



AFGE Y.O.U.N.G.

Presents:

Glossary of commonly used union
terminology

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is the largest federal employee union representing 700,000 federal and D.C. government workers nationwide and overseas. Workers in virtually all functions of government at every federal agency depend upon AFGE for legal representation, legislative advocacy, technical expertise and informational services.

As a labor union, AFGE is in a unique position because it is not currently afforded the same full scope collective bargaining rights as workers in the private sector. For this reason, in addition to negotiating working conditions at the bargaining table, AFGE coordinates a full-scale legislative and political action program to monitor issues that impact the government workforce. When Congress debates funding of vital government programs administered to the public by government workers or tackles employee health care issues, AFGE is on the scene representing its members.

The union is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and is divided into 12 geographical Districts consisting of almost 1000 Locals. www.afge.org

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

A labor federation created by a merger between the AFL (American Federation of Labor) and the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organization) in 1955. Though the AFL-CIO is based in Washington, D.C., there are also bodies at the state (often called the "State Fed") and local (referred to as "Labor Councils") levels. The AFL-CIO is a federation of over 55 labor unions (AFGE included) nationally and internationally, representing over 12.5 million workers. www.aflcio.org

Affirmative Action Plans/Affirmative Employment Plan (AAP)

Written plans for programs required by Executive order 11478 and other laws and regulations. AAP's may contain studies which show how the workforce at the activity has been used, and may include goals and timetables for increasing the representation of protected class members in those areas where they have been underrepresented.

Bargaining Agent

Union designated by a government agency, such as the Federal Labor Relations Board, or recognized voluntarily by the employer, as the exclusive representative of all employees in the bargaining unit for purposes of collective bargaining.

Bargaining Council

Groups which facilitate the negotiation process between unified employees and employers on matters such as working conditions. The aim is to provide a forum for **collective bargaining** by which settlement on matters of joint interest can be reached through negotiation. The agreed conditions are then applied to all employees within the relevant sector. (For example, VA Council, SSA Council, etc.)

Bargaining Team

The union or employer negotiators who will actually be at the bargaining table and actively involved in the negotiations towards a contract.

Bargaining Unit (BU)

A group of employees in a given workplace that has sufficient commonality of interest to constitute a unit for purposes of collective bargaining. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) or similar federal, state or local agency usually defines a bargaining unit.

Boycott

A concerted refusal to purchase from or handle the products of an employer or company.

Canvass

A method of talking individually to every member of a bargaining unit to either convey information, gather information on a survey, or plan for united actions.

Canvass Coordinator

A term sometimes used for the person at the “top” of a member-to-member action network. Other terms include “network coordinator” or “campaign coordinator.” This person is responsible for establishing the one-on-one network and for planning and scheduling activities of the network.

Charge

A written statement of alleged unfair practices. Filing a charge with the Federal Labor Relations Board (FLRB) is the first step in an unfair labor practice proceeding. If the FLRB decides to take up the charge, it will issue a formal complaint to start an unfair labor practice hearing.

Central Labor Council (CLC)

Central Labor Councils are AFL-CIO umbrella groups that include many unions in the area. They partner with state and community organizations and conduct state, local and national campaigns to improve life for working families.

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. Note: D.C. Government employees have a closed shop.

Collective Bargaining

A process which workers, through their bargaining team and/or bargaining council, deal as a group to determine the working conditions of employees. Normally, the result of collective bargaining is a written contract which covers all workers in the BU (bargaining unit).

Collective Bargaining Agreement or Contract

A formal written agreement over conditions of employment entered into by an employer and the union representing employees in the bargaining unit.

Constituency Group

The AFL-CIO's constituency groups are unions' bridge to diverse communities, creating and strengthening partnerships to enhance the standard of living for all workers and their families. The groups also promote the full participation of women and minorities in the union movement and ensure unions hear and respond to the concerns of communities they represent. The AFL-CIO constituency groups: Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Union Veterans Council (UVA), Pride at Work: LGBT & Allies (PAW), A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI).

Districts

AFGE members are divided into 12 geographical Districts directed by a National Vice President that administers support services to locals. District breakdowns are as follows:

District 2: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont

District 3: Delaware, Pennsylvania

District 4: Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia

District 5: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

District 6: Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio

District 7: Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin

District 8: Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota

District 9: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma

District 10: Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Texas, Panama

District 11: Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, Guam, Okinawa

District 12: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada

District 14: D.C. Metropolitan area, Europe

Duty of Fair Representation (DFR)

A union's obligation to represent all people in the bargaining unit as fairly and equally as possible. This requirement applies both in the creation and interpretation of collective bargaining agreements. A union is said to have violated its Duty of Fair Representation when a union's conduct toward a member of a bargaining unit is arbitrary, discriminatory, or in bad faith. A union steward, for example, may not ignore a grievance that has merit, nor can that grievance be processed in a perfunctory manner. It should be noted, however, that the employee in the bargaining unit has no absolute right to have a grievance taken to arbitration.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) is the law. Applicants and employees of D.C. and the federal government are protected under federal laws from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, genetic information, prior EEO activity and disability. Moreover, federal laws require equal pay for women and prohibits discrimination on the basis of pregnancy.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is a government agency that oversees the discrimination complaint process for federal employees & enforces Federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. These laws protect employees and job applicants against employment discrimination when it involves:

- Unfair treatment because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.
- Harassment by managers, co-workers, or others in the workplace, because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.
- Denial of a reasonable workplace accommodation that the employee needs because of religious beliefs or disability.
- Retaliation because the employee complained about job discrimination or assisted with a job discrimination investigation or lawsuit.

Exclusive Representation

The employee organization that, as a result of certification, by a labor board, has the right to be the sole collective bargaining agent of all the employees in an appropriate bargaining unit.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

The 1938 federal Wage-Hour Law which establishes minimum wage, maximum weekly hours and overtime pay requirements in industries engaged in interstate commerce. The law also prohibited the labor of children under 16 years of age.

Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA)

The Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) is an independent agency of the United States government that governs labor relations between the federal government and its employees. The FLRA was created by Title VII of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (also known as the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute) (the Statute). Pub. L. 95-454, 5 U.S.C. 7101 *et seq.* The Statute allows certain non-postal federal employees to organize, bargain collectively, and participate through labor organizations of their choice in decisions affecting their working lives.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-related leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave.

Note: workers in the federal and District of Columbia governments and private sector are governed by different FMLA eligibility and administrative requirements.

Free Riders

Used in an open shop to refer to non-union members who receive all the benefits derived from collective bargaining without paying union dues or equivalent fees.

Grandfather Clause

A contract provision specifying that employees on the payroll before a specified time will retain certain and benefits even though newer employees are not entitled to these rights.

Grievance

Any type of worker dissatisfaction including violations of the collective bargaining agreement, violations of the law, violations of employer policies, violations of fair treatment, and violations of past practices. The definition of a grievance is usually part of the contract, and therefore may vary from one contract to another.

Grievance Procedure

A procedure usually established by a collective bargaining agreement to resolve disputes, problems or misunderstandings associated with the interpretation or application of the collective bargaining agreement. It consists of several steps with the last step of the procedure, usually being arbitrations.

Grievance Arbitration

A dispute resolution process whereby a neutral third party-the arbitrator-hears a grievance and makes a decision that is usually both final and binding on both parties.

Hatch Act

The Hatch Act limits certain political activities of Federal employees both on and off duty. Violations of the Hatch Act may result in disciplinary actions, up to and including removal.

The term “political activity” means doing something in active support of or opposition to a political party, a candidate for partisan political office (e.g., President, senator, representative, state or local legislature or office), or a partisan political group (e.g., “Historians for Smith”). Examples of political activity that would violate the Hatch Act if done while on duty or using Government property include but are not limited to: circulating a candidate’s nominating petition within your office; using the computer in your office after work to produce a brochure in support of a candidate’s campaign; sending e-mail invitations to campaign events to friends within the agency; and using federal government Internet connections to forward e-mail messages received from a partisan campaign or someone supporting a partisan candidate.

Questions concerning the Hatch Act may be directed to AFGE’s General Counsel’s office.

Housecalls

Term used to describe visits by union staff, volunteers, or organizing committee to the homes of workers they are attempting to organize. Such visits give organizers an opportunity to discuss the union and answer questions of unorganized workers in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Informational Picketing

Picketing done with the express intent not to cause a work stoppage, but to publicize either the existence of a labor dispute or information concerning the dispute.

Just Cause

A reason an employer must give for any disciplinary action it takes against an employee. An employer must show just cause only if a contract requires it. Most contracts have just cause requirements which place the burden of proof for just cause on the employer.

Labor Board

Quasi-judicial agency set up under national or state labor relations acts. Its duties include defining appropriate bargaining units, conducting elections to determine if workers want union representation, certifying unions to represent employees, and hearing and adjudicating complaints by either the union or the employer charging unfair labor practices.

Lockout

A suspension of work initiated by the employer as the result of a labor dispute. A lockout is the employer counterpart of a strike. Used primarily to pressure employees to accept the employer's terms in a new contract.

Note: This does not apply to AFGE. Federal government agencies are not permitted to lockout employees.

Made Whole

A catchall phrase used in grievance and other legal action where a remedy is sought from an employer. Often used in discharge and discipline cases where the union seeks to have a worker, who had been wrongly discharged or disciplined, returned to work and reimbursed all wages, benefits, or other conditions lost due to an employer's unjustified action.

Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB)

The federal agency responsible for deciding appealable personnel actions and mixed case appeals.

National Executive Council (NEC)

The National Executive Council is comprised of the 12 national vice presidents and the 3 executive officers. It is the duty of the NEC to watch all legislative measures directly affecting the interests of employees of the United States Government and the District of Columbia and to devise and initiate such legislative actions as the AFGE National Convention may direct, and in the interim between National Conventions, shall devise and initiate, whenever necessary, legislative policies consistent with the objectives of the Federation.

Official Time

Official time is time granted to an employee by the agency to perform representational functions on behalf of the union. This time is granted without charge to personal leave or loss pay, when the employee would otherwise be in a duty status and is considered hours of work.

Open Shop

Where employees do not have to belong to the union or pay dues to secure or retain employment, even though there may be a collective bargaining agreement. The Union is obligated by law to represent members and non-members equally regardless of whether it is an open shop or a closed shop.

Organizer

A person usually employed by a union; whose function is to enlist the employees of a particular employer to join the union.

Past Practice

A customary way of doing things not written into the collective bargaining agreement. Past practices can sometimes be enforced through the grievance procedure if the practice has been longstanding, consistent, and accepted by the parties.

Pay Equity

A term addressing the fact that female-dominated jobs or professions that have been traditionally undervalued, based on levels of responsibility and required education, should be raised to pay levels of comparable jobs traditionally held by men.

Phone Banking

The organized telephoning of large numbers of members to inform them of a union policy, political activity/action or to gather information. This is often done by volunteers who come into the union hall and telephone members during a certain time period.

Picketing

Workers carrying signs and/or distributing literature protesting working conditions or actions taken by the employer. Picketing occurs during a strike or as an “informational” picket. The purpose of the tactic is to put pressure on the employer by informing the public and other workers about unfair working conditions.

Political Action Committee (PAC)

AFGE’s PAC supports candidates who advocate for government employees regardless of party affiliation. AFGE’s collective monetary contributions build relationships that are critical to passing or defeating key legislation. As a government employee, the lawmakers who get elected determine your pay, benefits, job security and agency funding. By participating in AFGE PAC you can help choose who is looking out for your best interests on Capitol Hill. ***Contributions to AFGE-PAC are not deductible as charitable***

contributions for federal income tax purposes. Your voluntary decision to contribute more, less or not to contribute at all will not result in any favor or disadvantage in your relationship with AFGE.

Rank and File

The members of a union. The term does not apply to the leadership of a union.

Ratification

Formal approval of a newly negotiated contract/agreement by vote of the union members affected.

Scab

A person who continues to work, or who accepts employment, while workers are on strike. By filling workers' jobs, scabs may weaken or break the strike.

Note: This does not apply to AFGE. Federal government employees are not permitted to strike.

Seniority

Preference accorded employees, based on length of service with an employer, in such areas as layoff, recall, promotion, transfer, vacation accrual, scheduling, shift assignment, etc.

Shop Steward

The union representative of a group of fellow employees who carries out duties of the union within the workplace. Example: Handling grievances, recruiting new members and monitoring compliance with the contract. The steward usually is either elected by other union members or appointed by higher union officials. The steward usually remains an employee while handling union business. Some release time (with or without pay) may be available to stewards under specific language in many collective bargaining contracts.

State Federations (State Fed)

State Federations are AFL-CIO umbrella groups that include many unions in the area. They partner with state and community organizations and conduct state, local and national campaigns to improve life for working families.

Strike

A concerted act by a group of employees who withhold their labor for the purpose of affecting a change in wages, hours or working conditions.

Note: This does not apply to AFGE. Federal government employees are not permitted to strike.

Unfair Labor Practice (ULP)

An employer or union practice forbidden by the National Labor Relations Board, the Civil Service Reform Act (for federal workers) or state and local laws, subject to court appeal. It often involves the employer's efforts to avoid bargaining in good faith. Other examples may include management's failure to provide relevant information the union has requested for either bargaining or grievance handling purposes or management's repeated failure to implement grievance settlements or arbitration awards. Some state laws may use the term "prohibited practices."

Union Label or Bug

A stamp or tag on a product or card in a store or shop to show that the work is done by union labor. The "bug" is the printer's symbol.

Weingarten Rights

The rights of employees covered by the NLRA to request union representation during investigatory interviews if they reasonably believe that the interview could result in their being disciplined. Weingarten rights also guarantee the rights of union representatives to assist and counsel employees during interviews which would lead to discipline.

Wrongful Termination

A civil action or lawsuit brought by a discharged employee against the employer, alleging that the termination violated or breached a statutory right, express public policy, or an employment contract.

