



Politics is too important to leave to the politicians.

Branch Officer pack: Frequently Asked Questions

A Message from Dave Ward

CWU General Secretary

CWU members recently overwhelmingly voted to retain the political fund and our voice in politics. We now need to make sure that this is heard.

If you pay the political levy you are entitled to vote in the Labour leadership elections but you need to register as an affiliated supporter in order to do so. You can do this by filling in the form on the back.

In standing to be General Secretary I have made it clear that the Labour Party will not continue to get something for nothing from the CWU and that our relationship with the party needs to change. We have to originate policies that advance our members' interests and start to change the balance of forces in society and the world of work.

The prospect of a Tory government attacking trade union rights, selling off Royal Mail and standing by as agency workers are exploited in a race to the bottom underlines the need for an opposition that is on our side. The Labour leadership elections are a first step towards securing this.

WHAT THE CWU IS ASKING YOU TO DO

The rules about how trade union members have a say in Labour Party elections have changed. In order to have a vote in these important elections, CWU members need to sign up to become an 'Affiliated Supporter'. We therefore need our branch officers and reps 'on the ground' - to ask CWU members to 'sign up'.

WHY WE'RE DOING IT

It is the long term plan to ask union members to become affiliated supporters but with the Labour leadership, deputy leadership and London Mayoral selections already underway, because if members are to have a say in these elections, they have to sign up now!!!

In previous contests members would have been sent a ballot paper automatically. This time they need to register in order to have a say.

WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

Signing a form or signing up online. That's it. Union political levy payers already pay an affiliation to the Party via the union, so there is no additional cost to becoming a supporter. The only action required is for a member to sign a form (or sign up online) saying they agree with the aims of the Labour Party and giving us permission to pass their details to them.

The CWU make a note of who has signed up, then let the Party know

the member wants to be an affiliated supporter. The Labour Party will check that the member is on the electoral roll and issue a ballot paper.

WHAT'S THE TIMESCALE?

Members can register to be an affiliated supporter at anytime but to vote in the Labour leadership contests they must be registered with Labour by August 12th - hard copy forms must be returned to CWU Headquarters by 30th July 2015.

ANYTHING ELSE WE NEED TO KNOW?

There will be spot checks on affiliated supporters to make sure that they are genuine. That's why we need to make sure members sign the forms themselves and are also registered vote. Members may be contacted by email to verify they exist!

Including your membership number where known will help us to more quickly identify members who want to affiliate - your help with that is much appreciated!

HOW DO WE DO IT?

Go to the website and sign up:
www.unionstogether.org.uk/your_chance_to_choose

Download a printable form from here:
www.cwu.org/your-chance-to-choose-the-next-labour-leader.html



Questions members ask about becoming an affiliated supporter

WHY SHOULD WE SIGN UP?

The union movement was there when the Labour Party was founded, it's the right of union members to have a say in who leads it. In the months ahead lots of Politicians, journalists and think tanks will have their say, we want to make sure union members have theirs too.

WHAT DOES SIGNING UP ALLOW ME TO DO?

Signing up means you'll become an Affiliated Supporter of the Labour Party, that means you can:

- Vote in the contest to choose Labour's Leader
- Vote in the contest to choose Labour's Deputy Leader
- Vote to choose Labour's London Mayoral candidate (if you're a member living in London)
- Receive invitations to Labour Party meetings and events and if you'd like to, you can attend Party branch meetings and attend Party conference.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SIGN UP?

When you sign up (either on a paper form or online) CWU will pass your details to the Labour Party. You'll be signing up as what's called a 'Labour Party affiliated supporter'. Unless you've opted out of the union political fund, you already pay a political levy to the Labour Party so signing up is completely free.

The Labour Party will check you're registered to vote (that's a requirement of getting a vote in the contest) and if you're registered you'll be added to their system as an Affiliated Supporter. You'll get information from the Labour Party from time to time and they might get in touch to check you're happy to be a Labour Party Affiliated Supporter from your union.

DOES IT MATTER WHO LEADS LABOUR?

Yes. Just from the plans announced by the Tory government already, we know that many members will be hit by a freeze in working families tax credits and child benefit, making household budgets even tighter. That's just one of the reasons why it's incredibly important that working people have a say in politics. Our link to the Labour Party means that the voices of hundreds of thousands of people like us are heard. That's why we're asking union members to sign up to have a say in where Labour goes next.

CAN I SIGN UP IF I'M ALREADY A PARTY MEMBER?

There's no need to. Your Party membership gives you full rights within the Party. The leadership contests will be run using a 'one member, one vote' system so signing up again wouldn't get you an extra vote. You'll get your Party ballot paper as usual.