer incidents in women have increased from one in twenty in 1960 to one in seven today. With early detection, 87 out of 100 women will survive. The largest risk factor is age. Most breast cancers occur in women over the age of fifty, and women over sixty are at the highest risk. Other risk factors include heredity, early puberty, late child bearing, obesity, heavy alcohol consumption and smoking.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM). For over 20 years NBCAM has educated women about early breast cancer detection, diagnosis and treatment. National Breast Cancer Awareness Month continues reaching out to women with several key messages, most notably, the importance of early detection through annual mammography screening for women over 40, or earlier for women at increased risk.

Action for CWA Women: The CWA Women's Committee encourages all CWA women to educate the women in their lives on the importance of monthly self breast exams and the significance of clinical breast exams performed by your doctor and yearly mammograms for women over 40. We also urge the Locals to remember Breast Cancer Awareness when planning community service activities.

For more information you can go to www.komen.org or www.NBCAM.org.

Cervical Cancer & Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

In 2006 nearly 10,000 American women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer and over 4,000 will die of this preventable disease – which disproportionately affects minority women. Hispanic women are almost twice as likely as Caucasian women to be diagnosed with cervical cancer and African American women are more than twice as likely to die of this disease.

Cervical cancer is almost always caused by HPV. HPV is a very common virus, in fact most people have had HPV at some time in their lives. The type of HPV that can lead to cervical cancer does not cause any symptoms. That's why it is important to get regular screenings, and if possible, the most up to date tests. The FDA states that the HPV test, when used with a Pap test in women over thirty, has the ability to identify cervical cancer or its precursors 100 percent of the time. Cervical cancer screenings should be done by your doctor using a Pap test if you are younger than 30 or a Pap and HPV test if you are older than thirty.

The States of Maryland, Texas and New Mexico now require health insurers to cover HPV testing as part of the routine screening.

Action for CWA Women: In light of the HPV test being an effective way to identify cervical cancer within women, the CWA National Women's Committee encourages all CWA delegates, alternates and members to support legislation for all states to cover HPV testing as part of the routine pap test by writing to your senators. Log on to the CLUW website at www.cluw.org or the non-partisan group, Women in Government, at www.womeningovernment.org for more information and the latest information on legislative activity.

I.C.E (In Case of Emergency)

Because the safety of our members and their families is of utmost importance to the CWA Women's committee, and 8 out of 10 people do not carry emergency contact information that would help if they were involved in an emergency, we strongly suggest every member utilize the ICE acronym. Storing emergency contact details in your cell phone could assist emergency personnel if you're unable to tell them whom to contact. This should be used in addition to, not in place of, other more standard forms of identification.

Action: Add this acronym to your cell phone contact list along with the name and number of someone who should be contacted on your behalf in case of an emergency.

Legislation

Protect Family Medical Leave (FMLA)

It is very important in today's society to make every effort to encourage flexibility in the workplace. As you know, most women today who are in the workplace often must balance working and family life. This is difficult and an important issue to focus on for now and in the future. Contracts can and should be negotiated with workplace flexibility in mind. Eldercare is another huge issue that women are faced with in the workplace. As Americans live longer, they are spending more years as caretakers of their children, grandchildren and their aging parents – increasing the need for time off to tend to their medical requirements.

On March 25, 2006 the Coalition of Labor Union Women launched a FMLA campaign to protect and extend family leave, which included postcards urging members of Congress and President Bush to "fight against any attempts to dismantle FMLA". Businesses are lobbying to try to change one of this era's most family friendly reforms. The department of labor has placed changes to FMLA on their priority list, so cuts could come at any time. Supporters of family medical leave propose extending the law to allow workers to take leave for additional family needs – such as: parent-teacher conferences, taking an elderly parent to the doctor or staying home with a child who has the flu.

Too many workers cannot take advantage of family medical leave because they can't afford to take unpaid leave. Many women wind up leaving their newborn to go to work because of economic pressures. A Harvard University study shows that 32 countries

mandate paid time off for new parents and 19 countries offer two years or more of parental leave. Meanwhile, half of the US workforce and three quarters of low wage workers do not even get paid for sick time.

The CWA National Women's Committee strongly supports our members being paid for family medical leave.

Action: Go to www.cluw.org and sign the post card to protect and extend Family Medical Leave.

Employee Free Choice

Union members demonstrated their commitment to workers' rights at a week full of rallies, marches and candlelight vigils across the country leading up to International Human Rights Day on December 10, 2005. Thousands of Union women and men paraded in Washington, DC from AFL-CIO headquarters to the White House on December 8 to press the Bush Administration to strengthen protections for workers who wish to organize and halt efforts to eliminate collective bargaining rights for hundreds of thousands of federal workers.

"The right to organize has been destroyed, right-wing politicians cut back the law to nothing, and corporations trample on our freedom like it's their personal doormat," AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson told the rally. "George W. and his buddies have turned the federal government into the nation's number one Union buster."

On April 19, 2005 the Employee Free Choice Act (S. 842 and H.R. 1696) was reintroduced into Congress by a bi-partisan coalition. The act strengthens workers' rights to unionize by requiring employers to recognize a union after a majority of workers have signed cards authorizing union representation. It also provides for mediation and arbitration of first-contract disputes and authorizes stronger penalties for employers in violation of unionization rights.

CWA knows that unions make a real economic difference for women and their families. Union women earn 34 percent more than non-union women and have better health care and pension plans. Union women also win when it comes to having the power to fight pay inequity and discrimination of all kinds. CWA sisters can help working women by advocating for the Employee Free Choice Act!

Action: The National CWA Women's Committee requests that you verify if your representatives and senators have signed on to S. 842 and H.R. 1696. If they haven't, call or visit and ask them to sign on. Let them know how important the Employee Free Choice Act is to working families.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault, or other abusive behavior perpetrated by an intimate partner against another. It is an epidemic affecting Americans in all communities, regardless of age, economic status, race, religion, nationality or educational background.

One in four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime and each year over 1200 women are killed by an intimate partner. Homicide is the leading cause of death for women in the workplace. Ninety six percent of battered workers experience problems at work, fifty six percent are late to work, twenty eight percent leave work early and fifty four percent miss entire days of work. Intimate partner violence victims lose nearly 8.0 million days of paid work per year – the equivalent of more than 32,000 jobs. The lost productivity and earnings due to intimate partner domestic violence accounts for almost \$1.8 billion each year.

CWA has effectively lead the way in education of its leaders as well as its rank and file members by conducting in depth training modules. Several Districts have negotiated joint union-management training. Some Districts and Locals have included Domestic Violence training in their education programs. Several Locals have grassroots programs. These training courses and activities give CWA representatives and members the tools and awareness to identify and assist domestic violence victims. But additional steps must be taken to spread knowledge and heighten awareness to our CWA family.

The impact of domestic violence on our members, survivors, their children and the community is detrimental. CWA must continue to be a leader in the communities in which we work and live. We must work to protect survivors from future victimization and prevent the continuation of the cycle of violence from generation to generation.

Action: The National Women’s Committee calls on CWA to include Domestic Violence awareness training to the CWA education and training programs at all levels.

Help raise awareness by participating in Domestic Violence awareness month in October.

Work with policy advocacy organizations to influence your state legislature to pass progressive domestic violence laws.

Volunteer at a domestic violence shelter.

The National Women’s Committee submit this report for your help in continuing to support of women’s issues in CWA, the labor movement and our communities.

Respect submitted

Anne McCauley, Secretary-Treasurer
CWA Local 1106

Linda Miller, Executive Vice President
CWA Local 2001

Debra Brown, President
CWA Local 3706

Tami Drollinger, President
CWA Local 4371

Jacqueline Fields, President
CWA Local 6505

Susan McAllister, Secretary-Treasurer
CWA Local 7704

Rosa Bernal, Secretary-Treasurer
CWA Local 9588

Mary Loy Schaffer, President
CWA Local 13550