

Report of the  
CWA National Women's Committee  
to the  
69th Annual Convention



Communications Workers of America  
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The CWA National Women's Committee met in Washington, DC, March 21 -23, 2007 prior to the 2007 CWA National Women's Conference. The Conference, which was held on March 23-25, themed "CWA Women OnThe Move: Stepping Up and Stepping Out" was attended by approximately 190 Delegates, Staff and Executive Board Members.

The Conference speakers included, President Larry Cohen, Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Easterling, Executive Vice President Jeff Rechenbach, District 2 Vice President Peter G. Catucci, District 7 Vice President Annie Hill, President CWA Newspaper Guild Linda Foley, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, and Councilwoman Valerie Ervin of Montgomery County, Maryland.

Workshops were lead by, Elisa Riordan, District 1 Area Director, (Domestic Violence), Mary O'Melveny, CWA General Counsel, (Sexual Harassment in the Workplace), Ilana Goldman, President Women's Campaign Forum, (How to Run for Public Office), Deb Briceland-Betts, AARP, (Retirement Planning for Women), Officer Luis Hurtado, Montgomery County Department of Police in Maryland, Community Outreach Section (Identity Theft & Personal Safety).

Delegates were entertained with a Special Presentation by Doreen Griffin, a member of CWA Local 1033, as Rosa Parks. The presentation was titled "She's Got A Ticket To Ride." The presentation was the story of Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on the bus and a reminder that her example remains an inspiration to freedom-loving people everywhere.

The conference ended with District Meetings. The District Women's Committee Representative, the District Coordinators and Vice Presidents who were present at the Conference discussed continuing plans for activities in their respective District.

The Committee thanks all those who participated in the Conference and helped make it a success. The Committee gives a special thanks to Gwend Johnson and Leslie Jackson of the Human and Civil Rights and Fair Practices Departments for their help in coordinating this Conference.

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.

## **Support for The CWA Diversity Committee Proposal**

The primary mission of CWA's National Women's Committee is to raise issues of special concern to women and to develop programs and strategies to make these issues useful and a priority in the workplace, the community and, most importantly, our union.

The CWA National Women's Committee has identified various issues in past years, which represent the difficulties women are up against in society and the workplace. The Women's Committee feels that it is time to bridge the gap and raise awareness to allow women the same opportunities as our union brothers.

We are excited and enthusiastic that CWA is leading the unions in taking this issue to the forefront and taking steps to resolve diversity issues which will allow the leaders of CWA to reflect the diversity of our membership. Our members are composed of varying diverse ethnicity and gender and we feel strongly that adding their voices to the leadership of CWA is the only way to move forward. The union movement is strong and will become stronger as we support diversity in leadership roles today.

**ACTION:** The CWA National Women's Committee urge all CWA members to support and vote to approve the CWA National Diversity Committee's proposal so that CWA will move forward and continue to be the leaders among unions today. We support the AFL-CIO Resolution #2, "A Diverse Movement Calls for Diverse Leadership". Let us all stand together as one union, diverse and strong.

## **Domestic Violence**

On March 13, 2007, we lost a dear friend and ex-US Airways coworker, Jana Rowell. Jana was hired in 1986, took the early out in 2005, and went to work for Allen Tate Realty. Jana was a beautiful soul in her prime at 41; she had everything going for her, a successful career, two beautiful children, and a wealth of friends and support. She lost her life due to domestic violence. We will never forget that tragic day.

The estimated 5.3 million cases of domestic violence occurring among US women 18 and older each year, result in nearly 2 million injuries and over one million deaths. This equates to 8 million days of work, equivalent to more than 32,000 full-time jobs. On average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States every day.

It has been proven that 50-70% of men who abuse women also abuse children. A Child's Tears (ACT) ([www.achildstears.org](http://www.achildstears.org)) is a website devoted to the effects of domestic violence on children. Between, 3.3 and 10 million children witness

domestic violence every year. ACT has created an anonymous forum for those touched by domestic violence, and is giving them the opportunity to speak out about their situations and past. It offers victims a place to come together and talk to others who understand.

Any hurtful or unwanted behavior perpetrated upon an individual, by their partner, is Domestic Violence. It also includes murder, negligent homicide, justifiable homicide, kidnapping, rape, assault or intimidation where the victim to offender relationship is based on marriage, family ties, a romantic relationship or a former marriage.

Domestic Violence also includes Battered Men - The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence. Approximately 835,000 men are battered each year. There are many reasons why we don't know more about domestic abuse and violence against men. First of all, the incidence of domestic violence reported by men appears to be so low that it is hard to get reliable estimates. In addition, it has taken years of advocacy and support to encourage women to report domestic violence. Virtually nothing has been done to encourage men to report abuse. The idea that men could be victims of domestic abuse and violence is so unthinkable that many men will not even attempt to report the situation.

Recognizing the signs of Domestic Violence comes from awareness. Locals in District 1 and District 4 have joint union-management training, awareness and education programs on domestic violence. Local 9509, being a leader, has a grassroots program started by men dedicated to teaching male youths within our CWA families and the surrounding communities that domestic violence is wrong.

**ACTION:** CWA Women's Committee urges every delegate here today and every CWA member to speak out against Domestic Violence. Reach out to support someone whom you believe is a victim. We need to become more involved and strengthen the grassroots movement on Domestic Violence. It is at this time, that the CWA Women's Committee is recommending that "We Stand Up, We Unite, We Educate and We Promote Awareness" to all our Brothers and Sisters!

### **Stop Drive-Through Mastectomies**

U.S. Senators Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME), together with Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro (D-CT), renewed their support for breast cancer patients by reintroducing The Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act to the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

The bipartisan Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act would end the practice of "drive-through" mastectomies, where women are sometimes forced to leave the hospital just hours following their physically and emotionally difficult surgeries even if they and their doctors feel they are not ready to go home.

This Act would ensure a minimum hospital stay of 48 hours to any woman following a mastectomy. It does not mandate a 48-hour hospital stay nor does it set 48 hours as a maximum amount of time a woman can stay in the hospital. It simply ensures that any decision in favor of a shorter or longer hospital stay will be made by the patient and her doctor.

**ACTION:** The CWA National Women's Committee encourages all members to sign the online petition in support of the Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act at [www.lifetimetv.com/breastcancer](http://www.lifetimetv.com/breastcancer). The Committee is also asking for members to contact their Representatives and Senators to support the act.

## **WORK & FAMILY BILL OF RIGHTS**

Families face a shortfall of time and money for care. A majority of America's children have no one at home full-time to care for them, while others, including the elderly and people with disabilities, increasingly need care. Jobs divide employees into those with high pay, benefits, but long hours and little time for family or leisure, and those with low wages, few benefits, insufficient flexibility and financial resources to care for their families. We can and should do better. Working families have fundamental rights to financially sustain and to care for themselves and their families.

These rights include:

- 1) The right to annual paid family, medical and personal leave for full and part-time employees. Minimum standards for leave are:
  - a) two weeks of employer-funded paid personal leave for all employees to be taken at the time of their choosing.
  - b) seven days of employer-funded sick time for personal or family illness.
  - c) 12 weeks of paid leave for parents of newborn, adoptive and foster children, and for serious illness of the employee, a child, a parent or other relative, spouse or partner.
  - d) 16 hours of employer-funded leave to be taken in small increments for doctor's appointments, parent-teacher meetings, and other small necessities.
- 2) The right to negotiated flexibility over work hours and place:
  - a) The ability to shift between full-time and reduced hours as family and personal circumstances change.

- b) Equal pay rates and at least pro-rated benefits for reduced hours employees.
  - c) No mandatory overtime.
  - d) Flexible schedules and place of work, mutually agreed upon by employees and employers.
- 3) The right to quality, affordable child and elder care.
- 4) The right to a minimum wage set at a living wage level and indexed to inflation.
- 5) The right to adequate health insurance for all.

These rights shall apply to all regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age, place of birth, religion, sexual orientation, or marital, family or disability status.

**ACTION:** We as union members have taken many of our benefits for granted because of the contracts that represent us. We need to mobilize our locals to incorporate work and family legislation in our training of stewards, bargaining of contracts, and use our committees and membership meetings to bring information to the membership about ways we as members can help legislate working family issues. We need to ask ourselves, “how do we represent the member who wants a job promotion, when they are being discriminated against by their employer when care giving for a sick family member or elderly parent?”

By broadening education of work and family issues, we can work together to help working families enjoy their family lives.

### **Equal Pay for Women**

While we continue to support equal pay, on average, women still earn less than men regardless of their occupation, age or education. The majority of women still work in traditionally female jobs – teaching, nursing, health care, clerical, and administrative sales and services. Women’s jobs and economic prospects for the future are mixed at best. While women are increasingly likely to enter the paid labor force, they are likely to continue to be represented in the lower-status occupations, and that is just not good enough.

In 2005, women continued to earn only 77 cents on the dollar to their male counterparts. To match men’s earnings for 2005, women have to work an extra four months. In recognition of this inequity, Equal Pay Day was celebrated on April 24, 2007.

In 2000, the federal government established the Pay Equity Task Force to make recommendations for an effective pay equity law. The task force recognized that pay equity was a *fundamental human right*. Their recommendations, released in May 2004, encouraged the adoption of a proactive pay equity law.

The Task Force acknowledges that employers have the responsibility to correct discriminatory wage disparities. It assigns an important role to unions where workers are represented, and mandates the creation of pay equity committees to prepare and monitor all pay equity plans in all workplaces, unionized or not.

CWA National Women's Committee supports the Task Force Report of 2004. We need to work hard to support legislation to implement its recommendations. Employer organizations have mounted a powerful lobby to delay the introduction of this needed equality legislation.

**ACTION:** The CWA National Women's Committee encourages CWA Local leaders to acknowledge the continued problems associated with Pay Equity by supporting current legislation introduced by Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) on March 6, 2007, Bill #H.R. 1338, Paycheck Fairness Act of 2007. In addition, CWA Local leaders should educate their members about training and education programs available to them, which have been bargained for by CWA, including CWA/NETT.

### **Healthcare – Women and Children**

The 2004 Working Women's Survey established that "secure, affordable healthcare" is the number one concern of working women. This was demonstrated in all age and ethnicity groups as well as all geographical regions of the United States. Approximately 45 million people in the United States are without health insurance, one quarter of those are children. Eight out of ten of the uninsured are full-time workers and their dependants.

The rising cost of healthcare to employees and their employer is of great concern. Workers with collective bargaining agreements are more likely to have health insurance coverage. We all know that it is a very tough fight to contain the costs that are passed on to our brothers and sisters during negotiations and how hard a Union campaign for representation and obtaining a contract can be.

In order to obtain secure, affordable healthcare that includes dependants, we need to look at our collective bargaining agreements and beyond. We need to support a healthcare system that will provide universal coverage, contains comprehensive benefits, is affordable for all, is financed fairly with the employer contributing, and that has quality delivery.

In the past few years, many states have sponsored health insurance initiatives that provide healthcare for children. Other states have instituted different forms

of expanded access to healthcare. While a National Health Insurance would meet many of the goals identified, there is still great resistance by insurance companies, employers and some of the public.

**ACTION:** CWA National Women's Committee encourages CWA members and leaders to:

1. work together with other groups/coalitions to support legislation (state and federal) to provide affordable healthcare.
2. elect leaders who support healthcare and will challenge the insurance industry and employers and will fight to enact legislation.
3. actively support and endorse state programs that provide affordable healthcare for our children.

An injury to one is an injury to all, no one should be without healthcare!

### **Help Donate a Free Mammogram**

The Breast Cancer Site is having trouble getting enough people to click on their site daily to meet their quota of donating at least one free mammogram a day to an underprivileged woman. It takes less than a minute to go to their site and click on "donating a mammogram" for free (pink window in the middle).

This doesn't cost you a thing. Their corporate sponsors/advertisers use the number of daily visits to donate mammograms in exchange for advertising.

**ACTION:** The CWA Women's Committee strongly recommendS that each delegate at this convention help to donate a free mammogram a day, at [www.thebreastcancersite.com](http://www.thebreastcancersite.com), it takes less than a minute. Please support the site sponsors, that make The Breast Cancer Site possible. They will pay for the mammograms your daily click provides. Please tell your members back in the Local and ask them to tell at least ten of their family and friends about this website.

### **The National Labor College (NLC)**

The National Labor College (NLC) is located on a beautiful 47-acre campus in Silver Spring, Maryland. It began with the vision of George Meany that labor have its own college - a national center that would provide continuous labor education for all union activists.

The American Labor Movement has, since its inception, placed a high value on educational opportunity. The National Labor College embodies this concept by providing working individuals with a place where they can realize their aspirations for higher education in a format which emphasizes both academic excellence and the realities of career and family.

At NLC you can take classes that enable you to be an integral part of building your union; those same union-building classes can start you on the path to finishing the bachelor's degree you have always yearned for by contacting [www.nlc.edu](http://www.nlc.edu).

**ACTION:** The Committee recommends that our CWA women look into this program to help further your education.

The National CWA Women's committee submits this report for your support, education, information and action. We need your help to continue the support of women's issues in CWA, the labor movement and our communities.

Respectively submitted,

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CWA Local CWA Local 1031

Linda Miller, President  
CWA Local 2001

Vonda Hardy, President  
CWA Local 3640

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## NOTES