

## CLUW convention highlights

**A vision! A vote! A victory!** The theme of the Coalition of Labor Union Women’s (CLUW) 21st biennial convention captured the energy of the first national CLUW event has held since the pandemic began. The past two turbulent years have been filled with many lows and highs. The world has been devastated by a pandemic that has disproportionately affected women (see below), the country elected its first woman vice president and the AFL-CIO has its first female president. Despite the complicated circumstances, and even though the convention was held online due to the ongoing risks of gathering in person, the delight in being together after such a trying time was palpable through the screen. Myra Warren, Michelle McQuality and Holly Feldman-Wiencek attended the Oct. 7-9 convention, representing NALC Headquarters.

**Delegates celebrated many victories and achievements** from the last two years. Nationally, Kamala Harris broke a long-standing glass ceiling as the first female vice president. Another glass ceiling was broken in the labor movement, with the election of Liz Shuler as president of the ALF-CIO following Richard Trumka’s unexpected death earlier this year. Shuler addressed the convention honoring the women who helped her get to where she is, and she promised to help others on their way up—so that she will be the first woman in this role but not the last. Delegates also applauded the dedicated work of essential workers during the pandemic and celebrated the many worker actions, strikes and victories throughout the country.

However, not all of the convention was a celebration. The program also gave space to recognize the anguish of the last two years. We grieved for the many CLUW members, allies and friends we have lost. In other somber moments, the convention discussed the serious issues affecting working women today, including the fact that women, particularly women of color, have lost more jobs during the pandemic than men. Rep. Katie Porter (D-CA) greeted the convention and discussed the childcare crisis affecting women and parents’ ability to return to work. Fran Drescher, newly elected president of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, urged delegates to prioritize their health, particularly after potentially delaying care due to the pandemic.

And, of course, we completed the business of the convention. Convention delegates passed resolutions, voted on constitutional amendments, elected new national officers, and, in true CLUW fashion, debated all of it heatedly. Delegates passed 13 resolutions on topics including ending the climate crisis, passing the Protecting the Right to Organize Act and voting rights reform, ending gun violence and supporting postal banking.

**Another celebratory and also somewhat poignant moment** occurred when the convention body bid farewell to several retiring members of the National Officers Council, including NALC’s own Warren, the former NALC director of life insurance. Myra became committed to CLUW’s mission after attending a training workshop in 2007. In 2017, Myra was elected by the CLUW convention as a vice president on the CLUW national officers council.

Warren has dedicated most of her adult life to serving NALC and the labor movement, beginning in 1986 as NALC shop steward in Dallas Branch 132. She served NALC as the first female regional administrative assistant for Region 10, which covers Texas and New Mexico, from 1996 until her appointment by President Vincent Sombrotto in March 2002 to the vacant assistant secretary-treasurer’s position. Warren was subsequently appointed director of life insurance by President William Young in January 2005 to fill a vacancy and was elected to that position in each subsequent national convention until her retirement in 2018. She was the first African-American woman to serve as a NALC national officer. Her many years of experience in the branch, the region and at NALC Headquarters were invaluable in her position with CLUW. Many thanks to Warren for her years of faithful service and unrelenting devotion to the labor movement, NALC and CLUW.

With many national officers retiring, many new members were elected, including McQuality, who follows Warren as a CLUW national vice president.

**The convention left us inspired to seek fresh perspectives** and to advocate for women in the workplace. Two particularly moving keynote speakers expressed the importance of developing women leaders who bring not just traditional leadership skills, but different views of what leadership can and should be. April Sims, secretary-treasurer of the Washington State Labor Council, spoke beautifully about the many ways people imagine their worlds and how celebrating those perspectives can build richer communities. And Alvina Yeh, executive director of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, spoke of the power that comes from honoring the softness and compassion in the connections we make with our fellow union members and communities.

We encourage all of our NALC sisters and siblings to look into CLUW chapters in your area and get involved. As CLUW President Elise Bryant says, we can all be SNAP—Sisters Not Afraid of Power! For more information on CLUW, its mission and how to join, visit [cluw.org](http://cluw.org).

*This report was written by Assistant to the President for Strategic Research and External Affairs Holly Feldman-Wiencek and Assistant to the President of City Delivery Michelle McQuality.*



**Left to right: Holly Feldman-Wiencek, Myra Warren and Michelle McQuality at the last biennial CLUW convention in 2019. This year’s convention was held online, in keeping with COVID-19 safety protocols.**