



***November 2025***

## **Stewards Are Organizers: *Local 2600 Fights for Disability Rights***

A member of Local 2600, Capitol Area Human Services & Public Aid Employees wanted to work remotely because his house was arranged to minimize the impact of his disability. The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) denied his remote request and fought the Union through the first three steps of the grievance process. The Department demanded that he report to an office that did not have a proper entrance for staff with disabilities or appropriate bathroom stalls.

To support their member, Local 2600 stewards helped organize an informational picket. "Our stewards were really engaged, lining up support from members in their workplaces and pulling together the rally" said Cherena Douglass, President of Local 2600. "Then two days before the picket, DHS management magically found another position for the member that was fully remote!"

Local 2600 turned the picket into a celebration of success with a food truck and a picnic. Stewards are organizers!

## **Tips for Effective Stewards: *Your Right to Information***

Unions have a right to information so they can monitor and enforce the contract. The employer's obligation is rooted in contract language and in both private and public sector labor relations laws. This broad duty includes the disclosure of documents, electronic records, factual information, and data. Management must provide requested information for the union to administer the contract, including what the union reasonably believes may be relevant to a grievance or potential grievance. If the employer doesn't have the information in its possession, it must make a reasonable effort to obtain it, including making requests of third parties with whom it has a relationship (such as contractors).

The union must be able to credibly state a good faith reason for the request, not simply conduct a fishing expedition. Employers can deny requests that are "unduly burdensome," but labor boards tend to favor the production of requested information. An employer cannot deny requests for information based upon the employer's opinion that a grievance has no merit.

Information requests can help the union to decide whether a grievance has merit.

Employers sometimes fail to timely provide grievance information. The union needs to decide whether to request their staff rep (with attorney assistance) to file an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP), or whether to advance the grievance without the information. Processing a ULP can take many months. Stewards should consult their staff rep about whether there is a consistent pattern of failure to provide information that would merit the extraordinary step of filing a ULP.

Information requests can help to win grievances, make employers think twice about violating the contract, and can serve as a powerful incentive for an employer who realizes that settling the grievance may be preferable to responding to detailed information requests that might weaken an employer's position. (*Adapted and reprinted with permission from The Union Steward's Complete Guide*)

## **Test Your Knowledge: Documenting Grievances**

When processing a grievance for temporary assignment pay, which of the following would you need to collect?

- A copy of the grievant's performance evaluations
- A copy of the grievant's educational achievements
- A copy of relevant job descriptions with duties of the higher classification performed highlighted
- All of the above

When processing a filling of vacancy grievance, which of the following would you need to collect?

- A copy of the seniority list
- A copy of the promotion test and individual scores
- A copy of the grievant's disciplinary record
- A copy of the grievant's performance evaluation
- All of the above

***Answers are below***

## **Steward Resources: Convention Workshops via Zoom**

Coming soon: convention workshops via zoom!

There was a tremendous amount of interest in the workshops presented at our 24<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention last month. But, of course, not everyone can attend the convention or all of the workshops. So Council 31 is making many of those workshops available to stewards via zoom. You can select one or all nine! Keep an eye out for the notice/schedule in your email!

- Understanding Labor Arbitration
- Protecting Lives—Health and Safety in State Prisons
- Resolving Workplace Issues
- Safety on the Job and Fair Compensation for Injuries

- Waging a Successful Contract Campaign
- Taking It to the Top—Why, When and How to Advocate at County Boards, City Councils or Other Leadership Bodies
- Artificial Intelligence—Meeting the Challenge
- The All-Out Assault on Public Employee Unions
- The Impact of Federal Budget Cuts on AFSCME Members in Illinois

### **Going the Extra Mile: Fight the “Freedom Foundation”!**

For years, the Illinois Policy Institute (IPI) has been fighting tooth and nail to undermine public employees and their unions. IPI accelerated its campaign after the Supreme Court’s Janus vs. AFSCME Council 31 decision that ruled that a bargaining unit employee does not have to pay any portion of union dues even though the employee is entitled to all the pay, benefits, and rights negotiated in the contract by union members.

In 2022 a new, virulently anti-union group arrived from out of state whose only purpose is to convince workers to drop their membership in public sector unions. The Freedom Foundation wants to weaken AFSCME’s ability to negotiate good pay and benefits, and wants to privatize public services. They are contacting our members, and urging them to drop their membership in an attempt to diminish the union’s bargaining power.

If you receive a letter or email from the Freedom Foundation or the Illinois Policy Institute, notify your AFSCME staff representative right away and warn your coworkers. We shall not be moved!

### **Terms You Should Know: Short Term Employee**

An employee who is employed for less than two consecutive calendar quarters during a calendar year and who does not have a reasonable assurance that he or she will be rehired by the same employer for the same service in a subsequent calendar year. Short-term employees are excluded from coverage under Illinois’ public sector collective bargaining laws. This exclusion is somewhat similar to the exclusion of “seasonal” employees under the National Labor Relations Act.

### **This Month in Labor History: Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO)**

November, 1935 – The creation of the Committee for Industrial Organization was announced by eight industrial unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. In 1938 they formally broke with the AFL to become the Congress of Industrial Organizations but reunited with the AFL in 1955 to become the AFL-CIO

### **Answers to Test Your Knowledge: Documenting Grievances**

*When processing a grievance for temporary assignment pay, which of the following would you need to collect?*

- A copy of the grievant's performance evaluations
- A copy of the grievant's educational achievements
- **A copy of relevant job descriptions with duties of the higher classification performed highlighted**
- All of the above

*When processing a filling of vacancy grievance, which of the following would you need to collect?*

- Copy of seniority list
- Copy of the promotion test and individual scores
- Copy of the grievant's disciplinary record
- Copy of the grievant's performance evaluation
- **All of the above**

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