

Building Member Support for Bargaining To Protect Workers' Freedom to Unite in Our Union

1 Start communicating with members well before the contract expires.

It takes time and repetition to build members' support for uniting all workers in our union and show management we're serious about it as a bargaining goal. Six months in advance of the contract expiration is not too soon to start discussing the issue in contract surveys, leaflets, and newsletters. Training activists to talk one-on-one with their co-workers and inviting non-union workers to speak at meetings and visit with union members at worksites can also build support.

2 Talk about helping other employees who do the same kind of work to unite with us so everyone will have more strength – not about “organizing rights” for non-union workers or for the union itself.

A national poll of SEIU members showed that only 21 percent were “very favorable” to making “*organizing*” a major priority for the union. That's because many members think that “organizing” is something “the union” does as an institution either to gain members and dues income or to benefit non-union workers.

But 74 percent find it either “very convincing” or “somewhat convincing” that *uniting more workers in our union who do the same kind of work* will give current members more negotiating strength.

3 Make a connection to other bargaining goals that directly benefit members.

Explain that we need to protect workers' freedom to unite with us in our union to gain the strength in numbers to win wage increases, benefit improvements, better staffing, job security, etc. If we don't help other workers unite with us, employers will look for ways to undermine our standards and job security by shifting to nonunion workers with lower pay and benefits.

4 Educate members about how employers deny workers' freedom to unite with us.

National polling shows that more than half of SEIU members don't know what workers are up against when they try to unite with us by forming a union. Tell members – or find ways for non-union workers to tell their own stories – about supervisor pressure, threats, and intimidation; mandatory meetings where employers lie about the union; and retaliation against employees who speak out for the union.

5 Clearly explain the fair conduct we're trying to negotiate. This could include...

Management should stop forcing workers to meet one-on-one with supervisors or in mandatory group meetings with management to be pressured not to unite with us.

Management should stop diverting patient care resources or taxpayer dollars to pay for campaigns to intimidate employees who want to unite with us.