

CWA Governance

Structure, Districts, and Sectors

1. Overview of the Communications Workers of America (CWA)

The **Communications Workers of America (CWA)** is a federation of more than **400,000 members** in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. It is governed by the **CWA Constitution**, which delegates authority through three interconnected levels of representation:

- **National** – the Executive Board and Convention
- **Geographic** – the Districts
- **Industrial** – the Sectors or Divisions

The highest authority within the union is the **CWA Convention**, where delegates from every district and sector vote on constitutional amendments, policy resolutions, and officer elections. Between conventions, the **CWA Executive Board**—composed of the President, Secretary-Treasurer, and Vice Presidents from each District and Sector—governs the union’s affairs.

2. Two Structural Axes: Districts and Sectors

CWA operates on **two parallel structural axes**:

Axis	Type	Leadership	Represents
Geographic	Districts 1–7	District Vice Presidents (regionally based)	Members organized by <i>location</i> (telecom, public employees, media, etc.)
Industrial	Sectors / Divisions	Sector Vice Presidents	Members organized by <i>industry or occupation</i> , regardless of location (e.g., AFA-CWA, NABET-CWA, IUE-CWA, TNG-CWA, PHEW-CWA)

These two systems intersect only at the **CWA Executive Board**, where District and Sector Vice Presidents meet as equals under the National President and Secretary-Treasurer.

3. CWA Districts — Regional Governance and Support

Purpose and Representation

CWA’s **seven geographic districts** provide **regional representation, administration, and coordination** for all CWA-chartered locals within defined territories:

- District 1 — Northeast (NY, NJ, New England)
- District 2-13 — Mid-Atlantic (PA, MD, DC, VA, WV)
- District 3 — Southeast (GA, FL, AL, TN)
- District 4 — Midwest (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)
- District 6 — Southwest (TX, OK, AR, MO, KS)
- District 7 — Mountain States (CO, UT, MT, ND, SD, WY)
- District 9 — Western States & Hawaii (CA, NV, HI, GU)

Each District elects a **Vice President** who sits on the CWA Executive Board and oversees local unions in that region.

Core Functions

Function	Description
Governance & Representation	Elected District VPs represent locals on the Executive Board and implement national policy.
Administrative Oversight	Manage field staff, organizers, legal representatives, and grievance support.
Collective Bargaining	Coordinate contract negotiations and strike logistics for non-sector locals.
Organizing & Campaigns	Lead drives for new locals and membership growth.
Education & Training	Conduct steward and officer training to ensure policy consistency.
Political & Legislative Action	Operate regional COPE programs and coordinate legislative efforts.
Financial Supervision	Audit local treasuries to ensure compliance with CWA and Department of Labor standards.

4. CWA Sectors — Industry-Based Representation

Definition

Sectors represent occupational or industrial groups across all geographic areas. Examples include:

- **AFA-CWA** – Association of Flight Attendants
- **NABET-CWA** – Broadcast Employees & Technicians
- **IUE-CWA** – Industrial Division
- **TNG-CWA** – The NewsGuild

- **PHEW-CWA** – Public, Health, and Education Workers

Each sector has its own **constitution, bylaws, and internal elections**, consistent with the overarching CWA Constitution (Article XIII).

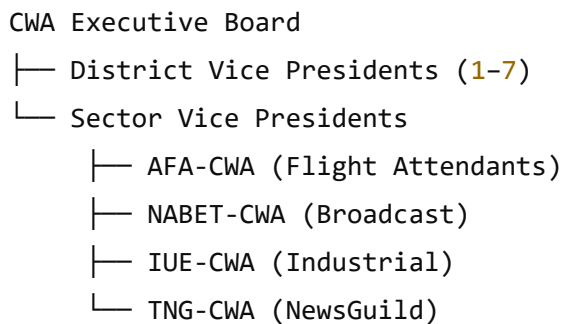
Sector Leadership

Every sector elects its own **Sector Vice President**, who serves as a **voting member of the CWA Executive Board**. This ensures parity between geographic (District) and industrial (Sector) representation in national decision-making.

5. The AFA-CWA Sector

The **Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA-CWA)** is a **sector—not a district—within CWA**, operating parallel to geographic districts and reporting directly to the national level.

Structural Hierarchy



AFA Governance Chain

AFA **Local** Councils → AFA International → CWA **National**

- **Local Councils (LECs)** represent flight attendants at individual bases.
- **Master Executive Councils (MECs)** coordinate system-wide operations at each airline.
- **AFA International** consolidates all airline MECs and reports directly to the **CWA National Union**.
- The **AFA International President** also serves as **Sector Vice President** on the CWA Executive Board.

AFA therefore functions **autonomously in operations and governance**, while remaining **financially and constitutionally integrated** within CWA.

6. Funding and Dues Flow

Districts and sectors are financed through **per-capita dues remitted upward** from local unions.

Level	Funding Source	Retention / Allocation	Primary Use
Local Unions / LECs	Member dues (payroll deduction)	~20–25%	Local representation, grievance handling, operations
Sectors (e.g., AFA-CWA)	Per-capita from locals	~45–50%	Industry-wide bargaining, legal representation, safety, and communications
CWA National	Per-capita from sectors and direct locals	~25–30%	Organizing, defense, COPE, audits, and district operations

District offices are **funded entirely from CWA National’s general treasury**, not by direct dues collection. Each District VP’s office receives an **annual operating budget, staff allocations, and field-support funds** approved by the Executive Board.

7. Relationship Between Districts and Sectors

Although **AFA-CWA is not governed by any District**, it collaborates with District offices in several ways:

- Joint participation in Executive Board meetings
- Regional political or organizing campaigns
- Administrative coordination through the CWA Secretary-Treasurer’s office

In short:

Districts = Geography (regional administration)
Sectors = Industry (occupational representation)

8. Summary Comparison

Aspect	Districts	Sectors (e.g., AFA-CWA)
Basis of Representation	Geographic (state/region)	Occupational (industry/airline)
Leader Title	District Vice President	Sector Vice President
Seat on CWA Board	Yes	Yes

Aspect	Districts	Sectors (e.g., AFA-CWA)
Primary Role	Regional administration, organizing, and political outreach	Industry-specific bargaining and representation
Funding Source	Allocations from CWA National (redistributed dues)	Direct per-capita dues via locals
Direct Member Relationship	Through regional locals	Through MECs and LECs

9. The “Union of Unions” Model

CWA functions as a **federated system**, balancing **sector autonomy** with **national accountability**:

- Each sector retains its own officers, budgets, and bargaining authority.
- The CWA Constitution ensures **financial integrity and shared governance** through the Executive Board and Convention.
- This design allows specialized unions—such as AFA—to maintain professional focus while benefiting from CWA’s legal, political, and organizing infrastructure.