January 20, 2014

TO: IUE-CWA Local Unions

FROM: James D. Clark, Division President

RE: Organizing

Brothers and Sisters:

As local leaders, we know that you spend countless hours working to ensure good working conditions and fairness on the job for members of your local. Many of you also go the extra mile to involve your local in charitable giving and community engagement. We appreciate all that you do, and know that service as a local union officer can be challenging. But we also know that we are facing a historic crisis for working people. Real wages have stagnated, while corporate profits skyrocket. In these times, we must all go above and beyond to ensure that unions stay strong and viable. One of the most important things we can do as union leaders is to look for opportunities to organize new members.

Although legal protections for workers have been weakened, making organizing more difficult, it is still important for our locals to take a leadership role in identifying potential organizing targets. If there are workers in your community who express an interest in unionizing, we at the IUE-CWA want to help you follow up.

When you identify a group of workers you want to reach out to, or if your local is contacted by a group of workers interested in organizing, IUE-CWA will help build majority support by initiating a union campaign. We’ve included some materials here that may be helpful. Here’s a brief summary of where to start:

Organizing a union is legal and a protected right under the law, but we know that many employers will do everything in their power to prevent workers from unionizing. When an employer finds out about a union campaign in the beginning stages of building union support, the road to success will be much more difficult. Therefore, it is important to avoid tipping off management for as long as possible when a campaign is new. Leafleting outside the plant gates, though used successfully in the past, is usually not effective in the current climate, because it gives the employer a head start to engage in union-busting tactics. So take first steps cautiously, and encourage non-union workers to begin their campaign by involving only those co-workers they trust.
1) Start by talking to some of the workers. **Determine their top five or so issues in the workplace.** Is there a common theme such as lack of respect and dignity; no input with management; unfair, arbitrary treatment or favoritism? Are wages and benefits lower at their workplace than what workers are getting in similar jobs in your industry? Write these issues up on a list and keep all campaign activity and messaging centered on these issues.

2) After determining support for a union exists around key workplace issues, encourage the non-union workers to start to quietly build a committee of co-workers they trust who are representative of their workplace. Building a strong inside organizing committee is critical to building the majority support that they will need to establish their union.

3) At this point (if not sooner) please contact the IUE-CWA at 937-298-9985 and let us know you are working on an organizing lead so that we can start to support you with materials and resources. We will help you determine when is the right time to take the campaign public and file for a union election.

At most private employers, workers make the choice to unionize through elections overseen by the National Labor Relations Board. They win their union if a majority of the workers voting in the election vote for the union.

In most cases, employers will use a variety of tactics to prevent workers from organizing a union, many designed to create conflict, divide union supporters, and create an atmosphere of fear. What employers don’t want to talk about during their anti-union campaign are workers’ concerns — those key workplace issues that the organizing committee identified as reasons why they want a union. **These workplace issues should always be central to our campaign and our messaging.** Strong majority support for a union is the best defense to successfully withstanding the employer’s campaign.

We encourage you to think creatively about what organizing targets there might be in your community. Remember, your local will be stronger the more members you organize. And again, please call us once you’ve established contact with the workers and have started to build support around key workplace issues.

In lasting solidarity,

James D. Clark
Division President

JDC:lkk
IUE-CWA’s Guide to Union Organizing
Interested in organizing a union in your workplace?

A union is simply a group of employees who join together for a voice in their workplace. When employees join together — “organize” — they increase their power. That’s what organizing a union is all about. It’s only as part of a united group that we, as workers, can gain the economic leverage that allows us to bargain with our employer on a basis approaching equality.

One person telling management that wages or health benefits should be improved does not carry the same weight as a bargaining proposal from a group of workers who organized together into a union.

Having a union enables us to speak together in one strong voice. In addition, once you organize a union, your employer is required — by law — to bargain with you and your coworkers over your conditions of employment. We in IUE-CWA can help. Our union’s purpose is helping workers like you organize together so you have the power, like us, to negotiate good contracts, increase your standard of living, and have a real voice in the decisions about your workplace and job.

Every day, men and women across the U.S. are organizing unions where they work. Doing this, they learn that they increase their power when they join together into unions. They discover that all it takes to build strong workplace organization is a willingness to talk with, listen to, and learn from one’s coworkers. Through this process, they gather information and get feedback. By joining together, they learn that they are able to create a vision for positive change where they work.

Since the earliest days of our nation, this is the way millions of workers have gotten a voice and bargaining power in the workplace. Experience tells us that it’s best when employees organize themselves. This is essential if you want to create a viable worker-led and inspired organization where you work. IUE-CWA organizers and staff can help. But it’s you, the employees, who must join together to create and build your union.

IUE-CWA organizers work with employees throughout the organizing campaign and provide guidance and resources. The campaign and the union, however, is led by and belongs to you and your coworkers.

1. CONTACT
To get your union started, the first thing you need to do is talk with your coworkers. Do they share some of the same concerns about your workplace? Are they raising other issues? Write up a list of those issues. Is there a common theme to your workplace issues, i.e., lack of respect and dignity, no voice in the workplace, unfair treatment favoritism, wages and benefits that are worse than others working in the same jobs or industry? The bottom line: Is there interest among your coworkers in creating a union?

At this stage, along with learning your coworkers’ level of interest in forming a union, you need to gather information about the workplace. First you will need to compile a list of workers’ names with their job titles, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. Next, draw a map of the workplace to show where each employee is located.

With this information, and with the help of a IUE-CWA organizer, you and your coworkers will evaluate whether to move forward with a campaign. This should depend on three factors: 1) A clear majority of employees who are concerned about significant issues; 2) The potential for majority support among your coworkers for union representation and 3) The ability to build a strong committee (naming at least 10 percent of the workforce) who are committed and willing to work together in building a union in their workplace.

2. COMMITTEE
The next stage is to increase your initial contacts into an Inside Organizing Committee of coworkers who are representative of the unit. Building a strong, effective Inside Organizing Committee is the most critical step to success in winning an election and improving the workplace by negotiating the best possible contract. Your IUE-CWA organizer will provide you with the training and support necessary to be an effective committee member.

During the campaign, the Inside Committee is the union. Members of the committee will lead the effort to build and maintain majority support for a union. Committee members should develop a Mission Statement which represents their positive vision for their workplace. Committee members should publicly declare their support for union representation by signing and posting the Mission Statement. Members of the Committee should:
- Provide leadership, communicate with, and educate their coworkers about union representation;
- Collect information and talk one-on-one with their coworkers about the benefits of having a union;
- Periodically provide assessments of their coworkers’ support for a union.

Note: Do not skip Stage 2, even if you think that you have enough support in your workplace to gain union representation. After the election, you will need a strong committee of your coworkers to lead your campaign for a first union contract (see Stage 4, “Contract”).

3. CAMPAIGN
In Stage 3, Inside Committee members begin to talk openly with coworkers and evaluate the support of every employee in the unit. Based on the one-on-one discussions committee members are having with coworkers, each employee’s support is evaluated. Committee members should ask all union supporters in your workplace to sign a public petition supporting the union. The goal is to get signatures on the petition from a majority of employees. When there is strong majority support, recognition is requested or the petition is filed with the appropriate government agency, such as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which will oversee the process. A date for a secret ballot election will be set.

Most employers will launch anti-union campaigns at this stage, if not earlier. When employers learn of an organizing campaign, they try to increase the conflict in the workplace and then blame it on the workers’ organizing campaign. Often, if support for a union is strong, employers will attempt to delay the election to gain more time to weaken support for the union.

Here are some of the most widely used tactics:
- Asking for another chance;
- Predicting layoffs or plant/office closings if the employees vote for union representation;
• Trying to scare employees with warnings of the likelihood of strikes;
• Making inaccurate or misleading statements about the union or union dues;
• Saying the union is an “outsider” or “third party.”

Employees’ public support for the union is crucial, particularly if there is strong employer opposition. Being able to display a Mission Statement (above) that is signed by large numbers of employees is a very effective way to counter employers’ common tactic of portraying the union as an outside organization. Employees publicly displaying their support — signing a statement or flyer, wearing union tee shirts, pins, buttons, hats, etc. — help increase employees’ solidarity. It is vital that the employer see the employees as a strong, united group.

Representation elections are conducted by a government agency by secret ballot, usually at the worksite, but sometimes by mail. If a majority of those voting support the union, and your union is certified by the NLRB or other agency, you have gained union representation. At this point, the employer is legally required to negotiate with your union in good faith on a written contract covering wages, hours, and other working conditions.

4. CONTRACT
Your work isn’t over once you succeed in organizing a union. As soon as you win representation, your focus needs to shift to obtaining your first contract. In order to negotiate and ratify a collective bargaining agreement that will make your contract terms legal and binding, you need to select a Bargaining Committee beforehand.

The committee is charged with prioritizing your issues and preparing for and planning negotiations. Your Mission Statement will serve as a foundation for your bargaining proposals, but you may also want to circulate a bargaining survey among your coworkers to ensure that you hear from everyone.

Next, you need to transform the Inside Organizing Committee into a Mobilization Committee. Its role is to continue the campaign so you are able to maintain majority support from workers through what may be long and difficult negotiations. (Most employers do not give in after their employees organize.)

The Mobilizing Committee should:
1) Sign up coworkers as members of your new union;
2) Continue to take your union’s message into the workplace via handouts and flyers (i.e., “We Won the Election; Now we Want a Contract!”) and
3) Counter any misinformation your employer may release during bargaining.

Forming alliances with community organizations, religious groups, and elected community leaders will add strength and leverage to your campaign. It will also discourage your employer from breaking the law, delaying negotiations, or not bargaining in good faith. Employers are less likely to abuse the rights of their employees if others become aware of their tactics.

Your Legal Rights

Employees covered under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) have the legal right to form a union in their workplace. The NLRA states:

Section 7: “Employees shall have the right to self-organization; to form, join, or assist labor organizations to bargain collectively through representation of their own choosing, and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining…”

Section 8: “It shall be an unfair labor practice for an employer…to interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed in Section 7…” Most public sector, railway and airline employees have similar protections. View the full text of the NLRA at www.nlrb.gov.

Answers to some of your questions

1. How long will it take before we have a union?
   It depends on how effectively you can do the following:
   1. Build a committee of coworkers who want a union;
   2. Establish strong majority support and
   3. Conduct a positive, issedriven union organizing campaign.
   Depending on the size of the unit, it can take anywhere from a few months to a year or more. In most cases, it takes several months.

2. What legal protection do I have?
   Federal law, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), support your right to form a union in your workplace (see “Your Legal Rights” above). Without a union, employees have little or no legal protection. In most states, public employees have similar rights.

3. What will our managers do when they find out we’re organizing?
   Typically, employers launch anti-union campaigns. Your employer will probably attack IUE-CWA as an “outsider” or “third party” organization that will “make all decisions for the employees” if the union is voted in. Managers often try to create a climate of fear while at the same time they ask their employees to “give them another chance” to improve conditions.

4. What about union dues and initiation fees?
   CWA dues are usually 1.3 percent of your base pay, excluding overtime. You begin paying dues after you vote to approve your first union contract — not when you vote to get a union. Dues are usually paid through payroll deduction. The initiation fee is generally waived.
ORGANIZING
DECERTIFICATION: AN EARLY WARNING SYSTEM
SEMI-ANNUALLY
(FORM 10)

Local________________________

Employer______________________________

Unit Description__________________________

Contract Expiration Date____________________________

Number in Bargaining Unit________________________

Number of Members________________________

Number of Stewards________________________

Date of last Steward Training________________________

Are Worksite Meetings Held________________________

Describe other Meetings________________________

If contract expires within 6 months, describe contract
preparation (surveys, meetings, discussion of key issues)

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Describe any signs of dissatisfaction (drop-outs, leaders quit,
management campaign)

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________________________________________________________________________

Should we be doing anything else? If yes, what?

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________________________________________________________________________
ORGANIZING PAMPHLET

PLACE HOLDER