



# STEWARDS CORNER

## Monthly Newsletter for Union Stewards

### Writing Grievances

It's a busy time at work and your shift supervisor, Mr. Grinch, needs to finish an order. But instead of following the overtime procedure in your collective bargaining agreement (CBA), he tells three employees with low seniority that they each have to work four hours of overtime. As a steward, you know this violates the CBA because it should have been offered to five senior employees first. You talk to Mr. Grinch about it, but he responds "I've got a job to do and don't have time to deal with any red tape." Grinch's reaction doesn't surprise you, since his heart seems to shrink three sizes every holiday season. So, you turn to the grievance procedure....

Writing grievances is a key part of grievance handling, but where do you start? First, **review the grievance procedure** in your CBA. Details matter. Your grievance procedure will generally set time limits for you to file grievances. Some CBAs require Unions to use specific forms. Don't forget about signatures and dates.

#### Writing a Grievance has Three Parts

##### 1. The specific violation along with a "catch-all" clause:

Let's assume that in our example *Article V, Section 1 (Overtime Distribution)* was violated. On the grievance form, you would cite that article plus a "catch-all" clause (**in bold below**) that incorporates other parts of the CBA that might have been affected by the violation but you might not learn about until after you file the grievance (for example, 401K contributions). This way, as you move forward in the process, you can argue they were violated and should be remedied (more on this in point 3 below). If you do not mention, you could lose your right to remedy on those issues.

**Article V, Section 1 (Overtime Distribution) and any other provisions of the Agreement that may apply.**

The USW's standard grievance form includes this catch-all clause. If the form your Local Union uses doesn't have it, you will need to start writing it in all your grievances. Your Local can order these forms from the USW's Print Shop.

##### 2. A short description of what happened.

Save your arguments for the grievance meeting and avoid making editorial comments like "Grinch knew he was wrong and did it anyway."

For the OT example, the grievance would state:

*Shift supervisor Grinch did not follow the overtime distribution procedure and bypassed five senior employees for overtime.*

The remedy shouldn't cite the amount of OT that the affected employees missed so the grievance isn't tied to a specific number. You might learn the affected members missed 20 hours of OT instead of 12 after filing the grievance.

##### 3. The remedy that makes the affected employees "whole" plus a catch-all phrase that doesn't limit the remedy:

The goal of the remedy is to make the employees who were impacted whole in every way.

For the OT example, the remedy could be:

**Affected employees will be made whole in every way, including but not limited to**, compensating each one for missed overtime at the applicable rate. *Also, moving forward, management will follow the overtime distribution procedure in the CBA.*

This remedy specifies two points: first, the employer needs to follow the overtime procedure in the CBA; second, the members who were bypassed need to be "made whole" for the OT that they missed. The catch-all phrase (**in bold**) expands the remedy to include other parts of the CBA that may have been affected by the violation.

When you're writing a grievance make a list of questions that you need answered to fashion your arguments. You can use them as the basis for an information request to submit with the grievance. Talk with your Local Union President or Grievance Committee chair if you have questions about writing grievances.

Check out previous issues of the [Stewards Corner](#) to learn more about grievances, including investigations, developing grievance "chains," and information requests.



To get future newsletters in your email use the QR code or go to: [www.usw.org/StewardsCorner](http://www.usw.org/StewardsCorner)

Take the time to check out our free USW courses on-line at: [education.usw.org](http://education.usw.org)



## Steward as Communicator: The 1945 Minute Book from USWA Local 1870

Prominently displayed in the USW History Exhibit on the 6th floor of International Headquarters is the USWA Local 1870 Minute Book from the year 1945. Local 1870 represented workers at Newport Steel in Covington, Kentucky. Attached to each of the handwritten logs of local union motions made, seconded and voted on, are the monthly grievance reports.

The early reports are very detailed and the grievances are named, not numbered. As the years progress, they are numbered and typed rather than hand-written.

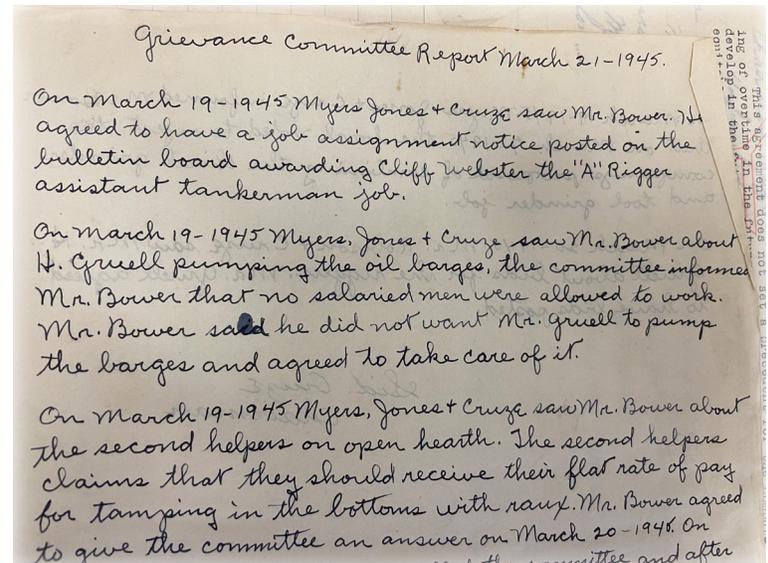
Depending on the customs and past practices of your Local, grievance reports may be handled in varying degrees of formality. If there is a report, it is usually from a grievance chair or the grievance committee. There may be in-depth discussions about particular grievances, which may lead to general discussions about issues members are having with specific supervisors and managers.

Each sector or council or union tradition might have their own way of doing it; but the main thing is: local officers and activists meet at local union meetings and talk about the issues that are going on in the workplace.

Stewards should go to union meetings because that's where a lot of work-related information is exchanged and, sometimes, decisions are made. A good union steward should keep up with grievances filed, what steps they are in, company stance, union position, and next steps to resolve. This especially applies to the grievances that the steward has filed, but other grievances might also be of interest and should be reviewed. The report offers you a good time to ask questions.

It is the steward who takes the information learned at the union meeting back to the shop and gives updates to members

about their grievances. Communicating with the members is essential. Good communication builds trust. Good communication builds unity and good communication builds the union.



*A good union steward should keep up with grievances filed, what steps they are in, company stance, union position, and the next steps to resolve the issue.*

## TEACHING TUESDAYS

**12/7/21:** Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Union Stewards  
([11 AM EST](#)) ([8 PM EST](#))

**12/14/21:** New Hire Orientation  
([11 AM EST](#)) ([8 PM EST](#))

1/4/22: Representing Members in Investigatory Interviews  
([11 AM EST](#)) ([8 PM EST](#))

1/11/22: FMLA part 1 ([11 AM EST](#)) ([8 PM EST](#))

1/18/22: Effective Community Service  
([11 AM EST](#)) ([8 PM EST](#))

Check out our online education classes by registering via the links below or scanning the QR code.

- All classes are held at **11 AM (EST)** and **8 PM (EST)**.
- Click on the time slot that you can attend to register for the classes you want to take.
- **All classes' times are in Eastern Standard Time**
- Steward Training Classes are on the 1st Tuesday of every month.
- All Classes are being held via Zoom.
- Classes are 1-hour 30-minute sessions.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

<http://education.usw.org/blog>

