

## Welcome to the Richmond Industrial Workers of the World!

There is a lot of information out there about the history of the IWW and its ideology, so this document won't cover much of that beyond a brief introduction. Instead, we'll focus on the practical realities of being a Fellow Worker. ★ | ★

### The plan:

1. Intro
2. Structure of the union
3. How to communicate with the union
4. How to find more information/resources
5. Fun miscellany

## 1. Introduction

The IWW is an international union dedicated to organizing our workplaces and communities. We organize both the worker and the job. Unlike most unions, you can carry your membership with you no matter what job you have, including if you are unemployed. Because we are a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved. Our dues are lower than any other union and members decide how dues are spent. We believe in the power of rank-and-file direct action, shop floor organization, and class solidarity, both to win better economic conditions and to build a world without bosses.

The IWW is based on the idea of "One Big Union" - that all of the working class must be united in order to act in our own interests, against capitalism. The united working class must be intersectional, meaning it must cross geographic, cultural, and industrial boundaries as well as overcome the false divisions of race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and age. While we all do different kinds of work, we all have the same role in the economy: we're the people that make our society run, but have no say over *how* it's run unless we unite together. We recognize that syndicalism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about rank-and-file workers coming together around common interests. Because of this, we often stand out for organizing workers that the "business-style" unions are either unwilling or unable to organize due to racist, sexist or "craft" prejudices, bureaucratic practices, harmful "jurisdictional" divisions, or simply because a group of workers are seen as "un-organizable." By creating One Big Union we can make it possible for working people to have a direct role in decision making, not just on the shop floor, but for society at large. Workers organized together can fold their arms and shut down an entire economy in order to represent our interests, to take possession of the means of production, to abolish the wage system.

Industrial Unionism is the idea that we need to build labor organizations connected to each other based on the way the economy runs. By organizing unions in this way we can strengthen our power across connected economic chains. For example: a union of agricultural workers, food processing workers, truckers, and fast food workers in one chain has more power against the employers on that chain than organizing all the fast food workers in Richmond.

The low-wage, high-turnover, precarious, and non-traditional workers that have been ignored by the trade unions are often the focus of IWW organizing. Migrant and seasonal workers, domestic workers, sex workers, students, and unemployed workers have organized and won under the banner of the IWW.

For those who are temporarily out of work, unable to work, or who are severely underemployed, the IWW offers sub-minimum dues of only \$6.00 a month. All member dues, except incarcerated workers, are based on monthly income. Regardless of what dues rate a wobbly pays, everyone holds equal membership and decision making status. These income-based dues prevent any worker from being unable to join and maintain membership in the IWW because of age, ability, skill level, or financial situation.

## **2. Structure**

### International Structure

The Union is divided into several regions: *North American Regional Administration* (NARA) covers the US and part of Canada. Other regional administrations include: *Wales, Ireland, Scotland, England Regional Administration* (WISE-RA), *Australian*

*Regional Organizing Committee* (AUSROC), *German-Language Area Regional Organizing Committee* (GLAMROC), and *Canadian Regional Organizing Committee* (CANROC).

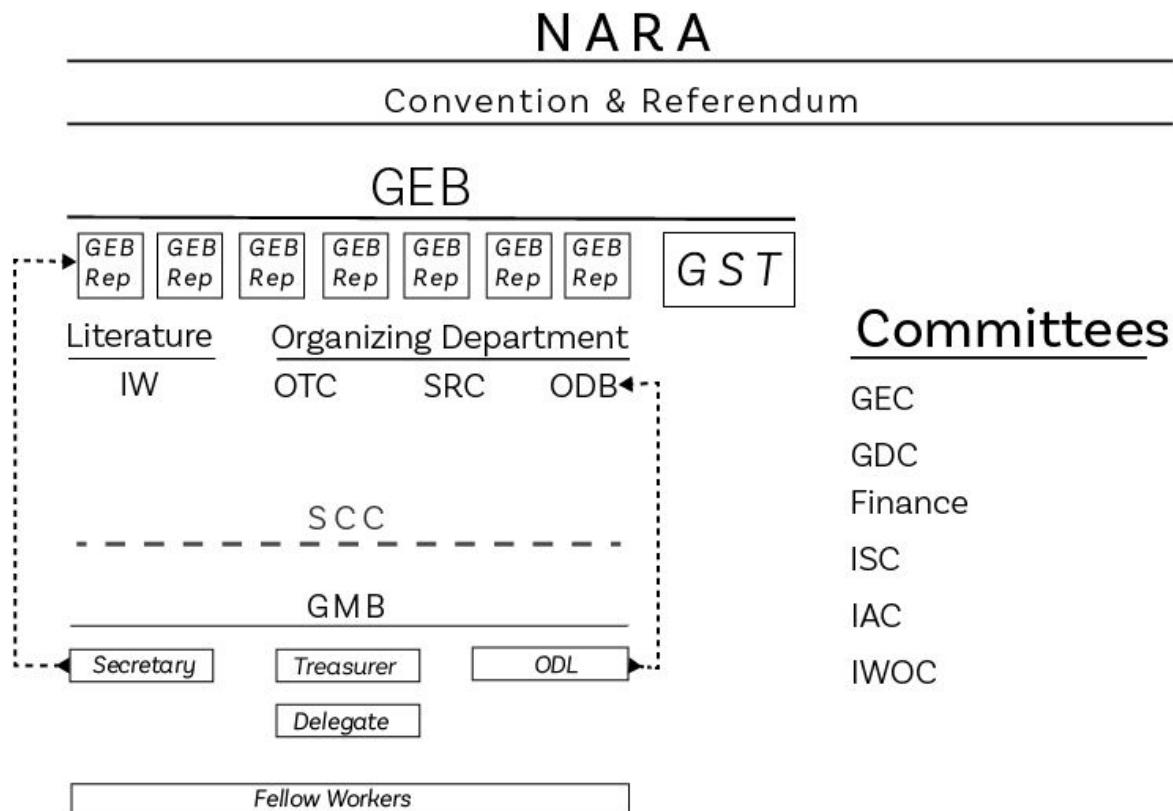
### **North American Regional Administration**

You are here!

There's definitely a divide between the parts of the union that are actively used and the ones that are sometimes called "aspirational," though another way of putting it would be to say they're the skeleton of a larger union that we keep around for when we need it. There's plenty of historical examples of worker's movements increasing exponentially in size in a short period of time so we keep our structure around so

when that happens we won't have to waste time wondering how all of these new people fit. For now we'll just stick with what is currently used. You can reference the constitution if you're interested in the "skeletal" stuff.

One thing to remember about our structure is that it's a very soft, flat hierarchy. Except in cases where there is a formal complaint or where someone has violated the constitution, few positions can direct any other position. The bulk of all decision making comes from rank-and-file votes at branch meetings, convention, and referendum.



*Convention* - Every year, any branch can submit, discuss, and vote on resolutions and constitutional amendments to propose to the convention. All branches then send delegates (or proxy votes) to the convention who participate in the debating, amending, and voting on such resolutions. Resolutions passed through three phases of reviewing, debating, and amending by the seated delegates before they are passed. This allows the union to be steered by a directly democratic means - as the major resolutions that get passed via convention go on to referendum votes where every member of the union has one vote.

*The General Executive Board* (GEB) is the primary executive body of the IWW carrying out the administration of the union between conventions. There are 7 GEB members, one of whom is chair, each of which is assigned branch contacts based on region. GEB representatives are tasked with communicating with General Membership Branch officers, ideally to then represent local branch interests on the board.

*The General Secretary Treasurer* (GST) is a single administrative position that oversees union funds, paperwork, and communications. The GST works out of General Headquarters (GHQ) in Chicago, along with the Membership Coordinator and the Literature Department Coordinator.

## **So Many Departments and Committees**

The following committees are a mix of elected and appointed positions. All are volunteer. Most committees admit FWs after six months of membership. Contact your delegate if interested in joining any of these.

- The [Organizing Department](#) consists of the Organizing Department Board (ODB), the Organizer Training Committee (OTC) and the Survey and Research Committee (SRC). The ODB is the elected body whose primary responsibility is to coordinate organizing efforts and to aid and assist those efforts.
- The [Gender Equity Committee](#) (GEC) supports the struggle for gender equity in our union, workplace, and the world at large.
- The [General Defense Committee](#) (GDC) conducts efforts to improve the defense of both the union and the communities it inhabits. Alongside this, they work to protect organizers and campaigns through improved picketing/strike strategies, and bail funds/legal defense funds for those arrested while organizing. The GDC is a parallel organization to the union in that it has its own set of structures and allows non-IWW membership (with certain restrictions) while being a subordinate body of the IWW as a whole.
- The [Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee](#) (IWOC), is a prisoner-led section of the IWW focused on ending prison slavery.
- The [International Solidarity Commission](#) (ISC) leads cooperative efforts with other workers and their unions around the world.
- The Literature Department oversees the publication of union materials, and operates the [IWW Store](#).
- The IWW.org Administration Committee (IAC) oversees all things related to union-wide information technology, including website and mailing lists.

## **Local**

A *General Membership Branch* (GMB) is the primary grouping of Fellow Workers (FWs). While there are attempts to change how this is organized, GMBs remain the primary way FWs interact with the union. GMBs typically have a core of officers consisting of the Secretary, Treasurer (sometimes combined with the secretary role), and Organizing Department Liaison.

The *Branch Secretary's* primary duties are to receive reports from delegates, send branch reports to the GST, organize meetings, and generally communicate and coordinate with FWs and the broader union

*Treasurers*, of course, handle branch funds and assets.

*The Organizing Department Liaison* (ODL) communicates with the Organizing Department Board about ongoing organizing activities and generally encourages/coordinates organizing efforts at the behest of those on the shopfloor.

*Delegates* collect dues from FWs and are the recruiting face of the union.

[Here](#) are the branch bylaws.

## **Officers:**

- **Secretary/Treasurer** - Jacki
- **Communications Officer** - Sam
- **Literature Officer(s)** - CJ and Kaitlyn

## **Delegates:**

- Sam
- Jacki
- Kai
- CJ
- Kaitlyn

### **3. Communicate!**

At the NARA level, all union communications are done through [various mailing lists](#) (we recommend joining at least the [GEB list](#) and [IWW-list](#)), [Red Card Forum](#), and the General Organization Bulletin (GOB), a monthly internal newsletter compiled by the General Secretary Treasurer. There's also [Industrial Worker](#) (IW), our quarterly and public magazine. FWs are welcome to contribute to either the GOB or IW.

Unofficially, there's the infamous Facebook group Red Card Holders (RCH). RCH is extremely controversial and problematic for a number of reasons and all FWs are strongly encouraged to use the other resources available. Should an FW choose to use this resource they are strongly encouraged to keep in mind that it's a relatively public forum where many non-FWs lurk. Additionally, it's Facebook, so all communication is recorded and mined for data to sell to the highest bidder.

Beyond those, the GEB email list can be a great way to keep up with what the union is doing. It can be a bit overwhelming at first (be sure to set up filters in your email!) but after a while most FWs get the feel for how to identify important emails and what can safely be ignored.

Locally, our branch uses a few different methods of its own. For communicating with the entire branch:

- For direct branch communication, please use the Signal Messenger chat group.
- To access past meeting minutes, digital inter-meeting votes, and other resources please create an account on [we.riseup.net](#) and tell the branch secretary or communications officer to be added to our private rise up page. Here we have branch discussions, store our relevant files, and have votes on motions between meetings.
- If you ever have any questions or concerns please contact your delegate directly.

We also have several ways of communicating with the public:

- [Richmond IWW Facebook Page](#)
- [Richmond IWW Twitter](#)
- [RichmondIWW.org](#)

## **4. Resources**

[IWW.org](#)  
[Official Facebook](#)  
[Official Twitter](#)  
[Our Constitution](#)  
[An Annotated Preamble to Our Constitution](#)  
[Red Card Forum \(the official one\)](#)  
Red Card Holders (Ask your delegate for access)  
[Email ListServ Lists](#)  
[Libcom.Org - IWW Pamphlets](#)  
[Washington U- IWW History Project](#)  
[Marxists.org - IWW](#)  
[The Anarchist Library - IWW](#)  
[r/iww](#)

## **5. Fun Miscellany**

- We have field days, movie nights, meetups, and plenty of fun social activities.
- Anything you are interested in we have some formal or informal position for that. Every FW can choose their level of involvement and what they'd like to do. Besides the primary focus of organizing we have places for wobblies who like to design, write, research, or whatever else you might be interested in doing. Abolish prisons? Organize a shop floor? Protect communities from Nazis? We can do that.
- If you're a history nut there's the IWW Materials Preservation Project - a massive Google Drive filled with every IWW-related picture or document we can find. (Contact your delegate for access.)

## **Welcome to the OBU!**

(That stands for One Big Union. Had enough acronyms?)