



United Museum Workers

NEWSLETTER

SENT ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2020 AT 3:32 PM EASTERN (US)

UNION DEMOCRACY

Will the union listen to me?

First of all, it's your union, OUR union -- the United Museum Workers. As a member you will have frequent opportunities to shape what our union stands for.

The bread and butter of every union is pay, benefits and working conditions (including health and safety).

Collective bargaining is all about demanding equitable treatment for all employees covered by the union contract. You will elect fellow union members to represent you and negotiate a contract that we will then vote to ratify.

What does it mean that our union “will give me a voice”?

The union's **collective voice** will be multiplied many times over its individual members. We can make a “mighty noise” about things that matter to us. Your **voice** within the union will be ensured by elections and other votes at our union meetings. If you're not feeling heard, you'll have regular opportunities to say so. Your voice will be magnified by **your own participation**.

Internal communications are critical in letting you use your voice effectively. It's a high priority in all unions. Many unions have committees that address pay equity, non-discrimination, and social justice in the workplace. This gives a **voice to the previously voiceless**.

What will our union achieve for its members?

The most important thing any union does is fight favoritism and bias by increasing transparency in management's decisions. Through collective bargaining we can build structures that both management and employees agree will promote equity **and** effective work. This is the definition of a democratic workplace.

The second most important objective is making sure employees can earn a living wage and necessary benefits. As a union member you define what those things mean. The employees of the Carnegie Libraries of Pittsburgh were able to gain valuable workplace protections even before ratifying their first contract. For example, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic their union, the United Library Workers, has managed to secure continued pay and a say in safety procedures before finalizing their first contract.

Will our union be serious about social injustice?

Workplace issues that engage union members often spill over into the wider world. Rights won by employees in the workplace often apply to everyone in our space: think of ADA accommodations, gender-neutral bathrooms, private breastfeeding rooms.

Our union could contribute some of its resources to outside causes, subject to democratic discussion and approval. With our collective power, we can establish committees to address concerns of our fellow members and our greater community. Union members involved in outside causes can often express a union endorsement of that activity, such as carrying a banner in a parade.

As members of the broader American labor movement, other unions will support us in a variety of ways to help us achieve our goals. The organized labor movement is, and has always been, one of the largest social justice movements in American history.

How does democracy work within our union?

First, we'll hold a general membership meeting to elect a bargaining committee, charged to get our first contract. The negotiating committee will conduct a survey to understand what members' priorities are at the bargaining table. We will have regular meetings to keep members informed about the status of contract negotiations and, eventually, we'll have a vote to ratify the contract. One member, one vote.

Once we have our first contract, the full membership will propose and vote on bylaws that define the governance of the union. Election of officers and governing board follow the first contract. New elections occur every three years. Many unions have governing boards with members representing each operating unit and/or different classes of jobs. This is to ensure that **all needs and perspectives** are addressed across each museum. Internal union communication will involve public meetings, electronic communication, and bulletin boards and signage at the workplace.

We will renegotiate our contract every few years, and every new contract will be ratified by a majority vote. Volunteer committees that specialize in certain issues give union members a chance to inform governing officers on the best policies.

All members will vote on the local union budget, including provisions for paid staff.

Secure your voice in our workplace!

Remember, it's your union, OUR union -- the United Museum Workers. As a member you will shape what our union stands for.

The first step to achieving collective power is to join the United Museum Workers by signing an authorization card now! <http://usw.to/museum>