

## WHAT IS A LABOR UNION?

*Because employers have the ability to hire and fire, an unequal power relationship exists in the workplace. It can be argued that since work plays such a central role in people's lives,*



**Democratic organization of working people** united as a **voice** in

### Voice in the Workplace

- Collective bargaining = legal right of workers to negotiate as a group with management on conditions of work environment
- Contract or Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) = written agreement of workplace conditions between employer and union
- Weingarten Rights = right to have a union representative with you during investigatory meetings that may lead to discipline [*NLRB v. J. Weingarten, Inc.*, 420 U.S. 251 (1975)]

### Democratic

- Leadership such as the President is elected by the members either by direct vote or elected delegates
- In most unions, members vote directly on their union contract and bargaining committee
- Similar to US government, corruption in

### Organization of Working People

- Based on the idea that workers have more power working together as a group
- The union is the working people themselves, the "rank-and-file," not a separate service company
- Stewards: rank-and-file members elected by their co-workers of the same union

### Voice in the Political Arena

- Affect public policies that impact working people and support candidates who commit to worker agenda
- Mobilizing People Power: Precinct Walking, Phonebanking, Lobbying, Letters, Worker Delegations to Elected's offices, etc.
- Mobilizing Money Power: Monetary contributions for campaigns

## TWO MODELS OF UNION REPRESENTATION

Union Representation deals with issues pertinent to the bargaining unit (workers represented by the union):

- Enforcing union contract
- Working on legislation that impacts conditions of work
- Filing charges with governmental bodies (NLRB or PERB)

Unions use either the servicing or organizing approach or a combination of both.

### **SERVICING MODEL**

Paid staff person from union, aka Union Representative or Business Agent, acts on behalf of the worker and resolves it for him or her.

Utilizes primarily legal procedures, such as the grievance process outlined in the union contract including arbitration, to handle problems at worksite.

Sees union contract as a "ceiling." *"If it is not in the contract, there is nothing we can do."*



## **ORGANIZING MODEL**

Rank-and-file members deal with their own issues at the worksite as a group.

Utilizes some legal procedures but also more militant tactics that involve larger number of workers such as "marches on the boss," petition drives, pickets, etc.

Sees union contract as a "floor." *"Nothing can be done through the contract, but how many of your co-workers are willing to do something about the issue?"*

**WORD ON WORDS: SERVICE TO ORGANIZING MODEL OF UNION REPRESENTATION**

In 2003, SEIU 1000, the Union of California State Workers, began the process of moving from a purely servicing model to an organizing model. Their decision to change terminology in their organization reflected their ideological shift and offers an illustrative example of the differences between the two different approaches in unionism.

<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>
Civil Service Division of California State Employee Association (CSEA)	SEIU Local 1000, Union of California State Workers
Employee	Worker
Association	Union
General Manager	Staff Director
Area Office Manager	Area Coordinator
Blue and Gold (The colors shared by all professional group associations within CSEA, which includes state managers and supervisors)	Purple (The colors shared by all local unions under the Service Employee International Union)
"filing grievances"	"actions"

"service the member"

Worker in bargaining unit as a consumer to be served by the union

"organize workers"

Worker in bargaining unit as a member of union to be trained to be active and a leader in their workplace

Note: In 2006, SEIU 1000 began setting up a grievance center that specializes in servicing to address issues that cannot be addressed by an organizing approach and have increased the organizing responsibilities of the union staff representatives.

## UNION TERMINOLOGY

**Agency Shop:** A workplace in which all employees who reap the benefits of the union contract and representation (e.g. higher wages and improved job security) must pay union dues regardless of his or her membership status. Workers who pay dues but do not join the union cannot participate in the democratic processes of the union (e.g. voting on union contract or union leadership).

**Arbitration:** A legal process whereby a neutral third party makes a binding judgment on a contract dispute (alleged contract violation) between a union and the employer. A judgment made by an arbitrator in a non-binding arbitration is not enforceable.

**Bargaining Table:** Contract negotiations.

**Bargaining Team:** Also known as the **Negotiating Team** or **Bargaining Unit Negotiating Committee**. Usually composed of elected rank-and-file members, elected union officials and some union staff, this group represents the union in contract negotiations with management.

**Bargaining Unit:** Workers designated to be represented by a single labor union.

**Blitz:** During a union organizing campaign, organizers conduct house visits in an intensive short time period.

**Building Trades:** Unions representing workers in the building trades. International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, **Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers, and Helpers (Boilermakers)**; International

Union of Bricklayers and Allied Crafts Workers (BAC); International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); International Union of Elevator Constructors (IUEC); International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers (Insulators and Allied Workers); International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers (Ironworkers); Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA); International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT); Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association (OPCMIA); United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers (Roofers); Sheet Metal Workers International Association (SMWIA); International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT); United Association of the Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry (UA).

**Business Agent:** Depending on the union, this person is also called a **Union Representative, Labor Relations Representative** or **Internal Organizer**. This is a full-time paid staff person who works for the union and does union representation work.

**Card-Check:** A non-governmental regulated process, whereby workers can form a union through a majority of employees in a bargaining unit signing a card. Card-Check generally accompanies an agreement that the employer would refrain from any form of intimidation towards the employees during the process.

**Central Labor Council (CLC):** A local regional body of the AFL-CIO made up of unions from all industries in the area that work together on issues of common interest. The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor is a Central Labor Council.

**Closed Shop:** Also known as **Union Shop**. A workplace in which all employees must be members of the union in order to work.

**CBA:** Collective Bargaining Agreement. Formal name for contract.

**Collective Bargaining:** Legal right of workers to negotiate as a group with management on conditions of work environment

**Company Union:** Employee organization created and dominated by the employer. Illegal under NLRA.

**Contract:** A legally binding written agreement between the union and the employer regarding conditions of the work environment such as wages and benefits, rights of workers and management and the procedure to deal with issues arising during the life of the contract.

**COPE:** Committee on Political Education. The body within a union or central labor council that decides on political campaigns, endorsements and legislative efforts and also managing the funding of these efforts.

**County Fed:** Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. The CLC for the Los Angeles region.

**Deauthorization:** Legal process by which union members remove Agency Shop or Union Shop from their workplace.

**Decert:** Decertification. Legal process by which union members get rid of their labor union as their legal representative.

**Duty of Fair Representation (DFR):** Obligation of union to represent all workers in the bargaining unit fairly, equally and in good faith.

**Fee-Payers:** Workers in a bargaining unit who receive the benefits of the union contract and pay a fee to the union but refuse to be members and participate in the democratic processes of the union such as voting on the contract and electing leadership of the union.

**FMCS:** Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. An independent government agency that handles mediation of labor disputes.

**“Green Collar” work:** Employment involving environment-friendly services or goods.

**Grievance:** Violation of the union contract. It is not a complaint, which are issues not covered under the union contract.

**House Visit:** Also known as **House Call**. It is when a union organizer visits a worker at home to talk about an issue or to form a union. House Visits are one of the most effective methods in communicating with workers since they are away from the workplace and require one-on-one face-to-face conversations.

**International:** The international and central body of a union.

**Issue:** More specific than a problem and tends to lend itself to a more defined solution. For example, racial discrimination is a problem. A pattern of white employees, regardless of experience

and skill level, receiving promotions over more senior, experienced and skilled workers of color in the same job classification—an issue.

**Informal Economy:** Also known as **Underground Economy** or “**off the books**” or “**under the table.**” These are jobs that operate without government monitoring or taxation and usually subject workers to substandard working conditions.

**Labor Peace:** A situation when union commits to not strike, or a lull in collective action.

**Local:** The local branch of the International. This organization deals directly with workers in a bargaining unit.

**Lockout:** When the employer forbids workers from going to work.

**MOB:** “March on the Boss.” Workers engage in an unannounced group delegation to the supervisor’s office to discuss an issue in the workplace.

**Neutrality Agreement:** Employer agrees to remain neutral while workers are making a decision to form a union or not. Legally, employers can discourage workers from forming a union, short of discipline or firing for union activities. Because employers have the power to fire and discipline, their public opposition to the union may be interpreted as a form of intimidation.

**No-strike and No-lockout Clause:** A section in the contract that forbids any strike action by the bargaining unit and lockout by the employer for the duration of the CBA.

**One-on-One:** In organizing, it is an individual meeting between the organizer and the worker to be organized.

**Open Shop:** Workplace in which members of the bargaining unit receive the benefits of the union contract but workers are not mandated to join the union or pay union dues.

**PLA:** Project Labor Agreement. Contractors bidding on jobs must offer a prevailing wage to their workers, regardless of union membership status. This ensures a level playing field between union contractors and non-union contractors by ensuring union workers wages are not undercut.

**Rank and File:** Members of a union who do not hold elected office or appointed positions.

**Rap:** In organizing, it is the message delivered in a one-on-one with a worker with the purpose of educating, motivating and agitating.

**Ratification:** Union members in the bargaining unit vote on a newly negotiated contract.

**“Sí Se Puede:”** Spanish for “Yes, We Can!” Coined by Dolores Huerta, co-founder with Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers, it signified that any obstacle can be overcome.

**Scab:** Derisive term for a worker who violates a union strike by acting as a replacement for workers who are withholding their labor for better working conditions. Most union activists view these replacement workers as the lowest form of life.

**State Fed:** California Labor Federation AFL-CIO. The state body of the AFL-CIO.

**Steward:** Also known as **Delegate** or **Union Representative**. Rank-and-file members elected by their co-workers of the same union membership or appointed by elected union leadership to represent a specific shop or department in dealing with management.

**Strike Sanction:** Central Labor Council approves the strike of a union. Consequently, members of the CLC honor the picket line.

**TA:** Tentative Agreement. Individual proposals that are mutually agreed upon by both parties during negotiation pending ratification by union members in the affected bargaining unit. It also refers to the complete agreement reached between both parties during bargaining before it goes through ratification.

**ULPs:** Unfair Labor Practices. Any practice by employer or union in violation of the governmental acts covering collective bargaining rights.

Private Sector:

National Labor Relations Act

[http://www.nlr.gov/about\\_us/overview/national\\_labor\\_relations\\_act.aspx](http://www.nlr.gov/about_us/overview/national_labor_relations_act.aspx)

Agricultural Labor Relations Act (California farmworkers)

<http://are.berkeley.edu/APMP/ala/alrahandbook.pdf>

California Public Sector (In most states, most public employees do not have the legal right to collective bargaining):

Ralph C. Dills Act (state workers)

- state government employees
- <http://www.perb.ca.gov/efile/instructions/index.dills.htm>

#### Myers-Milias-Brown Act

- municipal, county, local special district employees
- <http://www.perb.ca.gov/laws/mmba.asp>

#### Educational Employment Relations Act

- school district employees in K-12 and community colleges
- <http://www.perb.ca.gov/laws/eera.asp>

#### Higher Education Employer- Employee Relations Act

- University of California, California State University and Hastings College of Law
- <http://www.perb.ca.gov/laws/heera.asp>

#### Los Angeles County Metropolitan Authority Transit Employer-Employee Relations Act

- <http://www.perb.ca.gov/laws/teera.asp>

#### Trial Court Employment Protection and Governance Act

- <http://www.perb.ca.gov/laws/trial.asp>

#### Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Act

- <http://www.perb.ca.gov/laws/interpreter.asp>

**Union Bug:** Tiny logo indicating that the item was printed by a union printer.

**Union Busting:** Employer practices that discourage workers from forming or maintaining a union.

**Wildcat Strike:** Strikes not officially sanctioned by union officials. These actions are not legally protected in the United States and may result in termination.

**Working Families:** Also known as **working people, working class** or **workers**.



## US-BASED INTERNATIONAL UNIONS WITH 100,000 MEMBERS OR MORE (2006)

Union	Labor Federation	Membership
National Education Association	Independent	2,767,696
Service Employees International Union	CTW	1,575,485
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees	AFL-CIO	1,470,095
International Brotherhood of Teamsters	CTW	1,398,573
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union	CTW	1,304,061
American Federation of Teachers	AFL-CIO	822,504
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers	AFL-CIO	699,053
Laborers' International Union of North America	CTW	657,197
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America	AFL-CIO	538,448
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers	AFL-CIO	646,933
Communication Workers of America	AFL-CIO	720,534
United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union	AFL-CIO	730,936
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America	CTW	523,126
UNITE HERE	CTW	458,901
International Union of Operating Engineers	AFL-CIO	397,348
National Postal Mail Handlers Union	AFL-CIO	249,509
United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the US and Canada	AFL-CIO	327,000
National Association of Letter Carriers	AFL-CIO	289,119
International Association of Fire Fighters	AFL-CIO	277,464
American Postal Workers Union	AFL-CIO	283,279
American Federation of Government Employees	AFL-CIO	229,248
Amalgamated Transit Union	AFL-CIO	181,140
United American Nurses	AFL-CIO	157,055
Sheet Metal Workers International Association	AFL-CIO	149,149
International Union of Painters and Allied Trades	AFL-CIO	129,499
International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers	AFL-CIO	127,222

Transport Union Workers Union of America	AFL-CIO	117,683
Screen Actors Guild	AFL-CIO	173,289
National Rural Letter Carriers' Association	AFL-CIO	107,564
International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the US and Canada	AFL-CIO	105,366
Office and Professional Employees International Union	AFL-CIO	103,335

Source: US Department of Labor (2007).

## TWO MAJOR UNION FEDERATIONS

### **American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Orga (AFL-CIO)**

56 International Unions  
Over 11 million workers

- President: Richard Trumka
- Secretary-Treasurer: Liz Shuler
- Executive Vice-President: Arlene Holt Baker
- 51 Vice-Presidents



Formed in 1955 when the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) merged together. The Congress of Industrial Organization, originally the

### **Change to Win Federation (CTW)**

5 International Unions  
Over 5 million workers

- Chair: Anna Burger
- Treasurer: Geralyn Luty
- Leadership Council of 5 International Unions



Due to the continued decline of union membership, five international unions came together in 2003 as the New Unity Partnership to push the AFL-CIO to be more aggressive in their efforts to organize the unorganized through a more coordinated industry-based model. In 2005, 7 major international unions disaffiliated from the AFL-CIO to form Change to Win with a primary focus to organize the unorganized (minimum of 75% of resources).

International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) Laborers' International Union of America

## **AFL-CIO AFFILIATED UNIONS**

Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA)

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)

American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (AFM)

American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA)

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

American Postal Workers Union (APWU)

American Radio Association (ARA)

American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA)

Associated Actors and Artistes of America (4As)

Actors' Equity Association (AEA)

American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA)

American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA)

American Guild of Variety Artists (AGVA)

Hebrew Actors' Union Inc.

Screen Actors Guild (SAG)

The Guild of Italian American Actors (GIAA)

Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM)

Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS)

California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee (CNA/NNOC)

California School Employees Association (CSEA)

Communications Workers of America (CWA)

Association of Flight Attendants (AFA-CWA)

Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC)

Federation of Professional Athletes (Professional Athletes)

Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers International Union (GMP)

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada (IATSE)

International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers (Iron Workers)

International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)

International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers (AWIU)

International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM)

International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers (IBB)

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)

International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)

International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU)

International Longshoremen's Association (ILA)

International Plate Printers, Die Stampers and Engravers Union of North America

International Union of Allied Novelty and Production Workers (Novelty and Production Workers)

International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC)

International Union of Elevator Constructors (IUEC)

International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE)

International Union of Painters and Allied Trades of the United States and Canada (Painters and Allied Trades)

International Union of Police Associations (IUPA)

Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA)

Professional Airways Systems Specialists (PASS)

National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA)

National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC)

National Postal Mail Handlers Union (NPMHU)

Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU)

Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association of the United States and Canada (OP&CMIA)

Seafarers International Union of North America (SIU)

Sheet Metal Workers International Association (SMWIA)

Transport Workers Union of America (TWU)

Transportation Communications International Union/IAM (TCU/IAM)

United American Nurses (UAN)

United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada (UA)

United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America International Union (UAW)

United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)

United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial & Service Workers International Union (USW)

United Transportation Union (UTU)

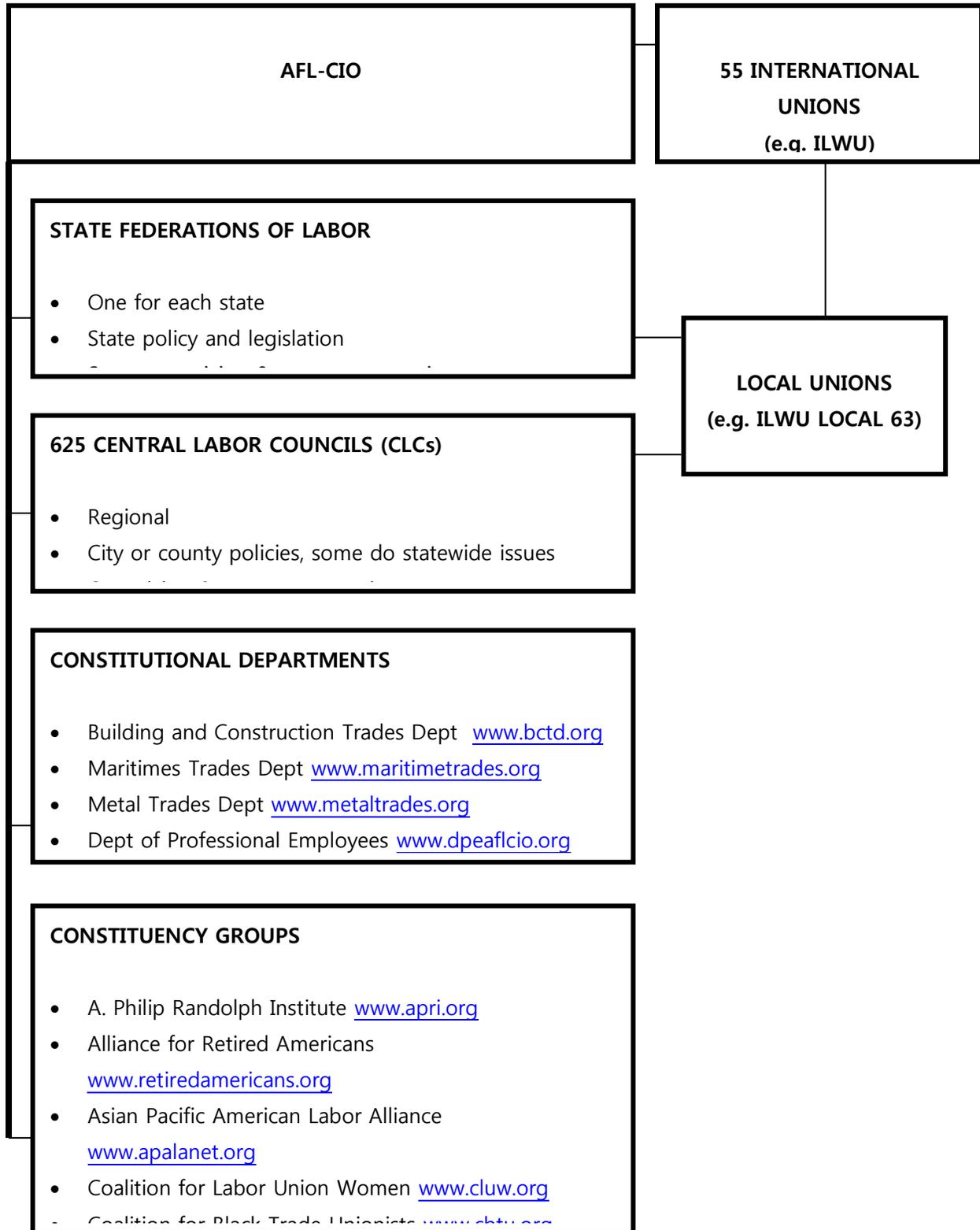
United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers (Roofers and Waterproofers)

Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA)

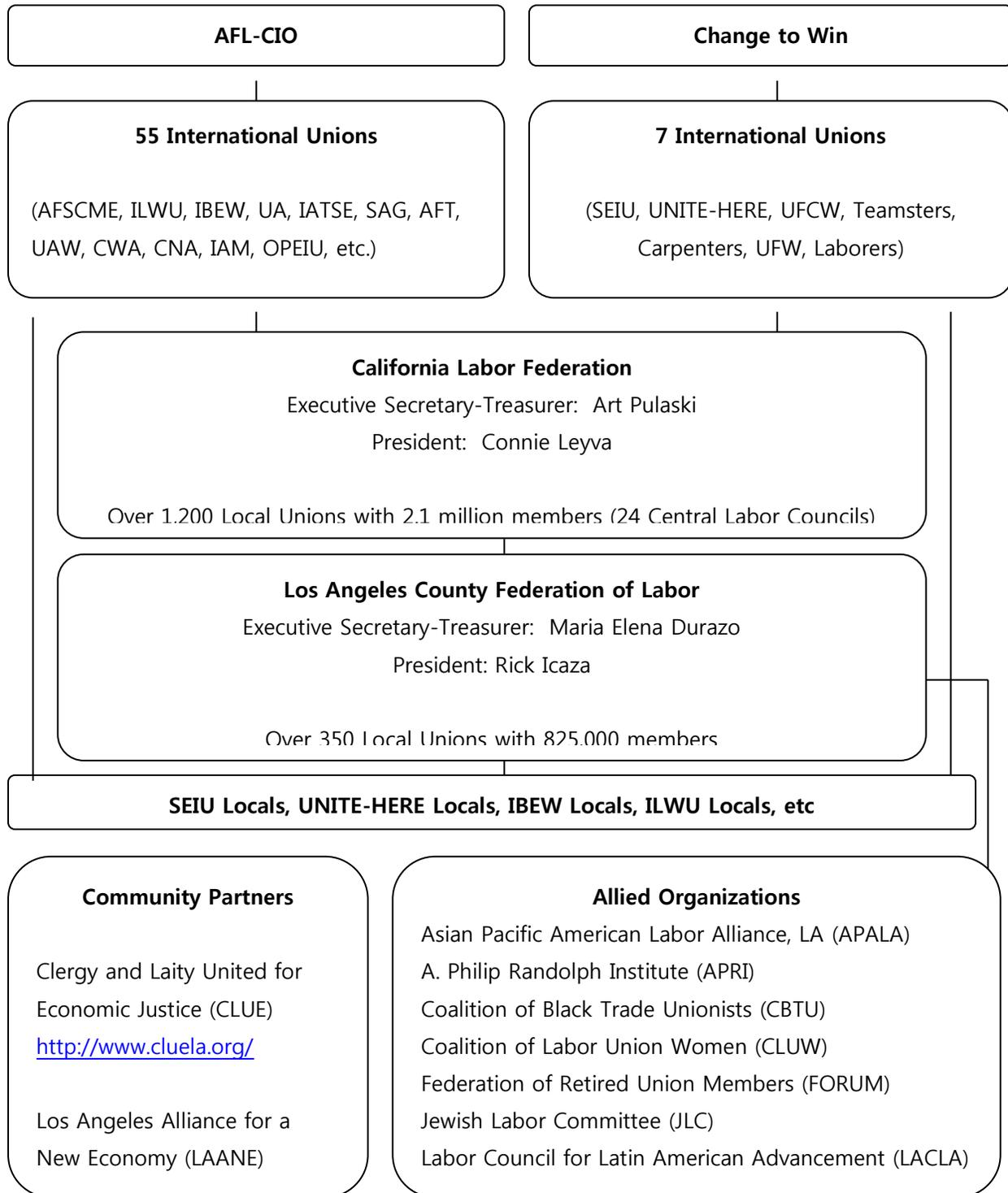
Writers Guild of America, East Inc. (WGAE)

National Education Association (NEA) is not an AFL-CIO affiliate but has entered a national partnership with the AFL-CIO, which allows its locals to affiliate.

## STRUCTURE OF AFL-CIO



## STRUCTURE OF UNION MOVEMENT IN LOS ANGELES



International Unions are generally members of either the AFL-CIO or CTW. Local unions generally are part of the state federation of labor, the central labor council in their region and their international union. Local allied organizations are made-up of union members and are affiliated with the central labor council. Community partners are community allies who usually work in coalition with Labor. AFL-CIO Executive Board

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