

All women have one thing in common

Power



## Got Equality?

Half of all workers are men; the other half are women. Fifty percent of the population is male, the other fifty percent is female. Men provide for their families, as do women. Men have financial obligations, as do women.

So, if women are half the workforce, half the population, provide for their families and meet their obligations, why is it a man's world?

Simply put, it was designed that way. However, it doesn't have to stay that way. It's a slow process, but women have been breaking ceilings and blazing trails for generations. The work isn't done. To realize true gender equality, it's going to take everyone – sisters and brothers – working together. That work can be done within your union, through a women's committee.

## Where to Begin?

Like everything else, forming a women's committee starts with conversations.

- Talk to other women in your local about working together to make things better.
- Talk to your lodge leaders and get their support. Explain that there are sisters willing to form a women's committee.
- Talk to the membership to determine top concerns. Remember many family issues affect men too, so consider all opinions.

## Pick an Issue. . . Any Issue. . .

Much of what happens in our communities is reflected in our workplaces. Just about every issue impacts women and working families, thus is important to the membership.

- Raising the Minimum Wage. More than 50% of minimum wage workers are women, average aged 35. Over 25% are mothers.
- Healthcare Reform. Historically, women pay higher premiums and co-pays because they could become pregnant or contract certain gender-specific illnesses.
- Domestic Violence. One in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime and 37% of women admit domestic violence adversely affected their job performance.
- Voter Protection Laws. Women have only had the right to vote for 100 years, yet some are trying to take it away. Voter Protection Laws are really about silencing voices – women's voices. Name changes resulting from marriage or divorce can deem a woman ineligible to vote if registration lists are not updated to match identification.

The list goes on and isn't limited to what happens on the clock. Education and activism on any issue are important committee goals.

## Plan Something

Once you have identified the issues, consider ways to spark improvement in those areas. Start with a short-term goal. Consider the following:

- Host a lunch and learn to increase knowledge on a topic.
- Schedule a guest speaker to talk about a subject before a lodge meeting.
- Look for community groups seeking legislative improvements on an issue and help spread the word, get signatures on petitions.

## Keeping it Going

To establish a viable functioning resource to the members, you have to be consistent with your activities.

- Schedule regular meetings and promote the date and time to the members.
- Create an agenda and stick to it. This will ensure efficient use of time.
- Set realistic timelines and goals.
- Assign duties and responsibilities to all committee members to avoid burn-out and keep everyone invested.
- Brief lodge leaders about committee activities
- Give reports at the monthly lodge meeting so members are informed.
- Write for the lodge's newsletter or website.

## Maximizing Your Voice

Everything we do and the rules dictating how it's done are decided in the political arena. From school boards and county officials to state and federal representatives, our voices count, but only if we use them. So many workers don't vote or vote against their own interests, because they don't know which leaders are in their corner. The women's committee can help educate members on which candidates support workers. Once representatives are elected, the women's committee can coordinate visits to the local office, email campaigns or call-in days as follow-up. When they know we're watching, they listen.

# Growing Stronger

“Strength in numbers” isn’t just a saying, it’s a fact. When Labor was at its peak, the middle class was solid, the economy thrived and workers earned better wages and benefits. As union density has decreased, so has our quality of life.

We can be strong again, if we organize. Comparatively, women are joining unions at a higher rate than men. Therefore, women should play a greater role in organizing and mentoring new members. That task might seem intimidating, but women are natural communicators, and organizing starts with a conversation.

Women play important rolls in the home, the community and the workplace; so, why not in their union? By joining a women’s committee, women become leaders empowered to change the world in which they live.



Women | Young Workers | Human

## Rights

Are you ready to change the world?

WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEPARTMENT  
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