

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.

Closed Shop: An agreement between an employer and a union that, as a condition of employment, all employees must belong to the union before being hired. The employer agrees to retain only those employees who belong to a union. Closed shop agreements were declared illegal by the Taft-Hartley Act.

Collective Bargaining: A process which workers, through their bargaining committee, deal as a group to

determine wages, hours and other conditions of employment. Normally, the result of collective bargaining is a written contract which covers all workers in the bargaining unit.

Common Law: The law of a country or state based on custom, usage, and/or the decisions and opinions of a court.

Comparable Worth: A pay concept or policy that calls for comparable pay for jobs that require comparable skills, effort and responsibility and have comparable working conditions, even if the job content is different.

Company Union: An employee organization, usually in one company, that is dominated by management. The

National Labor Relations Act declared that such employer domination is an unfair labor practice.

Complaint: Formal papers issued by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to start an unfair labor practice hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. The complaint states the basis for the NLRB's jurisdiction and the alleged unfair labor practice.

Concerted Activity: The rights, protected by the National Labor Relations Act, of two or more employees to act in concert to form, join, or assist labor organizations in order to affect their wages, hours or work or working conditions.



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NLRA Gives Stewards Legal Right to Information

One of the most useful tools provided by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) is the union's right to obtain information from employers. In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled this right to information is not limited to data needed for contract negotiations, but also includes information relevant to contract enforcement, which includes all aspects of the grievance procedure.

Under the ruling, stewards and their unions have the right to request information needed to:

- Gauge compliance with the contract.
- Investigate if a grievance exists, or should be continued.
- Prepare for a grievance meeting.
- Prepare for arbitration.

The kind of information employers must provide -- as long as it is relevant to the grievance -- is very broad. However, stewards and unions are prohibited from using the right to information to "go fishing" to see what violations they may uncover, or to simply harass the employer.

The types of documents employers must provide includes the list accompanying this article. The company is not required to provide information deemed confidential; such as employee medical records, and sensitive compa-

ny data such as trade secrets, product research and profit and loss details.

Employers must provide requested information in a timely manner, allowing for due process and be within the time limits specified in the grievance procedure. If the employer claims more time is needed, an agreement must be reached for extending the

grievance's time limits.

The cost of supplying the requested information is the employer's, unless "substantial costs" are involved. In these cases, the union and company must bargain over sharing the costs.

Contact your union representative at the Local 876 office with questions regarding your right to information.

Documents Requested from Employers

The following is a list of the most common types of information requests. Under the NLRA, employers are required to comply with the request, provided the information is relevant.

Accident Reports	Interview Notes
Attendance Records	Investigative Reports
Bargaining Notes	Job Assignment Records
Bonus Records	Job Descriptions
Collective Bargaining Agreements for Other Bargaining Units or Other Facilities	Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs)
Company Manuals and Guidelines	Payroll Records
Contracts with customers, suppliers and subcontractors	Personnel Files
Correspondences	Photographs
Customer Complaints	Piece-rate Records
Customer Lists	Security Reports
Disciplinary Records	Security Guard Reports
Equipment Specifications	Seniority Lists
Evaluations	Supervisors' Notes
Inspection Records	Time Study Records
Insurance Policies	Training Manuals
	Videotapes
	Wage and Salary Records
	Work Rules

Helping Members with Off-the-Clock Problems

At one time or another, most stewards will find themselves in situations where they need to look outside the contract to help members with a difficult situation.

Locating reliable and affordable child care, may be the answer to a member's tardiness problem. Another distracted member's poor job performance may be improved by getting his troubled teen into a residential counseling program. Yet another member's erratic attendance may be linked to a substance abuse problem.

"What's going on in a member's life off-the-clock, may sometimes impact their performance on-the-clock," Roger Robinson, Local 876's president, said. "Many times, people are aware they need to make some changes in their personal lives, if they want to preserve their jobs, but they just don't know where to turn. In these situations, a referral to the appropriate agency can be a great help to members."

Even when their job is not in jeopardy, members may look to their steward for assistance for themselves or a coworker with a personal situation or problem.

"Because members view stewards as a knowledgeable resource and overall problem-solver, stewards often become the unofficial "go to" person at the unit when someone needs guidance with a problem they or someone close to them is experiencing," Robinson said. "No one expects stewards to go around and try to solve everyone's problems, or to get deeply involved with their coworkers personal situations, but it is reasonable to expect them to provide direction to members who request it."

Providing this direction is as simple

as knowing two telephone numbers - 2-1-1 and the number for their area labor liaison (see accompanying list).

"Members should not hesitate to contact their labor liaison," Robinson said. "Not only is assisting union members part of their job, but these

individuals are extremely knowledgeable and very caring people."

Stewards can make initial calls to either 2-1-1 or the labor liaison on a member's behalf, but the member will typically need to make follow-up calls to provide relevant information.

Labor Liaisons Available to Assist Members

Fortunately for union members, individuals exist in every community whose job description includes assisting union members experiencing difficulties. United Way Labor Liaisons work exclusively with unions and their members to strengthen the relationship between the organization and unions. Liaisons also work with individual union members to make sure they are getting all the help they need from community and state agencies.

Local 876 stewards and members are encouraged to call the labor liaison in their county, as listed below, when they need assistance with a personal issue.

Bay County: Steve Rajewski -- (989) 893-7508

Genesee County: Cindy Cromwell -- (810) 762-5827

Jackson County: Margaret Grose -- (517) 796-5121

Ingham County: Glenn Freeman, III -- (517) 203-5026

Midland County: Hollie Hawkins -- (989) 631-3670

Monroe County: Michael J. Smith -- (734) 242-1331

Saginaw County: Robert Cramer -- (989) 775-0433 x 204

St. Clair County: Charlie O'Boyle -- (810) 985-8169

Washtenaw County: Rickey Banks -- (734) 677-7214

Wayne, Oakland, & Macomb Counties: Erkeisha Terry -- (313) 226-9200

All Other Counties: Chuck Kennedy -- 1-800-396-3066

2-1-1: Non-Emergency Help Just a Call Away

2-1-1 is the equivalent to 9-1-1, for non-emergency individual or family needs. When calling 2-1-1 individuals are connected to a trained information and referral specialist who suggests community and/or government organizations that can provide needed help.

2-1-1 specialists help individuals navigate the health and human services system, including situations involving a

national or regional disaster or in personal situations including job loss, abuse, child/elder care, counseling, and financial aid.

The 2-1-1 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to both english and non-english speaking callers. 2-1-1 can be accessed outside the tri-county area by calling 1-800-552-1183.

Providing Alcohol to Minors Causes Major Problems

As spring and summer arrive, so do events such as proms, graduation parties, beach gatherings, boat trips, festivals, and other occasions which heighten the interest in securing alcohol among the under 21 crowd.

To protect members from the penalties associated with selling alcohol to or purchasing alcohol, for minors, Stewards are encouraged to remind members of the dangers of both of these practices. The following section provides answers to common questions regarding minors and alcohol.

Q: What are the dangers of selling alcohol to minors?

A: Selling alcohol to minors is a very serious violation of company policy usually resulting in a discharge.

Companies react very strictly when an employee is caught selling alcohol to a minor because of the penalty they can receive from the state. The liquor commission can revoke a store's liquor license, and/or access them a very large fine. These penalties can have a devastating effect on the company and other workers due to financial strain and reduced business. Layoffs can result, workers' compensation may be jeopardized, and stores may be closed.

Finally, selling alcohol to a minor is illegal. Individuals are regularly fined, jailed, or required to do community service for this violation.

Q: Why would my employer care if I purchase alcohol for a minor?

A: Purchasing alcohol for a minor is illegal and can result in jail time. This could impact a workers' ability to report to work, which could result in discipline or discharge, regardless of the employer or where the alcohol was purchased.

However, a much more common and much more serious situation from an employer's standpoint is when an employee who is 21 or over purchases alcohol for a underage coworker or

friend at their place of employment. Again, because of the legal and financial ramifications for the company, employers typically discharge the members involved.

Q: How can I best protect myself against mistakenly selling alcohol to a minor?

A: Most stores with a liquor license have a very clear policy regarding alcohol sales. Members should strictly follow this policy and contact a manager if they doubt the validity of the identification provided, or a shopper refuses to supply requested identification. Members are not required to make determinations regarding questionable identification or appease a difficult shopper by making the sale without seeing identification. Those decisions should be left to management, and members are protected from discipline or legal action if it turns out to be the wrong decision.

Q: I have heard that the liquor commission hires older looking minors to purchase alcohol, using professionally falsified identification, and then takes action against the cashier and the store if the sale is made. Is this true?

A: Yes, these "sting" operations do occur, which is why members must be extremely careful when selling

Don't be Fooled by Fake ID

To help cashiers spot a fake ID, local police officers have provided the following tips for verifying the legitimacy of an ID used to purchase alcohol.

- Check the size, thickness and color of the ID for anything unusual. As of July 2003, all minors are issued vertical Michigan driver's licenses and state IDs.
- Check the placement, size, and typeface of the letters and numbers, nothing on the ID should be blurry.
- Look closely at the state seal to make sure it is correct and exact.
- Check for numbers that have been scratched or bleached out and inked over, or cut out, and reinserted.
- Look for rough spots around the edges and over the photos where laminate may have been altered.
- Compare the photo with the person presenting the ID.
- Ask the presenter to sign his/her name on a sheet of paper and compare the signature to the one on the ID.
- Ask the presenter to verify personal data on the ID.

alcohol. A company caught in a sting typically proposes terminating the employee involved to protect the company from a penalty.

Forcing management to make the decision regarding an alcohol sale and the verification of identification protects members from discipline.

Contact your union representative with any questions regarding this issue.