



Questions & Answers about Organizing

Q. Is it legal to sign an authorization card?

A. YES! Section 401 of the Public Employee Relations Act (PERA) gives employees the right to “organize, form, join or assist in employe organizations...of their own free choice”. This is your legal right under law. It is illegal for the employer or a union to threaten or coerce you in any way.

Q. Will we be without protection while we wait for the election?

A. No. Once the petition has been filed at the PA Labor Relations Board (PLRB), it is illegal for the employer to change your wages, benefits or working conditions. Everything must stay the same until the PLRB conducts an election to determine who your new bargaining representative will be.

Q. How does the PLRB election work?

A. After the union petitions the PLRB for an election, the PLRB will schedule a telephone pre-conference call to determine if there are any issues to be resolved regarding the bargaining unit. If there are open issues, the Board will schedule a hearing. If there are no issues, or when they are resolved, the PLRB and the parties will set the date, time and place for the election. An election notice will then be posted at the work place.

The election is conducted like any other election with each side having observers at the poll. All eligible employees will vote by secret ballot at a convenient time for all work schedules. The ballot will have the name of the petitioning union (PSEA) and “no representative”. In order to be certified by the PLRB, the petitioning union must obtain 50% + 1 votes of all employees who cast ballots.

Q. What happens when PSEA wins a representation election?

A. Once PSEA is certified by the PLRB as your new representative, PSEA Region Officers will assist your local in adopting a local Constitution & Bylaws and election of local officers. Your UniServ Representative will work with your local negotiations committee in preparations for negotiating an Agreement with your employer regarding wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment.

Q. Will we have to bargain from scratch?

A. No. With PSEA, you will begin bargaining using your current terms and conditions as a base, then bargain improvements with the employer. PSEA has never bargained from scratch when we were certified as a new local.

Q. Who will bargain our contract?

A. Your new local will be assigned a UniServ Representative who will assist your local bargaining team in negotiations by preparing contract surveys, drafting proposals and researching special issues. We will use our research database to evaluate your wages and benefits in comparison to similar schools in your area.

Q. Will everyone be required to join PSEA?

A. PSEA encourages all employees to join in order to have more clout at the bargaining table. However, any employee who elects not to be a member may pay a Fair Share fee (approximately 85% of dues) instead. Fair share must be bargained into a collective bargaining agreement.

Q. If PSEA wins the election, will the employer's ability to make arbitrary decisions be limited?

A. With your first contract, you will have a voice in important decisions about your job. A contract establishes more consistent policies and fair rules for all employees. Supervisors will no longer have discretion to play favorites with some employees and discriminate against others.

Q. Can dues dollars be used to support political candidates?

A. PSEA cannot use dues dollars for direct or in-kind contributions to any candidates or political parties. PSEA cannot use dues dollars on activities or communications on behalf of any candidates that go to the public.