

Labor's Language: Glossary of Union Terms

Labor agreements, publications, and even officials often use terms that are almost exclusive to the labor arena. To help stewards feel more comfortable operating in this area, "Labor's Language: A glossary of Labor's Terms" is a regular *Steward Edition* feature.

Authorization Card: A union card filled out by pro-union workers during a representation campaign. The card usually specifies the union as a collective bargaining agent of the employees and must be dated and signed. The National Labor Relations Board will accept 30 percent of the employees' signatures on cards or petitions as the "showing of interest" required to conduct an election. Usually unions will not file for an election unless a majority of bargaining unit workers have signed authorization cards.

Award: The final decision of an arbitrator which is binding on both parties.

Back Loaded: Providing a greater wage increase at the end of a contract.

Bargaining Agent: Union certified by a government agency, such as the National Labor Relations Board, or recognized voluntarily by the employer, as the exclusive representative of all employees in the bargaining unit for purposes of collective bargaining.

Bargaining Rights: The rights outlined in Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act, giving workers the right to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment through their chosen representatives. The bargaining agent is designated by a majority of the workers in a bargaining unit to represent the group in collective bargaining.

Bargaining Unit: A group of workers who bargain collectively with the employer. The unit may include all the workers in a single location, or in a number of locations, or it may include only the workers in a single craft or department. The final unit is determined by the National Labor Relations Board, or agreed to jointly by the union and the employer.

Base Rate: Straight time pay rate, excluding premiums and bonuses.

Benefits Cafeteria Plan: A benefit program offering a choice between taxable benefits, including cash, and non-taxable health and welfare benefits. The employee decides how his or her benefit dollars are to be used, within the total limit of benefit costs agreed to by the employer.



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Union Relies on Stewards to Promote Programs

Future Hinges on Active Membership Group

As Local 876 unveils several new programs and membership benefits, the local is counting on union stewards to promote these programs at their workplace, encouraging membership participation.

Five new Local 876 committees -- Political Action, Women's, Youth, Community Services and Membership Services -- are detailed in the latest edition of the Local 876 newsletter. The local hopes to see stewards on all

of the committees, but is relying on them to recruit their coworkers to join the committees. "A great starting place, and a realistic union dues by participating in certain union activities. A.C.T. events are located close to members' homes and require as little as one hour to complete. The first A.C.T. activities will center on strengthening Local 876 contracts by bringing union representation to additional workers.

"The overall success of the local, not just in organizing, hinges on an active and involved membership group," Robinson said. "Our future will be determined by how active members are today. Stewards can do their part to insure that the future is bright by encouraging their coworkers to participate in Local 876 projects and programs."

"Stewards can do their part to insure that the future is bright by motivating their coworkers to participate in Local 876 projects and programs."

Roger Robinson, president Local 876

"We don't expect stewards to sign up for every new committee being created by the local, but we do expect stewards to talk to their coworkers about the new programs and encourage their participation in them," Roger Robinson, Local 876's president, said. "Sometimes this will involve informing members about a new benefit being offered by the local, such as our new scholarship program. Other times it will require stewards to encourage members to take a little time to when it is convenient for them to help their union, such as filling out a survey, or giving a little more time by participating in a union event or on a local union committee."

goal, would be for each steward to recruit one member for each of the committees," Robinson said. "This would not only lay a solid foundation for our new committees but, in the long run, make stewards' job easier. For example, if there is a member on the political committee at a unit, this individual, not the steward, will be asked to be the union's contact at the unit during political campaigns."

The Local 876 Activist Coalition Team (A.C.T.) is another program stewards need to actively promote in their unit. Announced at the 2006 Local 876 Steward Conference, the A.C.T. provides members with the opportunity to earn a rebate on their

Attention Kroger Stewards

Please remind your coworkers to return their collective bargaining surveys by February 28, 2007.

Also, all Kroger members are encouraged to sign-up for email alerts regarding their contract negotiations. Call the Local 876 Public Relations Department at 1-800-321-6406 to register.

4 Categories of Grievances

The ability to determine if the correction to a member's problem can be pursued through the grievance procedure is an important skill for stewards to develop. While most grievances fall into a single category - contract violations - there are three other types of violations that may constitute a valid grievance.

The four categories of grievances are summarized below. If you are unsure whether a situation qualifies as a grievance, contact your business representative at the Local 876 office.

1: Contract Violations: While the meaning of a specific piece of contract language can be debated, if management violates the union's interpretation of the contract, a grievance could be filed.

2: Violations of the Law Your employer cannot violate the law. Even if your contract is silent on a specific issue, workers have the right to file a grievance if the employer violates Federal, State, or local law. This would include violations of wage, health and safety, and family/medical leave laws. Employers must follow the law's most recent terms, even if the contract references an earlier version of the law.

3: Violations of Company Rules: If the company violates its own rules or enforces these rules inconsistently, the employee who is disadvantaged by this action has the right to file a grievance.

For example, a worker who is caught smoking in a non-smoking area cannot be disciplined for this action if other workers, including managers, have been allowed to smoke in the area. Before filing this type of grievance, be sure documentation is available to support your case.

4: Violations of Basic Worker Rights: Finally, you have legitimate grounds for a grievance if a worker's basic rights have been violated, even if the action isn't prevented by the contract. You don't need contract language declaring that a supervisor can't assault or otherwise abuse or discriminate against a worker.

Discrimination occurs when two people are treated differently under the same circumstances in a way that harms or treats one of them unequally. While the most common types of discrimination tend to be based on race or sex, there are other types of discrimination including age, physical appearance, personality and union activity. Keep in mind that discrimination can be hard to prove. Encourage members to keep a log documenting the discrimination and noting any witnesses to the discrimination.

Less is More: New Grievance Form Streamlines, Improves Process

If you filed a grievance lately, you may have used one of Local 876's newly redesigned grievance forms (a sample of which appears on this page). The new form eliminates previously required duplicate and unnecessary information. These changes not only streamline the grievance process, they also increase the likelihood of the grievance achieving its desired resolution.

"The new grievance form is more efficient as it cuts the paperwork for a single grievance by two-thirds," Roger Robinson, Local 876's president, said. "It is also a more effective tool as space restrictions prohibit the form from being improperly used to argue the case."

In the past, stewards, either on their own, or at the insistence of the grievant, had actually hurt their case by providing too much information on the form.

"The grievance form is the official document that travels through the grievance procedure and could possibly end up in the hands of an arbitrator," Robinson said. "It asks for specific information that should be provided as concisely as possible. Additional information, if worded incorrectly, could possibly cause a valid grievance to be lost. The extra details may also be used by management against the grievant. The grievance form is not the place to argue the grievance. Stewards should save the presentation of their argument for grievance meetings."

A properly completed grievance form is critical to providing members with quality representation in the grievance procedure. Instructions on how to properly complete the new grievance form follow, (referencing corresponding lettered sections placed on the replica of the grievance form at right).

Section A: This section calls for the most current information pertaining to the grievant. It must be filled out completely and accurately. Members are no

longer required to provide their entire Social Security Number, but must provide the last four digits of this number. Each member's data file contains this information and it is the best way for the local to accurately differentiate between similar or identical names.

Section B: On these lines, write the article of the contract violated, how it was violated and the correction being sought. The key here is to be as specific and brief as possible. The article should list the specific numerical article of the contract violated, for example.8.C.

Also, the nature of the violation should include the date of the incident. For example, "*Lee Smith received only 36 hours pay for the 40 hours he worked during the week of January 8, 2007.*"

The remedy sought in this example would read; "*to be made whole for all losses, including but not limited to four hours straight time pay.*"

If stewards are unsure of the appropriate remedy, they can simply write "*to be made whole for all losses.*"

If the grievance is being filed for an improper suspension, the violation should state the grievant's name followed by "*was improperly suspended.*" The remedy sought would read "*to be reinstated and made whole for all losses.*" The grievant must sign and date the form, with the date the grievance is filed, not of the violation.

Stewards and members who want to provide the union with additional information, may do so using a separate sheet of paper and attaching it to the form.

Section C: There is the potential for three "step" meetings being held regarding each grievance. After each meeting, the appropriate section should be completed. The outcome should simply state whether or not the grievance was resolved and what will happen


next. For example, "*No resolution reached, step 2 meeting scheduled for Feb. 5, 2007.*" Or, simply "*grievance resolved.*" The remedy does not have to be listed here as it is called for in Section D.

Section D: All grievances filed have a resolution, including "*grievance withdrawn.*" When a grievance is settled, the resolution should be noted using as much detail as possible. For example, "*the company agrees to pay Lee Smith for*

four hours of work at \$12.15 per hour in the paycheck received March 1, 2007."

Section E: This section will be completed by Local 876 following the Executive Board's decision regarding arbitration.

Call the Local 876 office if you have any questions regarding filing a grievance. Remember, to check grievance filing deadlines and be sure to file grievances in a timely manner.

		United Food & Commercial Workers Union Local 876 876 Horace Brown Dr. Madison Heights, MI 48071 Phone: (248) 585-9671 • 1-800-321-6406 • Fax: (248) 585-0509	
Grievance Form			
Please Print Neatly			
Grievant's Name _____		Soc. Sec. Number (last 4 digits) XXX-XX-_____	
Street Address _____		City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____	
Telephone Number(____) _____		Employer _____ Unit Number _____	
Hire Date _____		Classification _____ Hourly Pay Rate _____	
Steward's Name _____		Union Rep.'s Name _____	
Article of Contract Violated _____		Nature of Violation _____	
Remedy Sought _____			
Grievant's Signature _____		Date _____	
Step One Meeting Date _____		Step Two Meeting Date _____	
Step Three Mtg. Date _____			
Location _____		Location _____	
Attending for the Union _____		Attending for the Union _____	
Attending for the Company _____		Attending for the Company _____	
Outcome _____		Outcome _____	
Grievance Resolution _____			
Arbitration Information (if needed): Date Arbitration Requested _____ E.Bd. Decision _____ Date _____			

UFCW Local 876 2007 Scholarship
Application Deadline Extended to April 2, 2007

Stewards should remind their coworkers time remains to apply for a 2007 Local 876 Scholarship. Five \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded to Local 876 members or their dependents who are full-time or part-time students. Complete rules and applications are available on-line at www.ufcw876.org or by calling the Local 876 office at 1-800-321-6406.