

July 7, 2009

2009 CWA Convention/Legislative Conference Report

Respectfully submitted by 7901 Delegate Roxy Barnstead

The Annual Convention and the Legislative Conference were held June 21-25, 2009 in Washington D.C.

Full documentation is on file at the CWA Local 7901 office. Briefly, here is a rundown on both events:

The following resolutions were passed at the convention:

- *CWA leadership will work on every level for a united labor movement.
- *CWA will join together in solidarity with other unions to support collective bargaining agendas.
- *CWA will support collective bargaining rights for public safety and law enforcement officers.
- *CWA will support an economic stimulus that produces good jobs and fair trade.

The CWA convention voted to explore new ways to work with the AFL-CIO, Change to Win and the National Education Association and new ways to support each other's campaigns. It has never been more important for the union movement to be united so that we can fully take advantage of these opportunities. Together, we're stronger. That's true for us within CWA and true for the entire labor movement.

In a first-ever joint appearance, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten and National Education Association President Dennis Van Roekel stood together at CWA's convention and called for a united labor movement. They are part of the National Labor Coordinating Committee that is working to bring together unions representing 16 million workers, to make sure that labor is a real force in organizing, in building our power and in working to restore middle class families. CWA President Larry Cohen has been a leading voice in this effort.

- *CWA members must do everything they can to pass the Employee Free Choice Act.

CWA members got terrific support from Vice President Joe Biden, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. Biden said the Obama administration is committed to giving workers the bargaining power we need to rebuild the middle class. Harkin, who is leading the Employee Free Choice campaign in the Senate pledged to do everything possible to make the Employee Free Choice Act law this summer. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis reaffirmed President Obama's support for the Employee Free Choice Act, stressing that the administration believes 100 percent that "in order to rebuild the

middle class, we need to restore fairness and that's why we need the Employee Free Choice Act." It was a great send off for the biggest legislative lobby day ever for CW
*CWA Strategic Industry Fund may now be used for organizing.

The change in the SIF framework sparked a heated debate and the first formal roll call of the CWA meeting. Delegates in support included Local 7901 and the rest of our contingency from District 7. The vote took place in the convention center where the walls were covered with banners promoting passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. The move sets up what could be a historic turn for CWA and other unions hoping to get traction from the most union-friendly White House and Congress in generations. As we all know - the plunging fortunes of labor give unions little choice but to organize.

The following were part of the Legislative Conference:

CWA's biggest Lobby Days ever were a huge success. Thousands of CWA members, in local and district delegations, fanned out over Capitol Hill to the offices of our Senators and Representatives and pushed hard for support for the Employee Free Choice Act and real health care reform as well as other issues of concern to our members.

During more than 200 appointments with members of Congress and their staffs, CWA members made sure that elected representatives were put on notice: "we're watching your votes on our top priorities and we'll make sure we know which side you're on."

CWA members met with more than 30 Senators and their staffs. We met with all the Oregon legislators or at least with members of their staff, as well as Rep Brian Baird from Vancouver. We pointed out that the Employee Free Choice Act has very strong support among Oregonians, the American people and deserves a Senate vote.

In meetings with more than 170 House members, health care reform was a big issue, with CWA members pressing for real health care reform that does not tax benefits, that covers pre-Medicare eligible retirees, that includes a public plan option and that requires all employers to cover their workers.

Part of the agenda was given over to a huge Health Care Rally (the biggest one ever held in Washington D.C.). An incredible number of CWA members who were an unmistakable sea of red among the participants from other unions who sported their colors as well – green, blue, yellow, and purple. More than a thousand CWA members were there. Some came after attending the convention/legislative political conference and CWA's hugely successful Lobby Day. Many more CWAers came on 54 buses – traveling overnight and for many, many hours – to join the ten thousand other union members who came from across the country to make sure health care reform gets done right.

We were addressed by our own Leaders and a host of politicians. To name a few: CWA President Larry Cohen (who said now's the time: "A united movement to change our country and a united movement for health care for all"); AFSCME Pres. Gerry McEntee and Anna Berger (SEIU). Political speakers included Howard

Dean, Chuck Schumer, Chris Dodd, Arlen Specter, Joe Sestak, and Congressional delegations from around the country. We even heard from actress Edie Falco (the Sopranos).

The events were capped by reception attended by our delegates that featured Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and spotlighted CWA members who have done outstanding organizing work over the last year.

It was a privilege to be elected to attend as your delegate. It is a privilege to be able to make this humble report to you all. The report is brief but please feel free to contact me, Roxy Barnstead, at unionlabor@aol.com or 503-569-0811 if you would like more detail. As noted, documentation will be available at our CWA office if you would like to review any of the resolutions.

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