

COMMON LABOR TERMS

Agency Shop

A union security clause providing that an employee in the bargaining unit refusing to join the union must pay a service fee to the union equal to union dues.

Arbitration

A way of settling disputes by calling in an impartial third party whose decision is final and binding on both parties.

Automation

Replacement of manual work with mechanical devices or new machines.

Bargaining Unit

A group of employees bargaining collectively with their employer. The unit may include both union members and non-members.

Check-Off

A clause in the union contract authorizing the employer to deduct union dues from members' paychecks and transfer them to the union. Dues check-off is the most sensible, efficient way to collect union dues.

Closed Shop

A plant hiring union members only. This practice is illegal under the Taft-Hartley Act. (Sometimes confused with "union shop." See page 5 - Union Shop.)

Collective Bargaining

Direct negotiations between union and employer to determine wages, hours and working conditions. Normally, a written contract covering everyone in the bargaining unit is the end result.

Company Union

Union organized, dominated and financed by the employer. Outlawed as an unfair labor practice by the National Labor Relations Act.

Coordinated Bargaining

Two or more unions cooperating to bring about changes in contract language affecting both unions.

Cost-of-Living Index

Commonly used name for the Consumer's Price Index prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This index shows, from month-to-month and year-to-year, changes in price for a number of consumer goods and is a rough measure of cost-of-living changes.

Department of Labor (Federal)

Oversees compliance with law on union financial reports, elections, union officers and terms, boycotts and picketing.

Department of Labor and Industries (Washington State)

Runs injured workers' compensation insurance, health and safety education and regulations.

Due Process

Provision under the law that prohibits employers from dismissing employees without just cause. In contracts, due process can protect employees from unjust discipline, transfer, demotion and other areas affecting employee's status with the employer.

Escalator Clause (COLA)

Contract language providing for wage increases or decreases as the cost of living goes up or down, measured by Cost-of-Living Index.

Fair Labor Standards Act

Federal law setting minimum wage and time and one-half for all hours worked over 40 hours weekly.

Free Rider

Worker in bargaining unit enjoying benefits of collective bargaining but refusing to join union.

Fringe Benefits

Non-wage benefits in contract, such as paid holidays, vacations, insurance, pensions and other items, paid in part or in whole by employer.

Joint Bargaining

Two or more unions working together to effect simultaneous contract settlement or identical contract language for both by utilizing one negotiation team for both bargaining units.

Lockout

Employer denying employment to workers during a labor dispute to force union to settle on employer's terms.

Maintenance of Membership

Union security provision in contract stating worker voluntarily joining unit must remain a member during the contract's term.

Mediation (Conciliation)

Efforts by a neutral third party to get union and management to agree when there is a dispute. The mediator (conciliator) acts as a friend to both sides and tries to find bases for agreement.

Modified Union Shop

Union security provision requiring all new employees to join union and workers already in union to remain.

National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)

Created by the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, the NLRB administers and enforces the Act. It defines appropriate bargaining units, holds elections to determine if a majority of workers want union representation or not, interprets and applies Act's provisions and certifies unions to represent employees. The NLRB has five members appointed by the President of the United States.

Open Shop

An employment environment where, although the employer recognizes the union as the collective bargaining agent of the employees in an appropriate bargaining unit, none of the employees is obligated to become or remain a member of the union in order to keep his or her job.

Picketing

Carrying of signs by employees either on strike to inform public and other employees of dispute or informational picketing to bring pressure to bear on employer for settlement.

Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC)

Interprets and applies the Public Employees Collective Bargaining Act for public employees in Washington State.

Real Wages

Earnings expressed in terms of buying power of the dollar. Buying power is the amount of goods or services current money wages can buy. One measure of buying power is the Consumer Price Index.

Severance Pay

Also called dismissal, termination, separation pay. Payment by the employer to worker who is laid off permanently through no fault of her or his own.

Strike

Withdrawal of workers' labor in concert with other bargaining unit members to force the employer to improve wages, hours and conditions of employment.

Strike Authorization

Vote by union members to allow negotiation team authority to call a strike if contract negotiations fail to bring about a settlement.

Strikebreaker (Scab)

Person who continues to work or who accepts employment while workers are on strike, thereby weakening or breaking the strike

Taft-Hartley Act

This actually refers to amendments to the National Labor Relations Act of 1935.

Unfair Labor Practice (ULP)

A violation of the National Labor Relations Act by either the employer or employee union.

Union Security

A clause in the contract providing for the union shop, modified union shop, maintenance of membership clause or agency shop. The check-off can also be regarded as a form of union security.

Union Shop

Plant in which every worker covered by the contract must become a member of a union.

VOTE

Stands for “Voice of the Electorate.” OPEIU’s political action fund. Through voluntary contributions from the members, OPEIU is able to defend the members’ rights and interests through united political action. The most effective means of collecting VOTE monies is through check-off