

Step-By-Step to Elected Office

**United
Steelworkers
Affirmative Action
Guide To Local
Union Elections**



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The United Steelworkers represents workers in a wide variety of workplaces including offices, mines, mills, retirement homes, hotels, bingo halls, universities, food processing plants, banks, fish plants and department stores. From independent truckers and security guards who work alone, to workers in call centres and factories, Steelworkers work coast-to-coast-to-coast.

Elections 2009 is an opportunity for us to reflect our tremendous diversity in the slate of candidates seeking local union election.

Making the decision to run for elected office is difficult. It is particularly difficult if you are trying to balance work and family responsibilities, if you have a disability or if English or French is not your first language. Our support and encouragement of women, visible minority persons, persons with disabilities and aboriginal people to seek nomination will help to raise awareness of barriers but more importantly, will help us to develop successful strategies for overcoming those barriers.

A local union is only as strong as its members. Your participation, involvement and support during and between elections builds the solidarity and strength our members count on to win improvements in the workplace, the collective agreement, and in the community.

It is a privilege to hold elected office in the union. It is also a lot of work. We hope this affirmative action guide together with the support of local activists will help ensure a strong and diverse slate of candidates in 2009.

In solidarity,

Ken Neumann
National Director

Steve Hunt
Director,
District 3

Daniel Roy
Director,
District 5

Wayne Fraser
Director,
District 6

Why run for elected office?

Why do people run for elected office? Why do we vote for one person over another? Your decision to run will be based on your own personal reasons and may be influenced by a number of different people and factors.

Before announcing your decision to run, make some notes about why you are running. Are there some things you think the Local Union should be doing differently or are there some key issues you think need more attention? What can you offer in terms of experience, commitment, enthusiasm or a new perspective? What position do you want to run for? If this is your first time running, what position will give you the experience you may benefit from in future elections?



Do you have the support of your friends and family?

A big factor in making the decision to run for elected office is whether you have the support of your family. If you have to spend time to campaign and subsequently carry out your elected duties, what will this mean to your family responsibilities? As an elected or active member of the local you may have the opportunity to attend schools and conferences that may require staying away for a few days

or weeks at a time. Whether you have children, elderly relatives at home to care for, or family and friends away from home to keep in touch with, what do you need to help you balance these responsibilities with your activities in the union? Do you have the support of friends or other relatives to help out if necessary?

If you have a disability, you may want to consider what measures may be required to help ensure your access to the membership during and after the election. For example, a person who is hearing impaired may require the assistance of an interpreter. If you require a wheelchair, are there special arrangements you will need to reach members in their specific units if you are running in an amalgamated local? While the barriers faced by people with disabilities may appear difficult to overcome, there are people and resources available to help accommodate special needs. As the participation of people with disabilities increases within the union, more workers and employers will learn about accommodating special needs to ensure that opportunities in the workplace and in the union are accessible to everybody.

Do you have the support of your co-workers? Before making the decision to run, you may want to speak with some of your co-workers about supporting your candidacy. Present your reasons for wanting to run and listen to their comments. They may help you in identifying other good reasons for running. And, they may

indicate their willingness to help you get elected. Ask them if they will help you in distributing leaflets or speaking with other members in their work area.

What kinds of activities do they think you should be involved in to help you get elected? Who will nominate you? Are there others running for different positions that you support? Does it make sense to run a team or “slate” of candidates? Your campaign team, however small, will be valuable in helping you to plan an effective campaign.

Who will you be running against? Knowing your opposition is important when putting together your election platform and strategy. Why should someone vote for you as opposed to someone else? It takes a lot of commitment and courage to run for office. Respect those qualities in your opponent and identify issues where your approach may differ. Avoid personal attacks and don't make promises you can't keep!

What if your chances aren't great?

Should you run even if your chances aren't great? Absolutely. While we all like to “win”, building a profile in your Local Union may take time. You may be unsuccessful the first time you run, but staying involved and



active will help you in future elections. Get involved in one of the Executive's committees, attend the union's education programs or seek appointment or election as a steward. The greater the participation in Local Union events, committees and day-to-day activities, the stronger the Union. And, the more experience you gain in working with other members of the Local, the more confidence others will have in you to represent the Local on the executive.

Resources Available

There are a number of resources available to all members seeking election. As well as this guide, members should not hesitate to contact their staff representative. Members of Local and District Women's and Human Rights Committees may also be quite helpful in offering suggestions and advice.

Specific terms and conditions for nominations and elections are detailed in the Constitution of the United Steelworkers and the Local Union Elections Manual. Used together with this guide, these resources should help you through the election process. For copies of the Constitution, By-laws and Election Guide, contact your Recording Secretary, Staff Representative or Steelworker District Office.

Note: This publication is only a guide. Where there is any question about the rules governing local union elections or activities, refer to the Constitution, Local Union Elections Manual or By-Laws for Local Unions.

United Steelworkers Structure

The United Steelworkers represents more than 280,000 members across Canada and about 850,000 in the United States. Including retirement homes and hospitals, restaurants, university staff, railway, forestry, banks and credit unions, hotels, mines, manufacturing, offices, and steel mills, the union represents workers in a wide variety of workplaces. Our union represents workers across every sector. Every member of the United Steelworkers has a direct vote in electing the people who run the business of the union: on the local level, District, National and at the International level.



Local Officers to be elected:

- President
- Vice President
- Recording Secretary
- Financial Secretary
- Treasurer
- Guide
- Guard(s)
- Trustee(s)

Local Committees:

Grievance Committee
(other committees, for example Health and Safety, Human Rights, Women's or Organizing, may be elected at the same time as the Officers and the Grievance Committee).

International Officers to be elected:

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

The International Executive Board

The term of office for International Officers, District Directors and the National Director for Canada is four years.

Every member is entitled to nominate and vote for members of the International Executive Board. In June of an election year, local unions will give notice of a nomination meeting to be held in September. If more than one eligible member is nominated for a position on the International Board, an election will be held. Elections for International Officers, the National Director for Canada and District Directors are held on the third or fourth Tuesday in November.

Local Unions

Workers eligible for membership in the International Union make up a Local Union upon receipt of a "charter" from the International Secretary-Treasurer. In the interests of sharing resources and meeting the needs of our members more effectively, units in the same or different workplaces may join together in an "amalgamated local".

All Local Union Officers, Guides, Trustees and Grievance Committee Members are elected every three years at the last scheduled general membership meeting in April or at a time in April designated by the membership. Other committees, for example, the Health and Safety Committee or Human Rights Committee, may be elected or appointed at the same time.

Nomination meetings for those interested in seeking election are generally held at the membership meeting in March, one month before the election. A campaign period of one month, while not very long, is long enough to give all the members notice of the election as well as an opportunity for candidates to meet with members and rally support.

The Nomination Meeting, like a campaign kick-off, is a great opportunity to show your strength. Ask as many of your supporters as possible to come to the meeting. Choose your nominator carefully and be sure that your nominator is the first to speak. Once all the nominations have been made, each candidate will be asked if she or he

accepts the nomination. While you may be nominated for more than one position, you may only accept the nomination for one “officer” position. However, you may run for election to as many committees as you want. Be careful not to overextend yourself. Committee work takes time and commitment too.

If no one is nominated for a particular position, it may stay vacant until the new executive meets to determine how to fill the vacancy in accordance with the Local Union Elections Manual and By-laws.

At the Nomination Meeting or shortly after, Tellers will be appointed or elected to run the actual election. Following the Local Unions Elections Manual, Tellers are responsible for notifying the membership of where and when voting will occur. All members in good standing, including those who may be on layoff or on sick or disability leave, are eligible to vote and must be notified of the election date.

Tellers will also determine who is eligible to run in the election following guidelines set out in the constitution and outlined below.



Who is eligible to run?

In order to run for election as a Local Union Officer or Grievance Committee Member, a member shall have been in continuous good standing for 24 months (or since the Local was

established), be employed in a workplace within the jurisdiction of the Local Union and have attended at least 1/3 of the regular meetings held by the membership in the 24

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months prior to the election month.

There may be circumstances where it is not possible to attend membership meetings. If a member provides notice (see Local Union Elections Manual on acceptable forms of proof) to the Local Union Executive that she or he is unable to attend a meeting due to Union activities, working hours, service in the armed forces, sickness which confines, death in the immediate family or jury duty, these meetings shall not be counted as meetings held in determining eligibility. For example, your Local Union held 24 meetings in the last 24 months. If you missed five of the meetings for one of the reasons outlined above and can provide proof, then your eligibility will be calculated based on the remaining 19 meetings you could have attended: seven meetings (one-third of 19, rounded to the next highest number). You must therefore have attended one-third of the meetings held in the 24 months prior to the election month that you could have attended.



The election committee, with the assistance of those officers or committee members who have the necessary records, will determine the eligibility of each candidate for election. For more examples and details on determining eligibility, please see the Local Union Elections Manual.

Note: if no person nominated for a specific office has been a member in good standing for 24 months or has attended 1/3 of the meetings in the 24 months preceding the election, these criteria are waived and the elections will continue.

In other words, once you are nominated, the Tellers will check to make sure you are eligible to run. If you are not sure you meet the criteria, you should still seek the nomination because it may be that no one who wants to run for that position meets the criteria. But, if one person does meet the criteria and the others do not, he or she will be acclaimed in that position.

REMEMBER: NOMINATIONS IN MARCH, ELECTIONS IN APRIL

What is the role of the Local Executive?

It is the responsibility of the Local Union Executive to organize the work of the union in the workplace and in the community. From contract negotiations with management to sponsoring social events, it is members of the local executive and committees who ensure that the needs of members are met.

Most Local Unions will hold monthly general membership meetings. In accordance with the Constitution and policies of the International Union, Local Unions may adopt their own by-laws and rules to guide the work of the executive and the members. While workers may have daily access to executive members in the

workplace, general meetings are opportunities to discuss issues that may concern all workers. In an amalgamated local, membership meetings bring together workers from different units, providing an opportunity to discuss issues that are of interest in a variety of workplaces.

Often depending on the size of the Local Union, the Executive will establish committees or designate positions to improve the services and education offered to the members. While some committees are required by the Constitution: Safety and Health, Workers' Compensation, Women's Committees, Civil Rights/Human Rights and Organizing, others may be specific to the Local Union like Education Committees, Pay Equity or Entertainment Committees.

Included in the by-laws are provisions for appointing or electing stewards. Stewards are often the link between the membership and the executive and the membership and the employer. Assisting members in filing grievances and handling complaints, stewards are trained to advise and guide members. In many locals, one of the stewards may be designated as the "Chief Steward." This person may also be one of the elected officers. Providing advice and advocacy support, stewards are key in helping to implement provisions in the collective agreement. For people just getting active in the local, pursuing the job of steward may be a good step in getting to know, and respond to, the various needs of the membership.

As the needs of the membership change with adjustments in the workplace, the tasks

performed by local executive members may also change. Keeping in touch with the membership is therefore essential to ensure the union's work is as far-reaching and effective as possible. Through newsletters, notices posted on bulletin boards, meetings and word-of-mouth, the local union communicates with the membership, building union strength and solidarity.

What kind of education and training is available?

The Steelworkers has built one of the finest union education programs in North America. Courses offered at the local level, through your Area Council and at the District or National levels, include training for union officers and stewards, and union activists in such areas as

health and safety, collective bargaining, international solidarity, leadership development and communications. As the membership has become more diverse, we have developed courses like "Women of Steel" and "The Duty to Accommodate." In general, members find out about upcoming courses at regular membership meetings. While some courses offered locally may be open to everyone, others may be limited because of the time and travel involved. In these cases, the membership may decide which courses would be of value to the

local union and in turn, who should attend the course.

Conferences and conventions, inside and outside of the union, are also learning



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opportunities. Again, while some conferences may be open to everyone, others may be open only to local union “delegates.” Delegates may be appointed or elected at a membership meeting.

Positions to be elected:

Local Union Officers:

- President
- Vice President
- Recording Secretary
- Financial Secretary
- Treasurer
- Guide
- Guard(s)
- Trustee(s)

Committees:

Grievance Committee

(other committees, e.g., Health and Safety, Human Rights, Women’s Human Rights or Organizing, may be elected or appointed at the same time or at a different time)

The following are brief “job descriptions” for each of the positions on the Local Executive. Some of the duties are set out in the Union’s Constitution while others may vary depending on the by-laws adopted by the Local Union.

As noted, you may be nominated for more than one position. While you may only accept the nomination for one “officer” position, you may run for election to as many committees as you want.

Note: A Local Union with fewer than 100 members may adopt a by-law allowing for the positions of Guide, Guard and Trustee to be combined or allocated among the other offices.



President:

The President of the Local Union chairs the meetings, works with executive members to appoint committees and performs other duties as assigned by the Local Union. These “other duties,” in addition to acting on behalf of the Local when dealing with management on issues of personnel or production, may include representing the Local Union at community events, meeting with other Local Unions and attending conferences or workshops that may be of interest to the members.

Vice President:

Working with the President, the Vice President may help to co-ordinate and plan the work of the local union. The Vice President may also sit on committees of the Executive and fill in for the President in his or her absence. If the President cannot complete the term, the Vice President shall act as President until the next election.

Recording Secretary:

The “minutes” or proceedings of meetings held are noted in a book by the Recording Secretary. The Recording Secretary is also responsible for the attendance book and the Local Union’s seal. The “seal” must appear on minutes of meetings, credentials for

conferences or other union business to be official. Correspondence is usually handled by the Recording Secretary to be dealt with at each meeting as well as perhaps posted on the bulletin board or communicated through a newsletter. In turn, the Recording Secretary may reply to correspondence or communicate on behalf of the Local to people inside and outside of the Union.

Financial Secretary:

The Financial Secretary receives monies due to the Local and maintains up-to-date books and membership reports as required by the Constitution. Monies received are passed on to the Treasurer. Both the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer will give a written and a verbal report at the membership meetings.

Treasurer:

Receiving money due to the Local from the Financial Secretary, the Treasurer will deposit all monies in the bank and maintain accurate and up-to-date records. All expenses of the Local Union must be approved at a membership meeting and cheques are signed by the President, Financial Secretary and Treasurer, in accordance with the Constitution and Local Union by-laws. In addition to the Financial Secretary's Report, the Treasurer will report to membership meetings on the state of various accounts and investments of the Local.

Guide:

At meetings of the Local Union, the Guide

ensures that people sign the attendance book. It is the responsibility of the Guide to make sure that those in attendance are members in good standing and thereby entitled to participate.

Guards (2):

Guards guard the doors! Only those entitled to attend Local Union meetings (or invited guests) may be permitted attendance. If necessary, guards ensure that no one enters who is not entitled to do so and that order is maintained during the meeting.

Trustees (3):

Trustees help to maintain the local property, meeting hall or office, of the Local Union as directed by the members. Every three months, the trustees audit the financial books as well as the Recording Secretary's books and those perhaps held by other committees of the Local. The Trustees will then prepare a report for the next membership meeting noting recommendations and comments on the state of the records and books.

Grievance Committee Members:

Depending on the size of the Local Union and negotiated provisions for handling grievances in the Collective Agreement, the Local Union will elect a number of people to the Grievance Committee at the same time as they are electing Local Union Officers. A person running for a position as a Local Union Officer may also run for a position on the Grievance Committee or any other committee of the Executive.

Committee members may assist stewards in



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filing grievances with the Company. Once a grievance is filed it becomes the property of the Union and the responsibility of the Grievance Committee. Representing workers in grievances and in some cases arbitration, Grievance Committee members must be trained in preparing cases, pulling together all the evidence and interviewing those involved.



While Grievance Committee members represent workers where there has been a violation of the collective agreement, there may be incidents not covered by the agreement. In these cases, stewards generally work with members and management to reach a resolution.

Amalgamated Locals:

Increasingly, small, medium and large units are joining together to form “amalgamated locals”. Amalgamated locals allow individual units to maintain their identity and autonomy while enjoying the benefits of shared resources and organization.

Each unit within an amalgamated local elects its own Unit Chairperson and Unit Secretary. Units may also appoint or elect stewards or grievors, as well as committees, similar to those in a local. The Unit Chairperson may sit on the Local Executive Board. The structure of units and the local itself may be outlined in the local by-laws. Check the by-laws and the local union elections manual if you are considering running for a position.

Nominations for local and unit positions will take place at the meetings prior to those held in April. Any member in good standing of an amalgamated local can run for a position in the amalgamated local. See above section on who is eligible to run. If you are running for a

position for the first time, you may decide to run for a unit position first. Once you have the experience in a unit and observe how an amalgamated local operates, you may then decide to run for a unit and a local position or only a local position.

Whether you run for a unit or a local position or both may depend on how much time you have available, the needs of the unit and local and the support you have from your family and co-workers. Meeting the needs of members in an amalgamated local requires time, creativity and a commitment from officers to work together as a team to ensure the small as well as the large units are represented and involved in the life of the local.

Designing your campaign

What is necessary to run a good campaign?

What you will need to do in a campaign period may well be determined by how big your Local is, both in terms of the number of members and the number of units in the case of an amalgamated local, and how well known you are to the membership.

Part of making the decision to run includes canvassing your friends for support and help. Once you have made the decision, invite some of your friends to be part of your “campaign team”. Brainstorm the kinds of things you think should be done to increase your chances of success on election day. Even if you only have one or two people on your team, the ideas and suggestions will help you in shaping your campaign.

A campaign team to help you prepare leaflets, raise money if necessary and organize events is valuable. These people are also your key “canvassers”. Develop a plan to ensure your team reaches other members to talk about the election and your candidacy. Keep track of the names of people who say they will support you.

REMINDE THESE PEOPLE TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY!

One of the effective ways to “get your message out” is to prepare a one-page flyer, card or a leaflet to distribute at the entrance to the workplace, plant gate, parking lot or union hall. A flyer or leaflet should include some background information and a brief explanation about why you are running and what you have to contribute to the Local Union Executive or Committee. If you are running as part of a team or “slate,” you may want to issue one leaflet together.

Be creative in designing your campaign materials. Think about what attracts your attention in a campaign. Is it the message, the advertisements

or the campaign buttons? Look at affordable and environmentally friendly ways to produce and distribute materials. For example, collect old campaign buttons from people, and use paint to cover the old slogan. You can then use a magic marker to write your name or message on the button. It doesn’t take many people wearing a button with a catchy phrase or slogan for people to “get” the message.

In addition to the written word and word-of-mouth, the most effective campaign technique is the personal canvass by the candidate. Running for election takes time and effort. While a campaign team’s help and support is essential, you are still the most effective campaigner. Be visible, be active! Try to speak personally with as many of the members as possible. Visit the lunchrooms, union hall, and places in the community where members may meet. If it is not possible to physically reach the members because of the shifts you work or because of a disability, use the phone or mail information directly to members’ homes.

Where there is a community newspaper, you may want to submit an article for publication. Find out if you can post information about the election and your candidacy on bulletin boards. Are there events, schools or conferences coming up that might provide you with an opportunity to speak or meet with the membership?

With today’s technology, you could e-mail creative posters or letters to groups or individuals.

There are many different ways to run a positive, effective and fun campaign!

Finally, win or lose, remember to thank your supporters, campaign team and family!

Steps to elected office

1. **Decide** what position you want to run for and why.
2. **Talk** to your family and friends about why you want to run and what kind of support you will need.
3. **Put together** your campaign team. Decide on a campaign plan. How much money will you need? Budget? Ask a member of your team to help in fundraising and keeping track of expenses.
4. **Attend** the nomination meeting with your nominator. If you cannot attend, make sure you submit a written note accepting the nomination. Try to ensure a lot of your supporters come to the Nomination Meeting. Don't wait for others to be nominated, make sure your nominator is the first to speak. Demonstrate your strength and enthusiasm!
5. **Design** and produce a short leaflet for distribution to let people know who you are and your reasons for running.
6. **Develop** a campaign calendar. Include for example, times for distribution of leaflets, attendance at union events and deadlines for articles or advertisements. Be visible, be active!
7. **Establish** a network of supporters to talk about your candidacy in their work area. Keep track of identified supporters so you can remind them to vote on Election Day.
8. **Organize** your time carefully to ensure that you spend as much time as possible meeting with members to gain their support and their vote on Election Day.
9. Win or lose, **SAY THANK YOU** to your team and supporters!

Arrange for translation if necessary. Are there places to post a letter or one-page flyer? Can you submit an article or letter in a community newsletter? Can you send it by e-mail, or post it on a website?

**Elections are not won in a month.
Stay active and involved to build your support
for the next election!**



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