

UNION CONFERENCES: Q & A

Q: Why does our local union attend conferences?

A: Local, regional and national conference attendance began with our affiliation with the IUE (now IUE-CWA) more than 4 decades ago. Local unions are mandated and encouraged to attend these conferences by the national union.

Q: Do we attend other conferences that are not mandated?

A: Yes. Many “non-mandated” conferences are offered every year. The Executive board selects **only** those that they believe will directly support the operations of our union and will, as a result, benefit the membership.

Q: How specifically do we benefit from sending representatives to these conferences?

A: Purpose and goals of attending include: education, training, sharing of strategies and tactics, networking, team building, moral building and most importantly, supporting a plan for a succession of local union leaders. Members moving into new leadership positions, who are well trained, will provide continuity and consistency to union operations and representation.

Q: What exactly do our representatives do at conferences?

A: Seminars and organized activities run for at least an entire business/work day, and sometimes longer, with evening sessions. Social events and dinners during conferences provide valuable networking opportunities for attendees as well.

Q: Who represents us at conferences and how are they chosen?

A: Most of the people who attend do so as a result of their elected or appointed position in the union. Decisions regarding who attends which conference are ultimately made by the Executive board.

Q: Can other members attend and represent the union at conferences?

A: Yes. If you are interested in going to a conference, please contact a steward or Executive board member for more information. Attendees are also nominated at general membership meetings, so be sure to attend them.

Q: Who pays for us to go to conferences?

A: The IUE and CWA sometime pay for officers and board members to attend, but in most cases, our local pays for our people to go to conferences.

Q: What are the positives about attending a conference on behalf of the union?

A: It is a great opportunity to learn how to be a more effective union representative and to network with other union people from all over the country and Canada.

Q: What are the negatives about attending a conference on behalf of the union?

A: Long days with many planned activities, being away from your family, paying expenses that can exceed what the union provides and the delays and inconveniences of travel are among the negatives involved with conferences.

Q: How can our members find out about what conferences were attended, by whom and what was accomplished?

A: Conference attendees are required to submit “function reports” outlining the benefits of having been at the event. These reports are then archived on the FSW website (fsw-union.com).

Q: Who insures that union funds for conferences are being used prudently?

A: It is ultimately the responsibility of the Executive board to insure that all expenses related to conference attendance are legitimate and necessary. Documentation of conference expenses are subject to review by the union’s treasurer and trustees. Expenses for conferences are budgeted for in planning each fiscal year.