

2010 CWA National Convention – Joe Digman, Delegate

First, I attended the conference of the CWA minority caucus, a group of members united in their belief that a union that serves all its members, is a stronger union. Many of these members were working hard to see to it that CWA policies and practices did not divide workers, but made the union accessible to all people. It also doesn't hurt Local 7901 to have a presence since this caucus is the largest and most influential in the union. Their work is also the reason our President has a seat on the National Executive Board, not a bad thing for our modest local. Here again, there were passionate disagreements, especially around the bargaining situation for the last AT&T contract. This was a good preview for the fight at the larger convention over the best way to restructure the way telecom contracts are negotiated.

The District 7 Meeting: We elected Mary Taylor by unanimous acclamation to the position of CWA District 7 Vice President, and hence to the National Executive Board. We also elected Cecilia Valdez by unanimous acclamation to the District 7's Defense Fund Oversight Committee. I served on the elections committee, so I missed some heated debate around how best to fight Arizona's new immigration law.

Our local president, Madelyn Elder, reported to the District 7 caucus as the Western Region's At-Large Executive Board Member about the board's various initiatives to bring in the next generation of leaders, support women's issues in this union founded by women, and help build the Committee on Civil Rights and Equity. A broad range of grassroots groups are joining with labor to form the "One Nation" coalition to shift the national conversation to economic issues and saving the American middle class.

The Convention: An all-star line up of speakers and some contentious floor votes kept things jumping; even the union's officers weren't boring. Most of the regular business of the convention was important, but not very controversial, such as giving CWA Canada its own seat on the Executive Board, adopting the various committee reports and Exec. Board sponsored resolutions, and merging Districts 2 and 13. Of the few controversial items, only one was close enough to require a roll-call vote. The proposal to go to bi-annual conventions instead of annual ones to save locals money. I voted to approve the Board's recommendation to go to bi-annual conventions, and would be happy to explain my vote to anyone who wants me to. The other issues were the so-called "Amendment 6" to create a new Telecom VP to co-ordinate bargaining with national bosses such as AT&T. The last round was widely viewed as deeply flawed, but the Board's fix was considerably different from Amendment 6. I voted to go along with the Board's plan, and again will be happy to discuss this with any member. The final issue was the resolution to demand we support our troops by bringing them home from Afghanistan. I supported the resolution, and it passed easily, but with some hard swallowing over the price we have already paid. A few of the grievance appeals were controversial, and the Executive Board decision was overturned a couple of times after some hot debate, but in the end I was impressed how the delegates all came together afterward in thunderous applause. It was quite moving.

Legislative-Political Conference: Wednesday opened up with none other than the Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. While neither the worst nor the best public orator, she nonetheless captivated the floor with her sheer *gravitas*; this is one powerful woman, and she is on labor's side. The rest of the day was spent lobbying the Oregon congressional delegation on the need for a national high-speed broadband and net neutrality plan for America, Jobs, collective bargaining rights for public safety officers, and the need to reform the Senate filibuster rules. Madelyn and Ken are masters at this, and I was schooled on this particular art form. They made some progress with every Oregon member of Congress they met with, both Republican and Democrat.



Congressman David Wu showed the Oregon CWAers the Capitol and other sites.