

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.

General Strike: A strike by all or most organized workers in a community or nation.

Geographic Wage Differentials: Differences in wage rates based upon locations of plants or industries.

Good Faith Bargaining: Negotiations in which two parties meet and confer at reasonable times with open minds and the intention of reaching agreement on a new contract.

Grandfather Clause: A contract provision specifying that employees placed on the payroll before a specified time will retain certain rights and benefits even though newer employees are not entitled to them.

Grievance: Situations of worker dissatisfaction arising from employer violations of the collective bargaining agreement, law, company policies, fair treatment, and past practices. Grievances are usually defined and categorized in each contract, and therefore may vary from one contract to another.

Grievance Procedure: A procedure usually established by a collective bargaining agreement to resolve

disputes, problems or misunderstandings associated with the interpretation or application of the collective bargaining agreement. It consists of several steps with the last step of the procedure usually being arbitration.

Group Grievance: A grievance signed by many people in a workplace in order to show management that members are collectively opposed to a management action.

Hiring Hall: The process of the union dispatching workers to employers as needed. A hiring hall may be operated by a union alone or by an employer and union jointly. Laws related to hiring halls are enforced by the National Labor Relations Board.



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Opportunities for Stewards, Members to Expand their Union Involvement

Training, New Programs, and Political Action Top Local's 2008 Agenda

Any extremely light 2008 bargaining schedule has presented Local 876 with the opportunity to expand its activities for the year, which in turn will give stewards and members the opportunity to expand their involvement in the local union.

Less time at the bargaining table means more time for the local to focus on other areas including staff and steward training, implementing new programs, and securing a positive outcome to the November 2008 General Election.

"As we strive to improve and grow the local union, and secure a better way of life for all workers, there are going to be many new opportunities for stewards and members to expand their involvement in the union," Roger Robinson, Local 876's president, said. "While the active involvement by stewards is always appreciated, the local also needs stewards to develop a more active union membership at their workplace."

The local will be counting on stewards to promote union programs, generate participation on Local 876 committees and secure turnout at union-related events.

"Local 876 has built a strong foundation with our steward group, now is the time for this group to reach out to other members, to not

only build a stronger union, but to insure members receive all of the benefits of Local 876 membership," Robinson said.

Important Reminders for Members

Local 876 Scholarship Deadline-March 3, 2008: Stewards are urged to remind their co-workers about the UFCW Local 876 Scholarship, stressing that adequate time remains for students to complete the application process and submit their entry for a \$2,000 award. Stewards should encourage members who have obtained applications to complete the process and suggest others request an application from the Local 876 office or download one at www.ufcw876.org.

The scholarship is open to members with one year of continuous service as of Jan. 1, 2007 of any age and their dependent children, regardless of their status as a full-time or part-time undergraduate or graduate student. Applicants are judged by the selection committee based on their written essay and letter of recommendation, along with academics, and school/community involvement. Therefore, students should not let a perceived lacking in one area stop them from applying for a UFCW Local 876 scholarship.

New Year Brought New Health Coverage for Most Members:

Members at Beaver's, Cygnet Financial, Hiller's, Hollywood, Kroger, Oleson's, Plumb's, Riverside Markets, and Turri's who have elected to take the health insurance negotiated by Local 876 began their new coverage January 1. Stewards should remind these members to review the changes in their new benefits, including the new \$500 Wellness Benefit and doctor office copays, to make sure they are using their insurance to get the maximum value and they are billed properly for services. Members received a summary of their new benefits in October with their enrollment packet. Additional information can be obtained from the Fund Office at 1-800-322-8190.

How Well Do You Know Your Contract? – Take the Following Quiz

As the workplace enforcer of the union contract, stewards must know the document backwards and forwards. While contract language can sometimes be complicated, it is important for stewards to understand the agreement so they can explain provisions to members in the simplest terms possible and discuss contract issues with management.

To test and improve your knowledge of the union contract covering your workplace, see if you can answer the questions listed below. Be sure to have a copy of your contract handy to check or look-up your answer. Contact your union representative if you need assistance understanding an aspect of your contract.

1. What is the “life” of your contract?
2. Do you have a union security clause? What does it mean?
3. What section of the contract deals with settling grievances?
4. What holidays are recognized by your contract?
5. A member’s date of hire is August 3, 2002, how much vacation is he entitled to receive in 2008?
6. How many hours constitute a day of work under your contract?
7. A member tells you she is pregnant. What can you tell her about leaves of absence for pregnancy/birth of a child under the contract?
8. Does your contract have an employee rights or management rights clause? What do they mean?
9. What does your contract say about strikes?
10. What is “check-off”? Do you have it in your contract?
11. Does your contract provide for health benefits, life insurance, or a pension plan? How do members go about finding out the specifics of the plans?
12. How is overtime distributed?

13. Under your union contract, can you, as a steward discuss union business on work time?
14. A member is ill and misses two days of work. Under the contract, does he need a medical excuse?
15. Are any of your co-workers required to wear a uniform or use certain tools to perform their job? What does the contract say about providing and maintaining these items?
16. A co-worker is interested in moving into a higher paying job classification. According to your union contract, how are these types of promotions made?
17. A member with 18 months of seniority wants to know when he will receive his next wage increase. What do you tell him?
18. A member needs a day off to take care of personal business. Under the contract, what does she need to do to get the time off?

Local Launches Young Workers Committee and MySpace Page

Involving younger members in their union is a challenge for union leadership at all levels, from stewards to vice presidents and executive officers.

“Union leaders are typically elected based on their experience, which usually takes a few years to acquire, meaning most union leaders are not considered younger workers,” Roger Robinson, Local 876’s president, said. “This generational difference makes it even harder for most union leaders to engage younger workers, who usually aren’t all that interested in their union. But we have to reach and involve members 35 and under as they represent the hope for the future.”

To involve younger members, Local 876 has established a Young Workers Committee, which in turn launched its own MySpace page.

“Any interested member is invited to join the committee, and stewards should talk to their younger coworkers about the group,” Robinson said. “This is really an exciting time for members to get involved as the committee will be instrumental in designing new ways for younger members to be involved in the local, and identifying ways the local can better serve our younger members. I would hope that stewards 35 and younger lead by example and join the committee themselves.”

To join the Local 876 Young Workers Committee, call Chris Michalak at 1-800-321-6406, ext. 8644. The group’s official MySpace page is located at <http://www.myspace.com/local876>.

Q&A: Providing Union Representation Under Weingarten

The article regarding the importance of members exercising their Weingarten Rights which appeared on the front page of last month’s *Steward Edition* generated several questions. The following question and answer section features the most commonly asked questions. If you still have any questions regarding Weingarten Rights, contact your Local 876 Union Representative.

Q: If I see a member going into a meeting with management, can I, as a steward, ask the member if she would like to exercise her Weingarten Rights and have me be present during the meeting, or do I have to wait for the member to ask for representation?

A: Under Weingarten, stewards have the protected right to request admission to meetings between members and management or security. If the meeting is routine (non-investigatory), the request can be rightfully denied by the company. If the meeting is covered by Weingarten, the company can ask the member if he/she wants representation. However, if the member is unfamiliar with Weingarten, the steward can explain the principle to him/her before a decision is made.

Q: If security stops a member as she is leaving work and asks to see the contents of her purse, can she request representation and refuse to open her purse if the request is denied?

A: Not necessarily. Locker, car, handbag and similar searches are not investigatory interviews. Therefore,

members do not have the right to insist on the presence of a steward. However, if the member is questioned based on the results of the search, Weingarten applies and they then have the right to representation by a steward or union representative.

Q: If a manager calls a cashier at home and begins to question him about a cash shortage, does the worker have to answer the questions?

A: No. Weingarten Rights apply to telephone conversations. An employee who fears discipline can refuse to answer questions until a meeting is scheduled where union representation is available.

Q: Can a member insist that the Local 876 Union Representative be present during an investigatory meeting if the steward is available at the time management wants to conduct the meeting?

A: No. Members must accept the available representation, or forfeit their Weingarten Rights.

Q: I am the only steward at my unit. How should I tell members to handle situations when I am not at work and they want to exercise their Weingarten Rights?

A: Just because union representation is not available when management wants to interview a member does not mean the member forfeits his or her Weingarten Rights. Once a member requests representation,

management is required to stop the interview and reschedule it for a time when representation is available. If management continues to question a member who is eligible for representation, the member is within his or her rights to refuse to answer the questions. Members in these situations should be advised to stay in the room, but remain silent, until excused.

Q: As the only steward at my workplace, how do I receive representation under Weingarten?

A: Stewards have the same Weingarten Rights as other workers. If you have a fear of discipline or other adverse consequence as a result of a conversation with management or security, you have the right to representation. Weingarten requires management schedule a meeting when a Local 876 Union Representative can be present to provide you with your legal right to representation.

Q: If a member is called into a meeting by management and questioned about the activities of other workers that could lead to their discipline, is the member entitled to representation under Weingarten?

A: Yes. Although the employee may not be involved in the wrongdoing himself, he risks discipline if he refuses to inform on others or admits to being aware of wrongdoing on the part of others. Since what the member says during this meeting could get him into trouble, he is entitled to union representation under Weingarten.