

ORGANIZING A UNION: SOME STEPS

STEP ONE: Know Your Rights

1) The right to join a union is a human right. “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States to...encourag[e] the practice and procedure of collective bargaining and [to] protect... the exercise by workers of full freedom of association, self-organization and designation of representatives of their own choosing, for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment or other mutual aid or protection.”

[from Declaration of human Rights”

2) The laws: National Labor Relations Act gives private sector workers the “right to engage in concerted activity to improve their wages and working conditions, including the right to petition, leaflet, organize a union, picket, and strike.” The Massachusetts Public Employee Collective Bargaining Law provides the same rights to public sector workers. Despite these laws, many employers strongly resist their employees' efforts to gain a voice at work through unionization. So, before you start talking union where you work, get in touch with a union that will help you organize.

STEP TWO: Talk to Your Co-Workers

On your break and lunch time, or at co-worker’s homes, talk with other workers to see if they are concerned about issues in the workplace and if they might be interested in learning more about what a union can do. A union organizing drive will only succeed if there is support from the workers. Never act alone.

STEP THREE: Find Out Which Union is Right for You

To form a union on the job, you need the backup and hands-on help from the union you are seeking to join. If you don't already know which union is most able to help you, find out more about the unions affiliated with the Massachusetts AFL-CIO at 781/324-8230 or www.massaflicio.org. Many other unions are part of the Change to Win Federation. You can find those unions by going to: <http://changetowin.org/>. These websites help you to decide which union is best for you.

STEP FOUR: Contact a union to work with you

Union organizers assist employees in forming unions on the job to give them the same opportunity for dignity and respect, good wages and decent working conditions that union members already have. Most unions will ask workers to form an organizing committee of interested workers to work with a union organizer to ask workers to sign union membership cards indicating that they want to join the union. Signatures of at least 50% of workers needed.

STEP FIVE:

The Union files for an election. Workers vote in an election whether to join the union. If a majority votes yes, the union wins.

STEP SIX:

With the assistance of the union staff, negotiate a contract.