



**DUTIES OF LOCAL UNION OFFICERS: USW NEXT GEN**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**  
**MAY 2021**

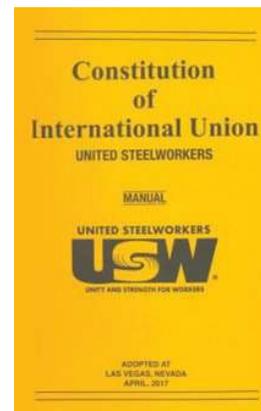


## Governing Documents of the USW

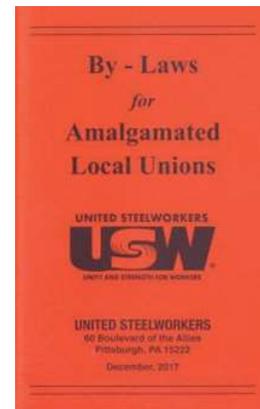
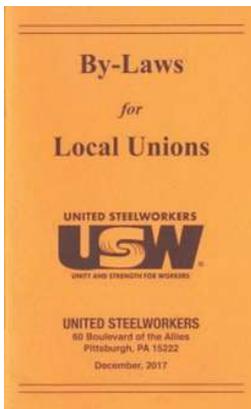
The Constitution of International Union and By-laws for Local Unions are essential documents for Local Union officers. They establish the processes and structures of USW Local Unions. All references to documents in this guide cite the specific article(s) and section(s).

The authority of Local Union officers rests on the USW Constitution and By-Laws for Local Unions.

Constitution of International  
Union (or “USW Constitution”)



By-Laws for Local  
Unions



## The USW Constitution & By-Laws for Local Unions: How Do They Work Together?

- The USW Constitution is the preeminent governing document of the International Union. It creates the basic aspects of the USW, including its name, mission, leadership and structure; who is eligible for membership, and its finances.
- The full name of the USW is the *United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union*. USW Constitution, Article I.
- By-Laws for Local Unions, which are issued by the International Union, state detailed guidelines about how Local Unions should operate, including responsibilities of Local Union officers.
- Local Unions may adopt, subject to approval by the International Union, by-laws and rules that do not conflict with the USW Constitution or International policies.
- Local Unions that do not adopt such by-laws are subject to the USW By-Laws for Local Unions. USW Constitution, Article VII, Sec. 5.

## The USW Constitution

The heart of the USW Constitution is the referendum ballot elections in which every member has the opportunity to vote for the union's officers from the International President to all of the Local Union's officers.

Democracy has been a cornerstone of the USW since its founding in 1942.

## Solidarity & Bargaining Power

The labor movement's two most fundamental goals—solidarity and bargaining power—are inseparable. These are set forth in Article II of the USW Constitution, which states the 'Objects' of the USW, including:

*First. To unite in this union all working men and women eligible for membership.*

*Second. To establish through collective bargaining adequate wage standards, shorter hours of work and improvements in the conditions of employment for workers in industry.*

## Key Points for Local Union Officers

Local Union officers are responsible for abiding by and enforcing the USW Constitution. These articles will be of particular interest to Local Union officers.

- Articles VII and VIII describe the structure of Local Unions and duties of Local Union officers.
- Article XIV includes information about dues.
- The Order Of Business For Conducting Local Union Meetings lists the responsibilities of Local Union officers during membership meetings.

## Overview of the USW International Union

Articles IV and V of the USW Constitution determine the leadership of the International Union and the nomination and election procedures for those offices. The term of each office is four years.

Prior to International Elections, Local Unions will receive instructions from the International Secretary-Treasurer on how to conduct the election in accordance with the International Union Elections Manual, which the International Union provides to Local Unions (USW Constitution, Article V, Section 1).

- International President
- International Secretary-Treasurer
- International Vice President (Administration)
- International Vice President (Human Affairs)
- National Director for Canada
- International Vice President at Large
- International Vice President
- District Directors (13)

## USW Dues

The USW dues structure is 1.45% of a member's earnings (\$1.45 per \$100.00 of earnings). Members pay NO MORE THAN 2.8 times their average hourly earnings (this is a monthly "cap" for members who work a lot of overtime). (USW Constitution, Article XIV, Sec. 17(a))



## By-Laws for Local Unions

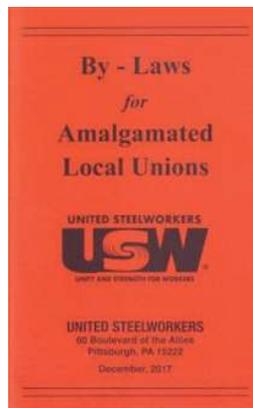
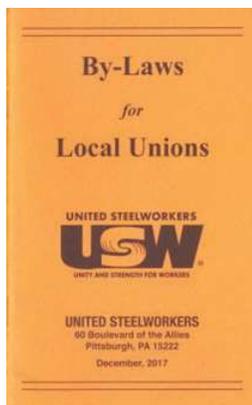
In addition to the USW Constitution, governance in Local Unions is also determined by the By-Laws for Local Unions.

There are two types of Local Unions in the USW:

- A stand-alone Local Union is made up of a single collective bargaining unit.
- An amalgamated Local Union has more than one collective bargaining unit in its membership. Members from the different units can serve as officers in the Local Union. The different workplaces in an amalgamated Local Union are known as units. The number of units varies depending on the amalgamated Local Union.

Stand-alone Local Unions operate under the Standard By-Laws for Local Unions (SBL) and amalgamated Local Unions operate under the Standard By-Laws for Amalgamated Local Unions (SBAL).

Under Article XIX of the SBL and SBAL, Local Unions can adopt by-laws to meet their own unique needs. All additions and amendments to the USW By-Laws must be submitted to the International Union for approval.



## Local Union Officers

Article IV, Section 1 of the SBL and SBAL establishes the following offices:

- President
- Vice President
- Recording Secretary
- Financial Secretary
- Treasurer
- Guide
- Guards (Local Unions typically designate one as Inside Guard & one as Outside Guard)
- Trustees (3)

## Term of Office

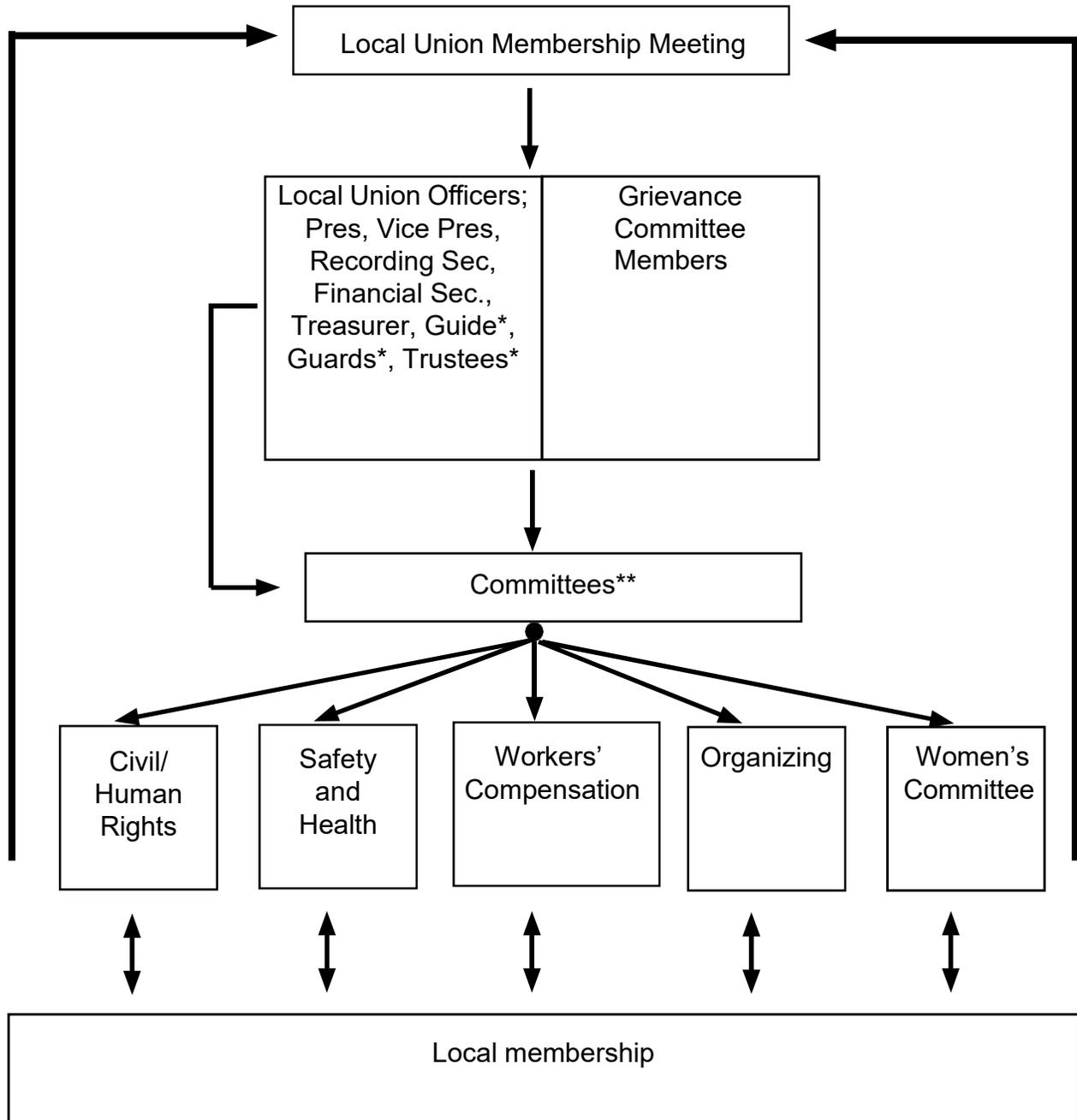
All Local Union Officers, Unit Officers and Grievance Committee Members are elected for a term of three years. See the USW Constitution, Article VII, Section 8 and also Article IV, Section 3 of the SBL and Article IV, Section 3(a) of the SBAL.

## Amalgamated Unit Positions

Units in amalgamated Local Unions are led by the positions below. (SBAL, Article IV, Sec. 1(b)) Members of amalgamated locals can serve as both a Local Union officer and in a unit position.

- Unit President (also referred to as “Unit Chair”)
- Unit Secretary
- Unit Griever(s)

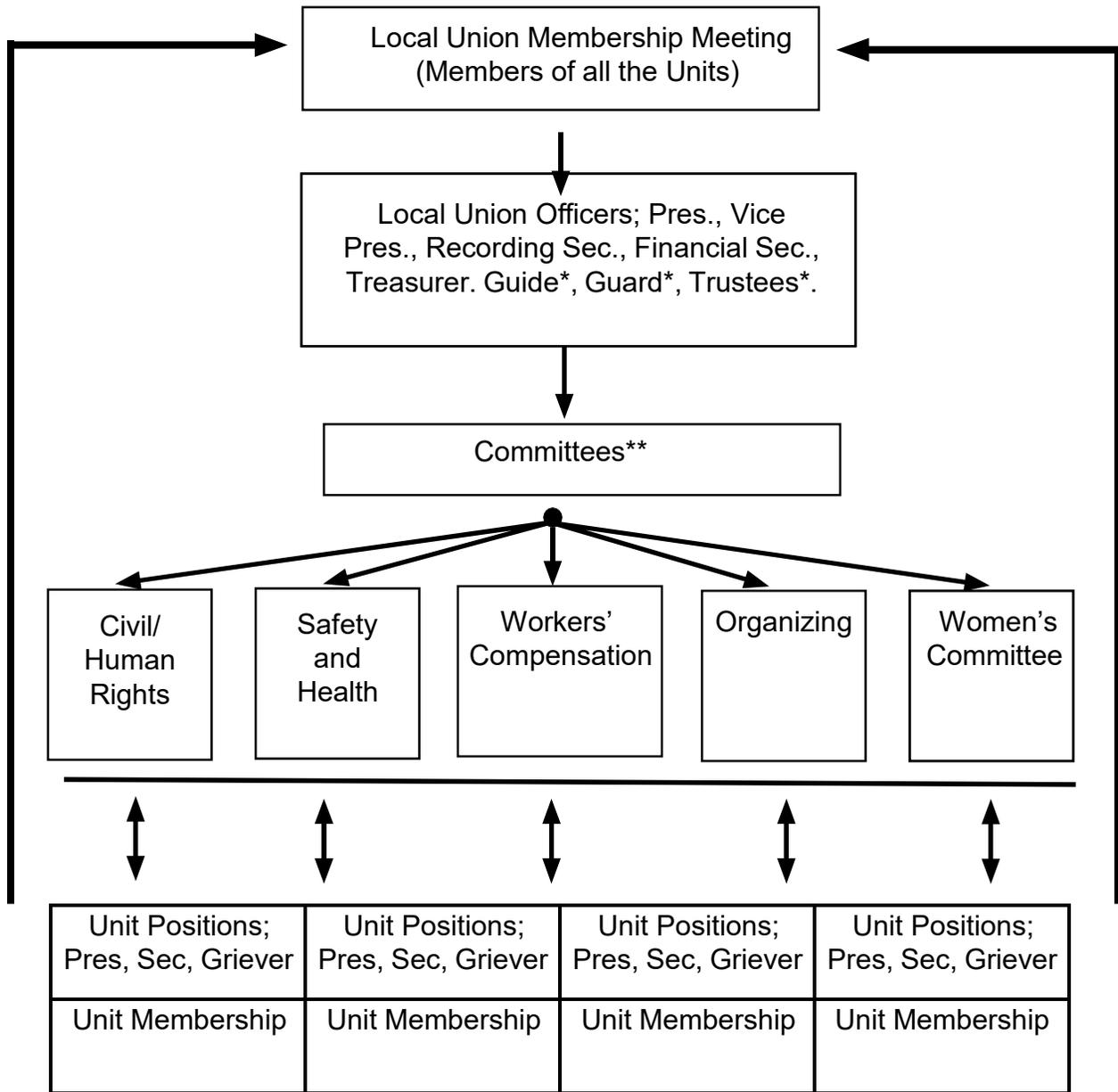
## How a Stand-Alone Local Works



\*Local Unions with 100 or fewer members may adopt by-laws that do not include these officers provided that their duties are allocated among the five remaining officers. (SBL, Article IV, Sec. 1, footnote 2)

\*\*All of the committees listed here are constitutionally mandated, but Local Unions can create additional standing or special committees depending on their needs, consistent with the USW Constitution and By-Laws for Local Unions.

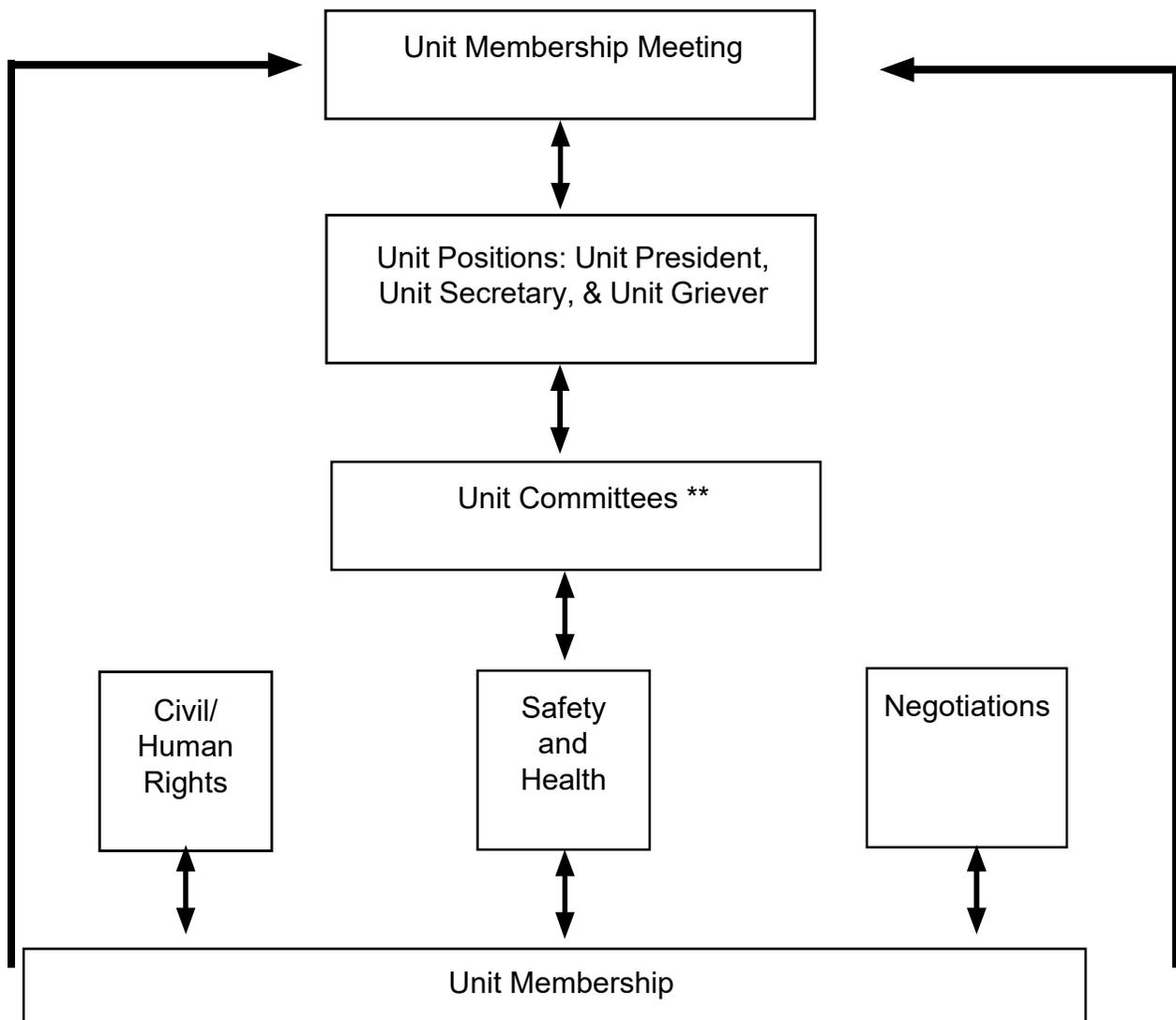
## How An Amalgamated Local Union Works



\*Local Unions with 100 or fewer members may adopt by-laws that do not include these officers provided that their duties are allocated among the five remaining officers.  
(SBAL, Article IV, Sec. 1(a), footnote 3)

\*\*The number of committees can vary depending on the needs of the Local Union or Unit and committees may be established at the Unit level or at the Local Union level with representation from each of the units.

## How A Unit In An Amalgamated Local Union Works



\*A Unit member may hold more than one of the Unit positions. Amalgamated Local Unions may adopt a by-law provision that allows individual Units to combine the position of Unit President with Unit Griever. (SBAL, Art IV, Sec. 1(b), footnote 7)

\*The Local Union President has the option of appointing a Unit representative to each Local Union committee or cooperating with the Unit President to establish Unit-based committees.

## Local Union Committees

Article VII of the USW Constitution requires each Local Union to establish five “standing” committees. By participating in them rank-and-file members build the Local Union’s power in the workplace and community, administer the collective bargaining agreement and develop leadership skills. They are also effective places to develop new leaders.

The Local Union President has the authority to appoint members to committees. (USW Constitution, Article VIII, Sec. 1; SBL and SBAL Article V, Sec. 1(c)).

Educational material and programs are available for each of these committees. Staff Representatives can assist Local Unions in accessing them.

Amalgamated Local Unions can establish committees in individual units or at the Local Union level with representation from all of the units in the Local Union.

### Local Union Committees under Article VII, USW Constitution

- Section 11. A Workers’ Compensation Committee provides guidance to members who experience work-related injuries or have questions about health care benefits. The USW has professional staff to advise members about the workers’ compensation laws in each state.
- Section 11. A Safety and Health Committee assists members who encounter hazards on the job and ensures that employers maintain safe workplaces.
- Section 12. A Civil Rights Committee (which may also be known as a Human Rights Committee) creates an environment of dignity and respect for today’s diverse workplaces and resolves disagreements between co-workers.
- Section 13. The Women’s Committee, also known as Women of Steel (WOS), prepares USW sisters to grow and learn in a union environment and to build power on the job. This committee is open to all USW members who are interested in women’s issues and concerns in the workplace and community.
- Section 14. The Organizing Committee can welcome new employees to the workplace through new hire orientation and ensure full membership in the union by encouraging all workers to join. Additionally, Organizing Committee members can improve the lives of other workers by organizing workplaces that do not have union representation.

## Best Practices for Leading an Amalgamated Local Union

Amalgamated Local Unions can be made up of collective bargaining units from different sectors. While each amalgamated Local Union is unique, these recommendations can build strength at the Local Union and unit levels.

- Establish an executive board that includes the president of every unit in the Local Union. This way every unit has a voice in the activities of the Local Union.
- Ensure that grievors in each unit have access to stewards' education so they can enforce their collective bargaining agreements and effectively represent unit members.
- Encourage each unit to have regular meetings to discuss ongoing issues. Per Article VII, Section 3 SBAL units in amalgamated Local Unions “may hold regularly scheduled membership meetings.”
- Reserve space in the Local Union membership meeting for each unit to give a report. For example, unit reports can be made during the Report of Standing Committees or New Business.
- See that each unit has the opportunity to participate in the Local Union's standing committees. Some units may be able to run their own standing committees while members of other units may have to work together to coordinate a committee

## **Local Union Executive Board**

The By-Laws for Local Unions allow for a Local Union executive board, but it is not mandatory. While the USW Constitution makes no provision for a Local Union executive board, a Local Union may establish one so long as it is provided for in its By-Laws. The members of such an executive board must be persons elected to office or position in the Local Union in accordance with the provisions of the Local Union Elections Manual. (SBL and SBAL, Article IV, Section 1, footnote 4.)

## **Executive Board Responsibilities**

- Assisting the President in planning the Local Union meetings so that important matters will be brought to the attention of the members in a clear and understandable manner.
- Reviewing correspondence to the Local Union. The executive board can then make recommendations to the membership for consideration.
- Planning and recommending a budget for the financing and expenditures of the Local Union. Estimating expenditures and receipts in advance helps ensure that funds will be available for essential union business.
- Assisting in making plans and recommendations for the Local Union's participation in the political affairs of the community, as well as state and national politics.
- Reporting to the membership on any actions it takes between meetings.

## **Responsibilities of Local Union Officers**

### **Local President (Article V, Section 1, SBL and SBAL)**

- ⇒ Presides at all meetings of the Local Union. Serves as the chairperson of all meetings and preserves order at such meetings.
- ⇒ Decides all questions of order, subject to an appeal to the Local Union.
- ⇒ Performs other duties as the Local Union may assign.
- ⇒ Serves as an ex-officio member of all committees in their Local Union. (*Ex-officio* means that by virtue of office, Local Union Presidents are members of all Local Union committees).
- ⇒ Appoints all committees within the Local Union not otherwise provided for.
- ⇒ Calls the membership meetings to order.
- ⇒ Signs the minutes of the meeting.

### **Vice President (Article V, Section 2, SBL and SBAL)**

- ⇒ In the event that a vacancy occurs in the office of President, the Vice President shall act as President for the unexpired term.
- ⇒ Performs the duties of the President in the event the President is incapacitated for a short period of time.
- ⇒ Assists the President in the discharge of the President's duties.
- ⇒ At the option of the Local Union, a Vice President, who is designated in advance, can serve as an alternative signatory to the Local Union financial accounts.

### **Recording Secretary (Article V, Section 3, SBL and SBAL)**

- ⇒ Keeps the minutes of all Local Union meetings.
- ⇒ Has custody of and responsibility for the Local Union seal.
- ⇒ Records proceedings of the Local Union in a book kept for that purpose.
- ⇒ Handles all correspondence of the Local Union.
- ⇒ Has working knowledge of the USW Constitution and By-Laws.
- ⇒ Reports the following items during the meetings:
  1. Roll call of Local Union officers
  2. Reading of previous meeting minutes
  3. Reading of correspondence
  4. Report of committees (grievors to give report of grievances)
  5. Any unfinished business
  6. Any new business
  7. Attendance report
- ⇒ Signs minutes of the meeting and affixes seal.
- ⇒ The Local Union must notify the International Secretary-Treasurer whenever there is a change in any of the Local Union Officer positions so that its records can be updated.

### **Financial Secretary (Article V, Section 4, SBL and SBAL)**

- ⇒ The Financial Secretary receives money due to the Local Union, pays it to the Treasurer, receives a receipt and records it.
- ⇒ Keeps books up to date, and has them open for examination by the Local Union Trustees and the International Secretary-Treasurer.\*
- ⇒ Reports on the Local Union finances at least once a month to the Local Union meeting and has the Local Union's membership approve the financial reports.
- ⇒ Completes the Monthly Financial Statement (Form 274).
- ⇒ Makes out (prepares) and forwards all forms required by the International Secretary-Treasurer and all federal, state, and local agencies.

\*The Financial Secretary and Treasurer are both responsible for this task.

The USW Local Union Financial Officers' Manual has detailed information on Financial Secretary responsibilities.

### **Treasurer (Article V, Section 5, SBL and SBAL)**

- ⇒ Issues a receipt to the Financial Secretary when money is received and deposits the money in a bank account, and records same.
- ⇒ Reports the balance of cash at each Local Union meeting, as shown by last report, including the amount received and amount spent, in addition to the balance.
- ⇒ Keeps books up-to-date, and has them open for examination by the Local Union Trustees and the International Secretary-Treasurer.\*

\*The Financial Secretary and Treasurer are both responsible for this task.

The USW Local Union Financial Officers' Manual has detailed information on Treasurer responsibilities.

### **Guide (Article V, Section 6, SBL and SBAL)**

- ⇒ Ensures that all persons present at a Local Union or unit meeting are entitled to remain.
- ⇒ If the Guide has reason to believe that someone attending is a non-member, reports it to the chairperson who then takes steps to correct the situation, either by having the person become a member of the Local Union or by having them removed.

### **Guards (Article V, Section 7, SBL and SBAL)**

- ⇒ Takes charge of the door and sees that everyone who enters is entitled to be there.
- ⇒ Preserves order during a meeting if called upon by the chairperson.
- ⇒ Takes charge of the Meeting Attendance Book at the door of the meeting. The Recording Secretary has custody of the Meeting Attendance Book at all other times.

### **Trustees (Article V, Section 8, SBL and SBAL)**

- ⇒ Takes charge of the hall and all property of the Local Union.
- ⇒ Audits records of the Financial Secretary and Treasurer every three months and ensures that all expenditures have proper authorization through recorded minutes.
- ⇒ Reports to membership every three months and sends a copy of the Quarterly Report to the International Secretary-Treasurer.

The USW Local Union Financial Officers' Manual and Local Union Trustees' Manual have detailed information on Trustee responsibilities.

### **Unit President (Article V, Section 9(a), SBAL)**

- ⇒ Presides at all meetings of the unit (if the unit has such meetings).
- ⇒ Decides all questions of order, subject to appeal to the Local Union.
- ⇒ Performs other duties as the unit or the Local Union may assign.
- ⇒ Shall be the ex-officio member of all committees in their unit.
- ⇒ Shall appoint all committees within the unit not otherwise provided for.

### **Unit Secretary (Article V, Section 9(b), SBAL)**

- ⇒ Records attendance at all unit meetings.
- ⇒ Keeps minutes of all unit meetings.
- ⇒ Handles all correspondence of the unit.
- ⇒ Maintains files of the unit.
- ⇒ Performs other duties consistent with the By-Laws, manuals, policies and USW Constitution, as the unit or Local Union may assign.
- ⇒ Reports the following items during the unit meetings:
  1. Roll call of unit officers
  2. Reading of previous meeting minutes
  3. Reading of correspondence
  4. Report of committee (unit grievors to give report of grievances)
  5. Any unfinished business
  6. Any new business
  7. Attendance report.

### **Unit Griever (Article V, Section 9(c), SBAL)**

- ⇒ Processes complaints and grievances within their respective units and in accordance with the appropriate collective bargaining agreement.
- ⇒ Performs other duties consistent with the By-Laws, manuals, policies and Constitution of the International Union, as the unit or Local Union may assign