IBEW® The right choice!

Why Employers Oppose the Union…The Facts

Why do employers fight the legal right of employees to organize? Without a union, employees are employed ***at will***. What this means is legally, employees have no rights other than those expressed in state and federal laws. Laws are only as good as their enforcement. If an employer violates the rights of employees, employees are usually unwilling to expend the time and expense involved to fight the charge and clear their good name. Employers have a whole cadre of attorneys and consultants to protect the company. The duty of these attorneys and consultants is to represent the interests of management.

With a union, employees gain additional rights, enforceable in a court of law. The IBEW has its own attorneys and representatives whose sole purpose is to represent the rights of employees. Employees gain further legal rights just with their union representation. The law gives rights to employees organized collectively that individual employees do not enjoy.

What about employer claims that they will lose flexibility with a union? Employers do lose flexibility in certain circumstances with a union, because the rights of both employer and employee are spelled out in a legal, binding contract. For example, employers lose flexibility in doing the following under most union contracts:

- Set wages where they want, without input or review by employees;
- To layoff employees without recourse and employee input;
- Utilize subcontractors on an unlimited basis to reduce costs of full-time employees;
- Change benefits whenever management wants without any say from employees;
- Absolve actions by supervisors or managers without a hearing or review of such actions;
- Hold a grievance meeting with peer and/or management review that gives the employee filing the grievance no legal recourse, and is unenforceable in a court of law;

- Discipline an employee and refuse to allow the employee's right to a fair hearing, and further, to deny the employee the right to review by an impartial arbitrator.

Are there economic considerations that prompt management's opposition? Yes. Employers make no qualms about their desire to maximize profits and minimize costs. If unorganized employers compete with surrounding organized employers (which are limited in their ability to cut wages of employees or subcontract jobs at a cheaper rate) the unorganized employer can be very successful in reducing costs by holding or reducing employee wages and benefits. If all employers are organized, however, employee wages and benefits are taken out of competition, and employers must then compete on improving productivity or innovative methods.

Without a union, management is free to use employee wages and benefits to reduce its costs, thereby driving down the wages and benefits of the organized employees of other competitors. The unorganized employer then must cut its employee costs further, and on and on. The cycle never ends.

Are organized companies competitive? Yes, most definitely. The IBEW has worked hard with its employers to insure the employers are productive and competitive. Employees have the same desire to make a company successful as management does. However, the methods are different in organized companies. In organized companies, workers and management are equal partners in addressing the needs of employees, shareholders, and customers.

Are there any other reasons employers oppose our right to organize? The ultimate reason is that employers lose total control over the working lives of their employees. When employees organize a union, employers must, by law, bargain with employees and their union over terms and conditions of employment, and that right is enforced by federal law. This is the primary reason employers expend so much time, effort, and money preventing employees from finding out the truth about union organization.

Industrial democracy provided by our union limits the inherent dictatorial power of management.

Only then can we as employees have an equal, effective voice in our own affairs.