

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.

Mass Picketing: Patrolling by large numbers of people in close formation, often preventing access to company premises.

Master Contract: A union contract covering several companies in one industry. For example, the National Master Freight Agreement covers Teamsters members employed by a number of companies.

Mediation: The efforts of a third

party to help two parties reach agreement in a labor dispute. Mediators help clarify issues and suggest solutions.

Member in Good Standing: A union member in good standing is one who has fulfilled requirements for the organization and who has not voluntarily withdrawn from membership, been expelled, or suspended.

Member-to-Member Network: A communications system designed to allow the leaders of a local union to communicate rapidly and personally with the members. A coordinator at the top of a pyramid communicates with approximately 10 leaders, each of whom communicates with approximately 10 other members, each of

whom may communicate with 10 other members, and so on.

Merit Increase: Increase in wages given to one employee by the employer to reward good performance. Merit increases involve a general lack of objective criteria for their award, and thus allow favoritism to enter into the decision to award an increase.

National Labor Relations Act (NLRA): Federal law signed in 1935 guaranteeing workers the right to participate in unions without management reprisals. It was modified in 1947 with the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, and modified again in 1959 by the passage of the Landrum-Griffin Act. The NLRA is also referred to as the Wagner Act.



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Unions Unite Around Passage of Employee Free Choice Act

UFCW Joins Million Member Mobilization Effort

The UFCW has joined with AFL-CIO and other Change to Win Unions to ensure union members across the country are united and engaged around passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. This Federal legislation would allow workers to freely choose union representation in a simple and fair process, free from employer intimidation and harassment, and requires the company to honor that choice.

"Passage of the Employee Free Choice Act is important for all workers," Roger Robinson, Local 876's president, said. "Year after year, statistics show the best chance for workers to get ahead is to join a union. And the best chance for workers in a union to secure stronger contracts is to have more workers in their industry unionized. The Employee Free Choice Act will pave the way for this to happen."

A recent poll found that a majority of people understand the connection between a thriving middle class, good jobs, and union membership. In fact, 60 million workers said they would join a union tomorrow if they could. This general support for unions and the Employee Free Choice Act is being undercut by opponents whose

Passage of the Employee Free Choice Act will Benefit Current Union Members

Every time Local 876 and other unions go to the bargaining table, the company compares the current union contract to the non-union competition and tries to drag down union standards.

It doesn't have to be this way. With more workers on labor's side of the table, unions can strengthen their contracts and raise working conditions for everyone. The Employee Free Choice Act will increase the number of union members in the U.S. by providing workers with a simple, one-stop process to freely choose union representation.

campaign of misinformation and heavy handed political arm twisting is jeopardizing its passage.

"While Employee Free Choice would be good for workers and the U.S. economy, anti-worker corporate special interests are sparing no expense in spending billions of dollars to misinform the public and bully our elected leaders into opposing Employee Free Choice," Robinson said. "It is up to unions to set the record straight and garner support for Employee Free Choice with our membership, the general public, and the new president and congress."

The coalitions of unions has undertaken a massive effort to mobilize one million union members nationwide to pledge their support for Employee Free Choice. Over the next several

weeks, Local 876 union representatives will be distributing flyers explaining Employee Free Choice and asking members to complete and return a postage paid postcard urging the new president and congress to enact the Employee Free Choice Act.

"Stewards are encouraged to assist their union representatives in distributing the flyers and educating members about the importance of securing passage of the Free Choice Act," Robinson said. "If we stand together, we can win passage of the Employee Free Choice and begin the process of strengthening the middle class and restoring the American Dream for millions of families. Without this legislative reform, America's working families will continue to fall further and further behind."

Union Advantage Continues to Prevail

The 2007 annual governmental survey of workers' compensation levels once again found a strong union advantage, revealing that union workers earn higher wages and get more benefits than workers who don't have a voice on the job with a union.

Union workers' median weekly earnings \$863

Non-union workers' median weekly earnings \$663

Union wage advantage 30%

Union women's median weekly earnings \$790

Non-union women's median weekly earnings \$592

Union wage advantage for women 33%

African American union workers' median weekly earnings \$732

African American nonunion workers' median weekly earnings \$533

Union wage advantage for African Americans 37%

Latino union workers' median weekly earnings \$736

Latino non-union workers' median weekly earnings \$487

Union wage advantage for Latinos 51%

Asian American union workers' median weekly earnings \$853

Asian American non-union workers' median weekly earnings \$823

Union wage advantage for Asian Americans 4%

Union workers covered by employer-provided health insurance 78%

Non-union workers covered by employer-provided health insurance 49%

Union health insurance advantage 59%

Union workers without health insurance coverage 2.5%

Non-union workers without health insurance coverage 15%

Non-union workers are five times more likely to lack health insurance

Union workers covered by guaranteed (defined-benefit) pensions 67%

Non-union workers covered by guaranteed (defined-benefit) pensions 15%

Union pension advantage 347%

Union workers with short-term disability benefits 60%

Non-union workers with short-term disability benefits 35%

Union short-term disability benefits advantage 71%

Union workers' average days of paid vacation 15 days

Non-union workers' average days of paid vacation 11.75 days

Union paid vacation advantage 28%

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey; Employee Benefits in Private Industry in the United States, Economic Policy Institute.

Stewards: Know Your Rights

Union stewards spend a great deal of time educating members about their rights under the law and the union contract, and fighting to ensure members rights are not violated.

It is important for stewards to remember they too have specific rights. Under Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), stewards have the protected right to engage in union activities, including participation in grievance activities.

"The company cannot take adverse action against a steward, or threaten a steward with such action, because of his or her handling of a grievance or representation of a member," Roger Robinson, Local 876's president said. "Reprisals against stewards are violations of the NLRA and considered unfair labor practices."

An employer violates the no-reprisal rule if it:

- Orders a steward to perform greater or more difficult work.
- Denies a steward pay opportunities.
- Segregates a steward from other employees.
- Deprives a steward of overtime or other benefits.
- Enforces rules more strictly against a steward.
- Overly supervises a steward.
- Transfers a steward to a different shift or job.

The law also protects stewards from being held to a higher standard than other workers.

"Some supervisors think stewards should be held to a higher work standard than other workers," Robinson said. "Under the law, employers must apply the same rules to stewards as they do other employees."

The Employee Free Choice Act: Fact v.s. Fiction

Special interest groups, fueled by big business, have launched a massive public relations campaign to derail reform of the nation's broken labor law system by cranking out misleading propaganda. Here are the facts to refute the opposition's fiction about the Employee Free Choice

Fiction: The "legislation would end the rights of employees to secret ballot elections."— *Center for Union Facts*

Fact: The Employee Free Choice Act does not abolish elections.

Under the proposed legislation, workers get to choose the union formation process—elections or majority sign-up. What the Employee Free Choice Act does prevent is an employer manipulating the flawed system to influence an election outcome.

When faced with organizing campaigns: 25 percent of employers illegally fire pro-union workers; 51 percent of employers illegally threaten to close down worksites if the union prevails;

and, 34 percent of employers coerce workers into opposing the union with bribes and favoritism.

Fiction: "Legal recognition of a union has traditionally been achieved through secret ballot elections...just like how a person votes for a senator or congressman." — *Center for Union Facts*

Fact: Current union elections involving secret ballots bear no resemblance to political elections.

In union elections, workers' free speech rights are squelched, employers practice various forms of economic coercion, and labor law allows employers to indefinitely delay recognition

through drawn-out appeals.

As the University of Oregon political scientist Gordon Lafer, said, "the presence of secret ballots can't overcome the corrupt nature of NLRB elections."

Fiction: NLRB elections are "the only way to guarantee worker protection from coercion and intimidation." — *Coalition for a Democratic Workplace*

Fact: Workers are more susceptible to coercion in NLRB elections than majority sign-up.

Workers in NLRB elections are twice as likely (46 percent vs. 23 percent) as those in majority sign-up campaigns, to report that management coerced them to oppose the union. Further, less than one in 20 workers (4.6 percent) who signed a card with a union organizer reported that the presence of the organizer made them feel pressured to sign the card.

Employee Free Choice Act Legislative Summary

The Employee Free Choice Act (S. 1041) was introduced for the 110th Congress in the Senate on March 29, 2007 by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), and in the House on February 5, 2006 by Reps. George Miller (D-CA), Robert Andrews (D-NJ), and Peter King (R-NY). The following is a summary of the bill's core provisions.

1. Union Certification Determined on the Basis of Signed Authorization Cards

The bill requires certification of a union as the workers' bargaining representative if a majority of employees in the unit signed authorization cards designating the union as their bargaining representative.

2. First Contract Mediation and Arbitration

Under the bill, if an employer and a union engaged in bargaining for their first contract are unable to reach agreement within 90 days, either party may request mediation. If mediation is unable to bring the parties to agreement after 30 days of mediation, the dispute will be referred to binding arbitration.

3. Stronger Penalties for Company Violations While Employees Organizing or Bargaining a First Contract

The bill requires federal court injunctions, triple back pay and civil fines of up to \$20,000 per violation, for violations of the National Labor Relations Act committed by employers against employees during any time when employees are attempting to organize a union or negotiate a first contract with the employer.