



EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Standing Committees

An Activist Handbook

Introduction

This handbook is a resource for local union standing committees and other committees to help engage members in their union and build internal and external programs and participation.

The UAW Constitution requires local unions to establish 10 identified standing committees for many good reasons. Standing committees are the gateway for member involvement and activism. They provide a training ground for new and long-time union leaders. They develop programs and projects that move the union's agenda inside and outside the union.

Across our union, thousands of UAW members participate in one or more local union standing committees. They are rewarded by a feeling of accomplishment, working with their co-workers on meaningful projects, and "being the change" they want to see for working people. But we need so many more activists at the table to help.

That's why it's important to remember that standing committees are a prime way for us to recruit and engage members. By working every day to develop and expand our standing and other committees, we can help meet the needs of our members and community, limited only by our creativity and commitment.

In solidarity,
UAW Education Department

Basics

Article 44 of the UAW Constitution requires each local union to establish 10 standing committees and any other committees the local union deems necessary.

UNION 101: Standing Committees

In addition to elected local union leadership, local union standing committees are the engine behind many activities in our unions. Standing Committees are outlined in Article 44 of the UAW Constitution as follows:

- ▶ **Citizenship and Legislative (CAP):** the political and legislative arm of the UAW. If you believe that the ballot box is connected to the bread box, then this group is for you.
- ▶ **Civil and Human Rights:** ending discrimination and promoting diversity in the workplace, community and nation.
- ▶ **Community Services:** providing relief for members and families in times of need.
- ▶ **Consumer Affairs:** involved in consumer protection activities.
- ▶ **Conservation and Recreation:** leisure and environmental concerns.
- ▶ **Constitution and Bylaws:** the rules by which our local unions operate.
- ▶ **Education:** classes, material and information for membership.
- ▶ **Union Label:** tracking goods and services that support working families.
- ▶ **Veterans:** advocating for the political and social needs of veterans.
- ▶ **Women:** broadening the scope of traditional women's roles through education and advocacy.
- ▶ *And such other committees as deemed necessary.*

These groups are where much of the work of the local union gets planned and put into action. Winter coat drives for area children? That's often Community Services. Voter registration drives? You'll often see members of Civil and Human Rights committee

leading the charge there. Reviewing candidates who want an endorsement from the UAW? CAP Committee members set up those interviews. These committees work in conjunction with their local union leadership to implement the programs of the union. Depending on local union bylaws, members of the committee are appointed or elected. But it all starts with stepping forward saying you want to be a part of the committee.

Horace Hubbard has worked for Chrysler in Belvidere, Illinois for 17 years. As a proud member of local 1268 (Region 4), he's active on multiple standing committees including Veterans, Elections, Education and the local union's Communications committee which publishes the union newsletter and magazine.

"My first experience with standing committees was right after I got hired in in 1998," says Hubbard. "Someone asked me to volunteer my time for a Stand Down that my local union veterans committee was participating in. At the time, I was still pretty angry from the Gulf War, edge. I didn't have a lot of trust. But that day blew me away: I saw us helping veterans with clothes, food, medical attention, haircuts – you name it. I volunteered right away to be on the committee and haven't looked back since. I'm now the chair and we are 24 members strong."

Today, Hubbard talks to new members about being active. "Going to meetings, keeping up on issues. That's part of it. But standing committees are where we get so much work done." Hubbard adds, "I think about the old-timers who took me under their wings and how much that meant to me becoming the activist I am today. Now it's our turn to do the same for the next generation."



To learn more, attend your local union meetings and talk to your elected leadership.

Standing Committees and Local Union Structure

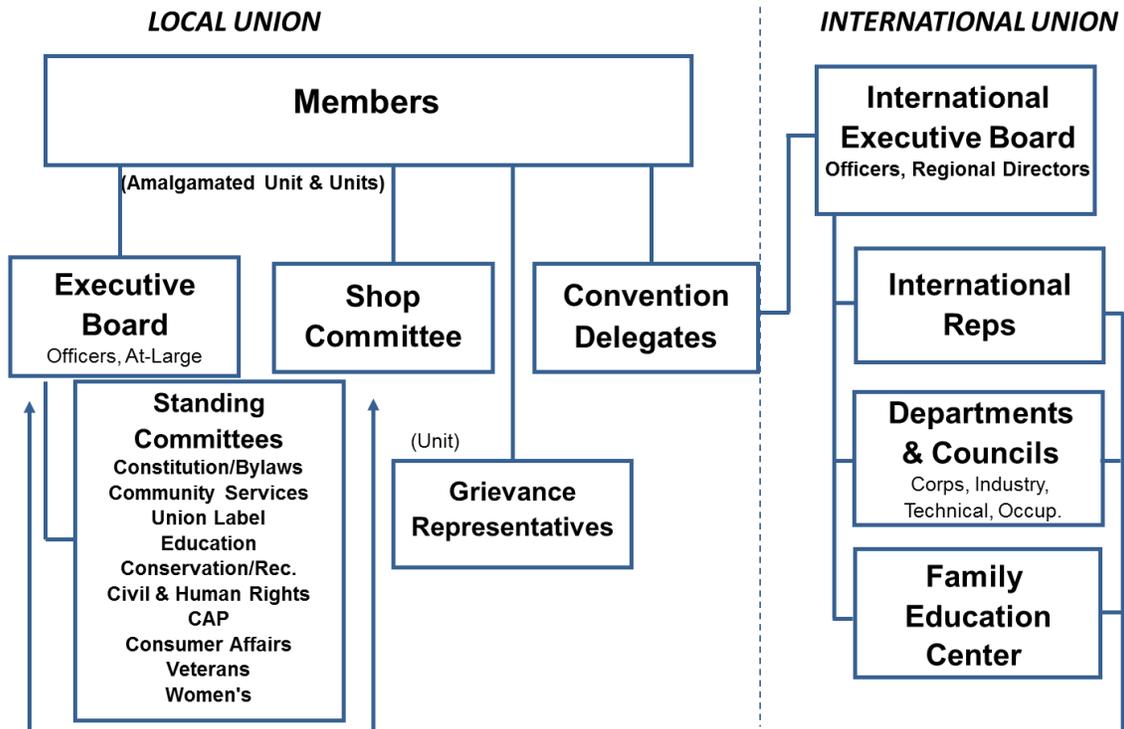
Standing committee members are part of the local union leadership. Committee members can have rewarding experiences and do important work, drawing more members into the life of the union.

In addition to the required standing committees specifically listed in the UAW Constitution, the Constitution provides the freedom and flexibility for a local union to form any other committee deemed necessary. Such committees may focus on Youth, Work and Family, Special Events, and the like.

It is essential for any committee to present its recommended plans to the local union executive board for approval. This is important for budgetary and coordination purposes. Check your local union bylaws for guidance.

Successful committee-run programs bolster member morale and are a credit to the executive board. By communicating effectively with the executive board, committees can successfully contribute to building union engagement and power.

UAW UNION STRUCTURE



General duties and responsibilities

Standing committees help members better understand their role in our union and move from passive observer to active participant. Standing committees – like our whole union – are stronger when members participate. Successful standing committees help support the goals of the local union, region and International Union.

Local union bylaws determine whether standing committee members are elected by local union members or appointed by the local union president. Under Article 44 of the UAW Constitution, the local union president is an ex-officio member of all local union committees.

Standing committees are most successful when members represent the local union's diversity regarding, race, sex, classification, work location, and other attributes relevant to the local union. Different voices coming together strengthen union solidarity and contribute to forming solutions that work for all members.

Effective local union standing committees:

- Understand their role in the local union
- Understand the union's vision
- Set and work toward identified goals
- Work with other local union committees
- Work in coalition with like-minded community organizations
- Report regularly to the local executive board
- Communicate and engage with members regularly and effectively

Most standing committee structures include:

- chair
- co-chair
- recording secretary
- treasurer
- sub-committees
- task forces

General rules follow for each standing committee participant. Check your local union bylaws for specific requirements.

Committee Members. We start with committee members because they form the team that will offer ideas and execute the vision. No committee can fulfill its function without active committee members. Committee members should be prepared to:

- Identify the scope of the committee work, including issues that are important to the union.
- Attend and participate in committee meetings.
- Be accountable to the committee.
- Seek opportunities to build skills that will lift the committee's work.

Chair. The chair must be able to coordinate the committee's activities and win local union leader and member support for committee programs. The chair must also oversee program implementation and help the committee accomplish its goals. The chair should be willing to work cooperatively with different people and consider new ideas. The chair should also be prepared to:

- Plan the meeting agenda with the secretary before meetings.
- Lead discussion on the committee's goals and plans with committee members.
- Submit all committee plans for final approval by the local union executive board.
- Preside at all meetings or make arrangements for the co-chair to preside in the chair's absence.
- Conduct the meeting consistent with the UAW Constitution and Robert's Rules of Order.
- Assist in the orderly transition of the committee in cooperation with the local union executive board at the end of the committee's term or mandate.

Co-Chair. The committee co-chair helps the chair by understanding the chair's duties, being an engaged partner, and presiding over committee meetings in the chair's absence.

Recording Secretary. The recording secretary supports the chair in committee meetings by having a copy of the UAW Constitution and local union by-laws at each meeting. The recording secretary is chiefly responsible for keeping accurate standing committee meeting minutes and these duties:

- Keeps the committee's important papers and documents.
- Helps the chair prepare meeting agendas.
- Keeps a record of committee attendance.

Treasurer. Standing committees must transfer any money collected from members or committee activities to the local union's financial secretary. Many standing committees do not collect money at all and just request local union funds for approved projects. The treasurer must also:

- Keep a record of the committee's financial transactions.
- Receive and record all money collected and transfer it to the local union financial secretary to receive a receipt verifying the transferred amount and transaction date.
- Keep up-to-date on fundraising guidelines.

Subcommittee/Task Force. Committees often form a subcommittee or task force to examine a special subject or plan and conduct a specific activity. Attention should be paid to be sure that the subcommittee or task force understands its role, reporting protocol, and scope of responsibility.

Recruiting standing committee members and supporters

Because standing committees are meant to connect members with their union, recruitment is a vital and key part of a committee's work.

All standing committee members should be talking about their committee's activities and inviting members in and around their work area to plug in and get involved. Through your conversations, you may also identify members who would be a great addition to your committee or another local union committee or project. Be sure to consult your local union leadership for guidance on recruitment.

While there are a number of good ways to reach out to members – including your local union's print and social media platforms – we know that the most effective way to reach members is through one-on-one communication.

When you take time to talk to someone directly, you show that you care about the other person's opinions, talents, and participation. You communicate that standing committees are an important part of the local union's work. You emphasize the relationship of the committee to the union's larger goals. You begin to build a relationship with a fellow union member.

Get to know those you are trying to recruit or invite to attend a committee-sponsored event. Ask them about their personal interests. Let them know how helpful their skills would be to your committee or a project. Ask them about their interest in participating and building their union.

Be ready to listen to their fears, experiences at past events, or misunderstandings that may make them hesitate about participating on a committee or attending an event. Many people are reluctant to ask questions, but encourage them to ask so that you can develop a line of communication.

Sometimes members – especially new members – make erroneous assumptions about the union or labor movement due to a lack of information or experience. By projecting a positive and open attitude, you will model the union culture you are trying to create through your committee work.

When you recruit a member to join a committee or participate in an event, don't leave the member alone! Follow through on promises. Introduce the recruit to other committee members. Be a mentor, or partner the recruit with an experienced and willing member who is willing to be that mentor. By taking these extra steps to make the new recruit comfortable, you are investing in our union cause.

Effective Committee Meetings

Standing committees meet regularly consistent with local union bylaws or as determined by the committee with proper approval. Meetings should involve everyone in the decision-making process and get real work done. When meetings are well organized and well run, they result in satisfied committee members and positive programs.

Because committee meetings are normally less formal than a regular local union membership meeting, it is tempting to be relaxed about planning and running the meeting, and doing necessary follow up work after the meeting.

Don't make this mistake!

Although committee meetings should be fairly informal and encourage open dialogue, they must be managed to be effective. There are three stages to your committee meetings: 1) before the meeting, 2) during the meeting and 3) after the meeting. These stages are discussed below.

Before the meeting. It is so much easier to have a productive meeting when you are prepared. That's the kind of meeting people with busy lives want to attend. Check the prior meeting's minutes for follow up items, prepare an agenda, and make sure you have appropriate meeting space, tools and refreshments reserved so that everyone is comfortable to do the planned work.

During the meeting. Stick to the agenda. Gently, but firmly keep people on the subject at hand. Be sure that everyone is allowed and invited to have input. Before the meeting adjourns, summarize what was decided and review assignments and action items. Be sure that each committee member knows their responsibilities. Set the date, time and place for the next meeting. End the meeting on a positive note and thank the committee members for their attendance and participation.

After the meeting. Each meeting is a learning experience. Evaluate what went well and what could have been better. Did conversation drift? Did the meeting drag on too long? Was the meeting space too small? Was attendance poor? Answering "yes" to any of these questions requires an assessment to determine why a problem arose to avoid repeating it at the next meeting. Seek advice from an experienced person when needed.

Communication System

To maintain a close, cohesive and active committee, it is important to agree on a good communication system. Having a dependable system in place helps everyone conduct the committee's business reliably and on time. Technology allows for committees to share cellphone numbers to text or email one another in a private manner any day or time of the week.

Avoid using the employer's communication system so that union communication remains private and protected.

Reporting Committee Activities to Members

Reports are a way to communicate committee progress and activities to the local union leadership and members. They can be formal or informal, oral or written. Written reports are often submitted for membership approval or acceptance and oral reports are often used to update people on the status of the committee's activities.

One-Hour Meeting Agenda

Most committee meetings should be completed in one hour. Use the timed agenda below to help stay within this guideline.

1. Roll Call
2. Reading of Minutes 5 minutes
3. Report of Officers 10 minutes
 - ◆ Chair/Co-Chair
 - ◆ Secretary
 - ◆ Treasurer
 - ◆ Other
4. Meeting Content 35 minutes
 - ◆ Unfinished (Old) Business
 - ◆ New Business
 - ◆ Action Items
 - ◆ Good and Welfare
5. Assignment/Agenda setting 10 minutes
 - ◆ Assignments given for next meeting: responsibility assigned
 - ◆ Agenda items created for next meeting
 - ◆ Meeting evaluation
 - ◆ Adjournment

Meeting Planning Worksheet

BEFORE THE MEETING

A. Specific Information

Meeting Date:	Start time:	End time:
Purpose:		
Desired outcome:		

B. Logistics

<p>Meeting logistics (Who's Responsible?)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Room: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Set up: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Refreshments: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	<p>Meeting needs (Who's Responsible?)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Flipchart: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Markers: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Laptop/Projector: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Internet connection _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Paper, pens: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Handouts: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>
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C. Invitees

D. Agenda Items

AT THE MEETING

E. Attendance

F. Meeting notes

G. Commitments-Delegated Tasks (Who's Responsible?)

AFTER THE MEETING

H. Evaluate: Did the meeting:

- ◆ Start and stop on time?
- ◆ Follow the agenda?
- ◆ Fulfill the purpose?

What you would change for next time?

I. Follow-up – Who needs to be contacted?

Name	Reason	Date
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What needs to be completed for the next meeting?

Committee reports

Whether written or oral, committee reports to your local union executive board and members should include enough information so that your activities and requests can be understood, but are still to the point so that you keep your audience's attention.

Some topics to include in a report are:

- Purpose of the report
- Meeting dates and times
- Status of current projects
- Plans for future projects
- Requests for help, resources, volunteers
- Committee successes, challenges
- Recommendations

Some local unions provide copies of written committee reports to members before the membership meeting begins, so be prepared to meet the expectations of your local union leadership.

You may also wish to consider making a special committee report to cover a specific area of your committee's work or to provide an overview, such as an end-of-the-year report. Whatever your plan, be sure that your local leadership is aware of your plan and has an opportunity to highlight it on the appropriate meeting agenda.

Sample Written or Oral Report Checklist

Committee _____

Chair _____

Purpose of Report:

- Executive Board Meeting
- Union Meeting
- Request
- Other _____

- Approval
- Need Additional Information
- Informational

Date/Time of Meeting:

Status of Current Projects/Activities:

Plans for Future Projects:

Requests for Help/Approval:

Committee Successes/Challenges:

Conclusion

The UAW Education Department has many leadership classes and publications that teach the fine points of planning and running a successful meeting.

Newly appointed committees are especially encouraged to access these resources through proper protocol, including the comprehensive leadership workbook, Building Your Local Union, Education Department Publication 516.

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Volunteer for a
Standing Committee!
Get More Involved in Your
Local Union!

Whether you are a new member or a long-time activist, you are the lifeblood of your local union. Some of the most rewarding experiences you will have as a UAW member will come from volunteering to help with a local union standing committee.

All UAW local unions must have standing committees to make a lasting union and community impact. Whether you're interested in veterans, politics, community work, civil rights, education, recreation, or something else, you can fire up your local union by volunteering to serve on a standing committee or helping with a committee project as your time permits.

I am interested in learning more about the following local union standing committee(s):

- Citizenship and Legislative
- Civil and Human Rights
- Community Services
- Conservation and Recreation
- Consumer Affairs
- Constitution and Bylaws
- Education
- Union Label
- Veterans
- Women

Please contact me at:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please return this completed brochure to:

Thank you for your interest!

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