



Workers' Rights 101: Collective Bargaining

Without a union, we only get what the boss wants to give us. When we have a union, management has to negotiate over every change in terms and conditions of employment. We negotiate as a union for those changes, and that is collective bargaining.



What is the definition of collective bargaining?

Collective bargaining is when a group of employees, after an election to form a union, sit down and bargain for improvements in the workplace with the employer. Every improvement we get is recorded in a contract that management is required by law to honor.



Where does the right to bargain come from?

The right to bargain comes from workers standing together to make improvements and have a voice on the job. The Civil Service Reform Act (the "CSRA") says that after that election, management must sit down and bargain with us. What we get at the table, however, is up to us.



What is your role in collective bargaining?

Collective bargaining happens in two places: at the table, and away from the table. Depending on the role you choose to play in your Union, you could do either (or both). At the table, Union members exchange written proposals to decide what will go in the contract that will define what our new rights are. Away from the table, union members sign petitions, go to meetings and let management know what their priorities are to support those proposals. The more support Union members give away from the table, and the more pressure we create on management, the better we will do at the table. You can't have one without the other, and every member of the Union has an important role to play in collective bargaining.