

Organize Your Workplace

5 Steps to Forming a Union

Organizing is the most important way to raise the working and living standards of America's Workforce.

Union workers earn approximately **30 % more** money than non-union workers and approximately **44 % more** when you consider the total compensation of health and welfare benefits. The Union advantage is clear. Organizing more workers will strengthen your Union and your contracts, and your communities with good jobs. United, we are a powerful voice for justice at work. Together, we can gain and protect the good jobs that workers need to achieve the American dream.

Five Steps to Forming a Union: An Overview

Talk with your co-workers about how becoming Union members can help address problems on the job

- Job Security
- Reliable Class Scheduling
- Salary that Addresses Actual Workload
- Medical Benefits
- The Respect you deserve and have earned from your employer.
- You are not disposable and shouldn't be treated as such.

Reach out to the Local Union representing your industry. There are multiple Unions that represent Adjuncts, Graduate Student Workers, and University Faculty.

- A Union representative will follow up with you and your co-workers to listen to your concerns and help you make a plan for gaining a voice at work
- Union Organizers will work with you along the way. Their role is to guide workers seeking justice.

Get majority of your co-workers to fill out information indicating you want to become a part of a Union

- Card or Petition
- Signature and Date a must

Hold a Vote on whether or not to form a Union to collectively bargain.

- Check YES on ballot
- Encourage co-workers to vote YES as well

Negotiate your new agreement alongside your Union and your employer.

- Decide as a group and vote to accept the terms and conditions of the new union contract you help to bargain.
- Enjoy the advantages of a collectively bargained contract and Union representation that includes handling of grievances, representation,
- Understand the Solidarity among coworkers in a Union workplace.

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Obstacles & Challenges

Just because they have your Labor, doesn't mean they have You.

Unions strengthen workers' voices by giving them the ability to bargain for better working conditions, wages, and benefits. Management doesn't see this as improving workers' lives, they believe that a Unionized workforce means they have less power; but they are really talking about control. In an effort to keep their control over you, many employers resort to both subtle and drastic measures to silence workers and stop them from speaking out against unfair labor practices and unsafe conditions. When your workplace organizes into a Union, you will all gain the respect of your employer. But first you have to stick together. When you stand side-by-side with your coworkers, you can overcome nearly anything; especially management's tactics. In the end, your job site will be a better place to work. Our strength is in our numbers and our solidarity.

Employer Tactics:

You know your boss better than anyone. It is important for you to be on the lookout if your employer attempts to coerce, manipulate, bribe, or even threaten you or your coworkers to keep you from gaining the respect of being a member of UFCW Local 342. Remember, if your boss respected you and treated everyone fairly, you probably wouldn't be reading this right now! You deserve better.

Typical Threats

Companies feel threatened by the idea of their workers organizing into and being represented by a Union. They usually resort to predictable tactics in order to keep you from organizing. These are divided into *Love Tactics* and *Scare Tactics*. While they are opposite in their approach, they can have equally damaging effects on you and your coworkers' struggle to be heard and gain a stronger voice at work.

Love Tactics

Your employer might try to convince you not to join a union by saying...

"Give us a chance"

Employers may admit to having made mistakes and assuring you that those mistakes will be fixed never happen again. Management may send out “love letters,” which formally apologize for any wrong doings in the past, and make lots of false promises for a better future.

Bribes

Your company may implement temporary changes or improvements in reaction to a Union organizing campaign. These changes rarely last beyond the campaign because your employer has no reason to keep them if the threat of a union goes away.

A Sudden Change in Attitude

The attitude of your employer towards you and your fellow workers might dramatically improve. Management may be suddenly very concerned with showing you how much they appreciate and respect you as a worker. Remember how many times they showed you their appreciation before. Activities, such as lunches, dinners and picnics, may be organized for workers and their families– activities that did not exist before you and your coworkers showed interest in joining a Union. You are smarter than their false promises and hollow appreciation.

Scare Tactics

Or your employer might try to convince you not to join a union by saying...

“Management Won’t Listen to the Union.”

This is a lie. Management wants you to believe that workers coming together and organizing into a Union have little power. They claim that if the workplace should Unionize, management will refuse to bargain with the workers or comply with the workers’ contract. What management doesn’t want you to know is that **under federal law, they must cooperate when workers form a union.**

Threatening Your Benefits

It is against the law to threaten to take away your benefits as punishment for supporting a Union. The Union will protect your right to organize, and once you are working under a Union Contract, will ensure that no benefits are reduced or taken away.

Pressuring Team Leaders and Supervisors

Management may pressure your supervisors to subtly, spread anti-Union messages throughout your workplace, emphasizing that the company is a family and should stand united against the Union. It is not unusual for hateful anti-Union videos and other forms of propaganda to be shown at these meetings.

Anti-Union Consultants

Yes, there are actually people out there whose only job is to help companies keep their workers from organizing into a labor Union to improve working conditions and earn a living wage. Management may get so desperate that they hire these highly-paid Union-busting consultants to keep workers from forming a union *at any cost*. Employers will pay these people *as much as or more* than it would take to make beneficial workplace improvements. This is just as much about power as it is about money.

\$ Money, Money, Money \$

Your employer may attempt to frighten you with talk about all the money you will pay if you form a Union. **These claims are false.** When workers come together to form a union at their workplace they are not required to pay any of the costs associated with it. Union members pay dues only after they vote to approve a contract.

The added pay and benefits workers receive through their Union membership are worth much more than the actual cost of Union dues. The dues go to pay for legal assistance, support staff, programs, among many others. All of these are needed to maintain the excellent contracts members work under and superior representation they receive at their workplace. Again, no one pays dues until the workers have voted to accept a contract, have agreed upon the terms of the contract, and put it in place.

Together we can overcome any obstacle or challenge management puts in our path.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Why Do I Need a Union?

Most state laws consider the majority of workers to be “employees at will.” This means that except under very special circumstances, an employer can discharge their workers with or without a reason at any time. Employers can also set wage rates, benefit levels and work rules without any worker input or involvement. In other words, management can do or change just about anything it wants, whenever it chooses. When workers form a union, their employer is then obligated under federal law to negotiate wages, hours and conditions of employment with representatives that the workers designate, giving you a stronger voice at work.

How Do I Form a Union Where I Work?

Union organizers will be happy to talk with you about the specific problems that you are experiencing and what can be done to correct them. **These conversations are strictly confidential** and you are under no obligation of any kind to join a Union. Because every organizing effort is unique, there is no standard procedure used in each campaign. If you and your coworkers decide to organize and become part of a Union, a tailor-fit program will be developed to fit your needs.

In order for you and your coworkers to gain Union representation, a majority of you must authorize the Union to represent you. This is accomplished by signing cards or a petition for that purpose. The petition or authorization cards are kept confidential.

Is it Easy to Form a Union?

No. It takes the work of employees who are dedicated to helping their co-workers as well as the active involvement of as many employees as possible. During the weeks before an election, it is very possible that the company will spend thousands of dollars to present an anti-union campaign compiled by paid consultants. Mandatory meetings with management may be held. You will be forced to watch films showing the horrors of organized labor strikes and violence. You will be told that unions are corrupt and that you don't need a third party interfering with your relationship with management. They will beg for a second chance, but it is important that workers stay focused on their issues and why you decided to organize to begin with. The union isn't a third party...YOU ARE THE UNION!

Am I Protected by Law?

The Federal Government guarantees you the right to organize a union. To put it simply, the United States Government itself guarantees you the right to help organize, join and support a union of your choice. This includes such activities as signing union cards, encouraging others to sign union cards and attending union meetings.

It also includes such activities as wearing union buttons, passing out union literature, and talking to other workers. It also means that employers are breaking the law if they question workers: (1) to try and find out how the workers feel; (2) to identify who has signed cards or who are union supporters; (3) to discover which ones are attending meetings, or if they engage in any other interference with your right to freely choose a union.

It also means you cannot be penalized in any way because of your union activity or support. You cannot have your overtime cut, be transferred to a less desirable job, be suspended or discharged. If an employer does any of these things because of your union activity or support, the law says, in most cases, you must be reinstated to your former job without loss of seniority, and the employer must pay you for all the lost wages plus interest.

Remember, it is your legal right! IT'S THE LAW! YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO JOIN A UNION!

How Does the Union Work?

A Union is a Democratic Organization comprised of a majority of workers in a facility/facilities/jobsite. The basic idea is that by joining with fellow employees to form a Union, workers have a greater ability to improve their conditions at work. In other words, "In Unity, There Is Strength."

You run your own Union. The Union is YOU!

How Much are the Union Dues and Will I Have to Pay an Initiation Fee?

Dues are used to run the Union and keep it strong. Dues pay for contract negotiations, handling grievances and arbitrations, and general member servicing. Any member who organizes a shop does not have to pay an initiation fee. For a newly organized group, initiation fees are waived. Nobody has to pay ANY dues until a contract has been voted on and approved. Only after you have a contract will you begin to pay dues. When considering the benefits that come with Union membership, dues can easily be considered "negligible."

Will the Union Make Us Go on Strike?

In fact, strikes are actually very rare. There can only be a strike at your place of employment if a majority of the workers vote to go on strike. The threat of a strike is often used by employers to scare employees during organizing campaigns. The media loves to highlight them when they take place while in reality over 97% of all union contracts are negotiated WITHOUT a strike.

Can I Get Fired For Helping the Union or For Attending a Union Meeting?

It is illegal for you to be fired, punished or harassed for attending union meetings or for supporting the union. The law protects your rights as workers to improve your working conditions.

Does the Company Have to Negotiate if We Vote to Join a Union?

YES! The law requires the company to bargain "in good faith" with the Union and the committee which the employees elect, to secure a contract. If during an organizing campaign your boss says that the company will NEVER bargain with the Union even if the majority of you vote "yes", they are breaking the law and you must report it to a Union representative immediately, to protect your rights.

Will the Operation Close if We Vote to Join the Union?

It is illegal for an employer to threaten to close a facility to avoid a Union. Companies commonly use this scare tactic to avoid organizing campaigns. The Union does not want to put your company out of business....what good would that be? Many Unions even publish "Shop Union" guides to promote Union facilities/workplaces/jobsites.