

## **THE STRUCTURE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT**

### **Understanding Labor's Structure**

There are two main structures that run parallel to each other from the national to the local level. The first is the structure of any given union, such as the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), or the Communications Workers of America (CWA). The second is the structure of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). The AFL-CIO is not a union. It is a federation of unions, which is organized as a federation down to the local level, first the national AFL-CIO, to state AFL-CIOs, to CLCs.

### **Labor at the National Level**

Through its convention and executive council, the AFL-CIO makes policy for labor, and carries out a wide variety of functions in the political arena. There are 56 national and international unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO. (For all practical purposes, there is no distinction between a national and international union.) The AFL-CIO both supports and is supported by state labor federations (State Feds) in all fifty states and Puerto Rico. At the local level, there are over six hundred central labor councils (CLCs), which are themselves federations of local unions in a city, county, or region of a state.

### **State AFL-CIOs ("State Federations")**

State labor federations are voluntarily supported by union locals and central labor councils. Commonly called "state feds," these bodies coordinate labor's legislative, electoral, and community service work. They also support strikes, sometimes assist in organizing, and do public relations activities. Please see the next document for more information on the critical role of state AFL-CIOs.

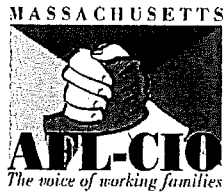
### **Union Locals**

Most local unions operate in a specific city or geographic area, and have a "jurisdiction" that specifies the types of workers they represent (telephone workers, social workers, teachers, janitors, carpenters, etc.). Some local unions serve expanded areas that cover an entire state or region of the country. Local unions vary dramatically in size, resources, and community involvement. Some may have as few as a dozen members and no full-time staff. Others have hundreds or thousands of members, and may have their own building(s), printing facilities, and many staff.

### **Central Labor Councils**

Local unions organize on the municipal and county level by affiliating with a Central Labor Council (CLC) in order to work together on political and legislative action, organizing, solidarity activity with other unions, and social justice issues. Local unions elect or appoint delegates to send to their CLC's monthly meetings to share information about what is happening in their locals,

support other unions if needed, and work together in committees to carry out the goals of the council.



## About the Massachusetts AFL-CIO:

The Massachusetts AFL-CIO is the unified voice of all organized workers in the Commonwealth. Moreover, we are the voice of all working people in Massachusetts, both those in unions and those not yet organized. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families – to work for economic and social justice in the workplace, our communities, our unions, our states and our nation.

The Massachusetts AFL-CIO has roots going back more than a century, with a long and proud history of fighting for the commonwealth's working men and women. Formed in 1887 as the Massachusetts branch of the American Federation of Labor, and later chartered by the national AFL-CIO in 1958, the Massachusetts AFL-CIO is a union of unions, dedicated to achieving a better quality of life for working families.

Today, we are the state's largest labor umbrella organization, representing more than 750 local unions and intermediate bodies, such as joint boards and district councils. We are one of 51 state charters of our parent organization, the national American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

Through our affiliated unions, we represent nearly 400,000 workers across Massachusetts spanning every conceivable occupation, from teachers to electricians, nurses to ironworkers, public employees to utility workers. By mobilizing our affiliated unions, members, and community allies, we maximize our collective strength to bring about positive change. Specifically, we focus our efforts in the following areas:

- **Political education and action.** We educate and mobilize union members around local, state, and national races, endorsing and supporting candidates who will advocate for working families. We work especially hard to elect union members to office, recognizing that no one represents working people more effectively than one of our own.
- **Legislative advocacy.** At the federal, state, and local levels, we fight for and achieve pro-worker and family-friendly laws and policies.
- **Organizing.** We support all workers who seek a better life and brighter future through union representation. And we assist our affiliated unions in their organizing efforts.
- **Bargaining and strike support.** A strong contract is the key to ensuring worker rights. We support our affiliated unions in bargaining contracts that provide fair pay, good benefits, retirement security, and a safer, more democratic workplace. During negotiations or strikes, we use our leverage and credibility among businesses, employers, elected officials and the media to help resolve disputes quickly, fairly, and favorably for workers.
- **Workforce development.** Lifelong education and training is essential for Massachusetts workers to compete in a rapidly changing economy. It's also the best way to ensure that we can create new industries and attract good jobs to our commonwealth. We obtain funding for and facilitate first-rate training and professional development for both current and displaced workers.
- **Community involvement.** We support charities that cure the sick, feed the hungry, provide heat to the cold, house the homeless, assist veterans, help those struggling with addiction or with mental and physical disabilities, and make a better future for our kids.
- **Outreach to the press and public.** We tell the true story of unions and union members to the media and the public. We also create strong coalitions with community groups who share our belief in human rights, labor rights, and a fair deal for workers.

## Glossary of Labor Terms

### A

**AFL-CIO** – Name of the federation created by merger in 1955 of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

**Agency fee** – Also called “fair share fee”, is a fee charged to non-members equal to the cost of representing them to their employer in collective bargaining. In states where there is no fair share fee, the union must sign up everyone as a member—not merely a fair share payer—to keep the union strong.

**Apprentice Worker** – serving a special training period in preparation for admission to full status as a skilled tradesman.

**Arbitration** – The hearing and determination of a controversy between parties by a person or persons chosen by the parties or appointed under statutory authority instead of by a judicial tribunal.

**Area agreement** – Collective bargaining agreement covering a given physical or geographical region, its terms and conditions governing all companies that participate.

**Association agreement** – Collective bargaining agreement applicable to all members of the employer association that has negotiated it.

**Authorization cards** – Signed statements by employees designating a union as their bargaining agent. Baby Wagner Acts State labor relations statutes modeled on the original National Labor Relations Act (the Wagner Act).

### B

**Back pay** – Wages due for past services, often the difference between money already received and a higher amount resulting from a change in wage rates. Under the National Labor Relations Act, “back pay” is the amount an employee discriminatorily discharged or otherwise discriminated against would have earned if no discrimination had occurred, minus earnings during the discrimination period.

**Bargaining rights** – (1) Right of workers to negotiate through chosen representatives concerning terms and conditions of employment; (2) The right of the union designated by a majority of the workers in the appropriate bargaining unit to represent the group in collective bargaining.

**Bargaining unit** – An employee group that, on the basis of related skills or common interests in working conditions, is an appropriate unit for collective bargaining.

**Blacklist** – List of union members circulated among employers to advise them of the union activities of job applicants.

**“Blanket” injunctions** – Injunctions prohibiting in the future acts or violations by an employer or a union that have not actually been committed in the case presently before the court.

**Boycott** – A refusal to deal with an employer, involving refusals to purchase products, refusals to work or both.

**Bumping** – Exercise of seniority rights by longer-service workers to displace junior employees when business conditions require temporary layoffs or the discontinuance of departments, or to obtain preference over junior employees in choice of shifts, runs, dates of vacation periods and the like.

**Bureau of Labor Statistics** – A federal agency in the U.S. Department of Labor engaged in fact-finding in the field of labor economics. Among its functions is the compiling of the cost-of-living index.

**Business agent** – Local union officer who acts as executive secretary for the union, handles business matters, enrolls new members, investigates complaints of members, negotiates with employers and generally administers the union's affairs.

**C**  
**Cease-and-desist orders** – The final order to cease and desist from unfair labor practices that is issued in an unfair labor practice case by the National Labor Relations Board. Certification Official, formal designation of a union as the exclusive bargaining representative for employees in a particular bargaining unit.

**Central Labor Council** – A union body composed of the various AFL-CIO locals within a city or metropolitan area

**Charge** – Written statement of alleged unfair practices. Its filing with the National Labor Relations Board is the first step in an unfair labor practice proceeding.

**Check-off** – A system by which union dues and other assessments are deducted from the employees' paychecks by the employer, either automatically or on specific authorization from the workers.

**Clayton Act** – Federal statute passed in 1914 as an amendment to the Sherman Antitrust Act, notable for its declaration that human labor is not a "commodity or article of commerce" and for its privileging of certain labor activities.

**Closed shop** – A form of union security in which the employer obligates himself to hire and retain in employment only union members, declared illegal by the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.

**Closed union** – A union that restricts membership to a relatively few, selected members of a particular craft, trade or similar group of workers.

**Collective bargaining** – The process of negotiating a union contract or settling grievances under the grievance procedure provided in an existing contract.

**Collective bargaining agreement** – The agreement reached between an employer and the union representing the employees that embodies the terms and conditions of employment agreed upon

in collective bargaining. Ordinarily, the agreement is written and is effective for a definite period.

**Company union** – An unaffiliated union whose membership is limited to the employees of a single company.

**Complaint** – Formal paper issued by National Labor Relations Board to start an unfair labor practice hearing. The complaint States the basis for the board's jurisdiction and the alleged unfair practices.

**Compulsory arbitration** – Settlement of a dispute by arbitration required by law.

**Compulsory unionism** – Employment conditioned on union membership, as in the closed shop, union shop, maintenance of membership or preferential hiring.

**Concerted activity** – Activity by two or more employees as a group, which, if engaged in for mutual aid or protection, is a right guaranteed to employees by the National Labor Relations Act and protected against coercion by employers or unions.

**Conciliation Attempt** – by third person, a conciliator, to aid the settling of a labor dispute by hearing both sides and offering advice and nonbinding suggestions.

**Conspiracy doctrine** – Early labor law theory that viewed self-organization of workers as a violation of common law prohibitions of criminal or civil conspiracy. Cooling-off period Period of time that must elapse before a strike or lockout may begin. See also "sixty-day notice,"

**Cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)** – A provision in a collective bargaining agreement that adjusts wage increases on fluctuations in the cost of living during the term of the contract

**Cost-of-living index** – The Bureau of Labor Statistics "Consumers' Price Index for Moderate-Income Families in Large Cities," based on retail prices of consumer items in a representative group of large cities

**Craft union** – A union whose membership is restricted to workers employing a particular skill, but admits workers having that skill regardless of the industry in which they work.

## D

**Davis-Bacon Act** – Federal law that provides for payment of minimum wages by contractors engaged in construction, alteration or repair of public buildings. These wage rates are fixed by the secretary of labor

**Decertification** – Removal by the National Labor Relations Board of a union's certification as exclusive bargaining representative

**Department of Labor** – Federal agency established in 1913 to further the welfare of wage earners.

**Discriminatory discharge** – Discharge for union activities or membership.

**Dispute** – Disagreement between an employer and employees that is of such proportions as to

warrant referral to an arbitrator for settlement or that threatens or causes a work stoppage, See also "jurisdictional dispute."

**Docking** – Deducting penalties from an employee's wages for tardiness, absence, spoilage, etc.

## E

**Economic strikes** – Strikes called to force changes in wages, hours or other working conditions rather than in protest against unfair labor practices.

**Employer's last-offer ballot** – A Taft-Hartley Act authorized election that is conducted by the director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to give workers an opportunity to vote, before striking, on acceptance or rejection of an employer's final offer.

**Escalator clause** – Union contract provision for the raising and lowering of wages according to changes in the cost-of-living index or similar standard.

**Escape clause** – A provision in maintenance-of-membership union contracts giving union members an "escape period" during which they may resign from membership. Members who do not resign must remain members for the duration of the contract.

**Exclusive bargaining rights** – Right of the union designated as bargaining representative by a majority of the employees in the appropriate bargaining unit to bargain collectively for all employees in the unit.

## F

**Fair Labor Standards Act** – The federal wage-hour law that establishes minimum wage and Overtime pay requirements and child-labor restrictions.

**Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service** – Independent agency created by the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 to attempt to settle labor disputes that substantially affect interstate commerce. It is a successor to and took over the functions of the U.S. Conciliation Service.

**Free riders** – Term applied by unions to nonmember employees who secure whatever benefits are derived from the union's activities without paying union dues.

## G

**General strike** – A strike by all organized workers in a city or country.

**Geographic wage differentials** – Differences in wage rates based upon locations of plants or industries.

**Grievance procedure** – Procedure for settling disputes, either established by the employer or provided for in a collective bargaining agreement.

**Grievances** – Workers' dissatisfaction-complaints-that charge a violation of a collective bargaining agreement or of traditional work practices.

**Guaranteed wage plans** – Systems under which the employer states, in advance, that for a specific period he will pay a predetermined amount to, or retain in service at some employment or in any event with pay, a previously specified number of his workers, whether or not they have work to do.

## H

**Hatch Act** – Federal law that, as amended by the Taft-Hartley Act, forbids corporations or unions from making contributions or expenditures in connection with elections for certain federal offices.

**Health and welfare plan** – Plan providing insurance payments to employees in case of sickness or accident.

**Hiring hall** – -Headquarters from which requests for workers are filled. A hiring hall may be operated by a union alone or by an employer and union jointly.

**Hot cargo clauses** – Clauses in union contracts permitting employees to refuse to handle or work with goods shipped from a struck plant or to perform services benefiting an employer listed on a union unfair list.

## I

**Illegal strike** – A strike that is called in violation of law, such as a strike that ignores cooling-off period restrictions or some absolute statutory ban, or a strike that disregards the no-strike agreement of the union.

**Improvement factor** – Annual increase in wages given under employer-union contract, representing an agreed-upon amount as employees' share of benefits resulting from increased productivity in the economy.

**Incentive wages** – Method of wage payment under which workers receive extra pay for extra production.

**Independent union** – A labor organization, not company dominated, that is not affiliated with the AFL-CIO and remains independent of any federation.

**Industrial union** – A union whose membership includes any worker in a particular industry, regardless of the particular skills the workers are exercising.

**Informational picketing** – Picketing to publicize either the existence of a labor dispute or information concerning the dispute.

**Injunction** – A court order that either imposes restraints upon action or, if in mandatory form, directs that action be taken, and that is, in either case, backed by the court's power to hold disobedient parties in contempt.

**Interference** – Under the National Labor Relations Act, action or non-action by employers or unions that infringes upon the rights of employees to join together or to refrain from combining for purposes of self-organization and collective bargaining.



## J

**Job action** – A concerted action by employees on the job that puts pressure on an employer without striking. Slowdowns, in which workers deliberately reduce productivity, and work-to-rule actions, in which employees perform the minimum of what is officially required of them, are examples.

**Journeyman** – Workers in a traditional craft who have gone through an apprenticeship and mastered the type of work involved in the craft: qualified craftsman.

**Jurisdictional dispute** – A conflict involving a dispute between two unions as to which shall represent a group of employees in collective bargaining or as to which union's members shall perform a certain type of work.

## K

## L

**Labor dispute** – A controversy concerning terms or conditions of employment. The term is expressly defined in various laws, such as the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act.

**Labor Management Relations Act of 1947 (Taft-Hartley Act)** – Federal law that amends the National Labor Relations Act to regulate some union activities, authorizes damage suits for collective bargaining violations and certain strikes and boycotts and sets up procedures for trying to settle national emergency strikes.

**Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959 (Landrum-Griffin)** – Federal statute that imposes controls on unions to protect rights of individual members; requires the filing of reports by unions, employers and labor relations consultants: and amends the National Labor Relations Act to impose tighter restrictions on strikes, picketing and boycotts.

**Local union** – The basic unit in union organization. The local adopts its own constitution and by-laws and elects its own officers, but it is chartered by the international with which it is affiliated.

**Lockout** – Shutdown of a plant by the employer to discourage union membership or activity or to force employees to meet the demands or economic terms of the employer.

## M

**Maintenance of membership** – A union security system under which an employee is not required to join the union, but if he does, or, if already a member and if he fails to resign during the escape period, he binds himself to remain a member for the duration of the union contract.

**Majority representation** – Designation of a union by a majority of employees in a bargaining unit or by a majority of employees voting in a representation election, as the bargaining agent for all employees within the unit.

**Management rights or prerogatives** – The assortment of rights involving hiring, production

scheduling, pricing, etc., that are generally reserved to management and are not proper subjects for collective bargaining.

**Master agreement** – A union contract usually associated with industry-wide or near-industry-wide bargaining. Usually the master agreement settles major issues but does not necessarily control all points, thus leaving room for local adjustments.

**Mediation** – The efforts of a third party to suggest to the parties to a labor dispute possible solutions for their controversy.

**Minimum wage** – The rate of pay established by statute or by minimum wage order as the lowest wage that may be paid whether for a particular type or to a particular class of workers or to any worker.

**Minority union** – A union that has members in a bargaining unit but not enough to give it majority representation.

## N

**National emergency strikes** – Strikes that would imperil national health or safety and are, therefore, subject to special cooling-off procedures under the Taft-Hartley Act.

**National Labor-Management Panel** – Joint labor management body created to advise the Federal Mediation and Cancellation Service in the avoidance, mediation and voluntary adjustment of labor disputes.

**National Labor Relations Act** – Federal statute enacted in 1935, originally known as the Wagner Act and now a part of the Taft-Hartley Act, that guarantees to employees in industries affecting interstate commerce the right to self organization, to bargain collectively and to engage in concerted activities, Amended in 1947 by the Labor Management Relations Act and in 1959 by the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act.

**National Labor Relations Board** – Board established by National Labor Relations Act to conduct representation elections and hearings and determine unfair labor practice charges arising under the statute.

**No-raiding pact** – Agreement between unions not to seek to organize workers within each other's specified jurisdiction.

## O

**Open shop** – A shop in which union membership is not required as a condition of obtaining or retaining employment.

**Organizational picketing** – Picketing to persuade employees to join a union or to accept the union as bargaining agent. Organizational picketing is subject to certain restrictions under the 1959 amendments to the National Labor Relations Act.

**Outlaw strikes** – Work stoppages that lack the approval of the national or international union and

usually violate either a collective bargaining agreement or the union constitution.

## P

**Picketing** – Union’s patrolling alongside the premises of a business to organize the workers, to gain recognition as a bargaining agent or to publicize a labor dispute with the owner or with whom the owner deals.

**Piecework pay** – Wages paid on the basis of the number of units produced rather than the time spent on production

**Preferential hiring** – System under which employers agree to hire only union members as long as the union is able to fill demands for workers.

**Premium pay** – An extra amount over straight-time rates sometimes a flat sum, sometimes a percentage of the wage rate paid to workers to compensate them for inconvenient hours, overtime, hazardous or unpleasant conditions or for their undesirable circumstances. See also definition of “shift differential.”

**Prevailing wage** – The prevailing wage protects communities and workers from unscrupulous contractors low-balling bids on taxpayer-funded construction projects by setting wage rates to the local or prevailing standard.

**Privatization** - Privatization of services has long been a favorite "solution" of right-wing extremists looking to profit off of taxpayer funds. In attempts to sell the government service provision to private companies, many promises are made about the cost-effectiveness and superior quality product that can be offered by the private sector. But most of those promised benefits fail to materialize. Instead, jobs are lost; wages and benefits slashed; and the quality of frequency of services are diminished.

**Project Labor Agreements** - Project-specific, pre-hire collective bargaining agreements that set out terms and conditions of employment to facilitate the smooth completion of a construction project by allowing stakeholders to agree to ground rules and synchronize expectations before the project starts. Wages, benefits, schedules and work rules are standardized up front, and parties agree to prevent work stoppages and submit to speedy dispute-resolution procedures. Public PLAs also focus on creating a positive community impact, with targeted hiring, training and outreach programs.

**Public Contracts Act** – Federal statute fixing wage, hour and working conditions for most federal supply contracts in excess of \$10,000.

## Q

## R

**Raiding** – A union’s attempt to enroll workers belonging to or represented by another union.

**Railway Labor Act of 1926** – Federal statute recognizing the right of collective bargaining in the railroad and airline industries.

**Real wages** – Wages in terms of goods and services that those wages will buy.

**Recognition** – Employer acceptance of a union as the exclusive bargaining representative for all employees in a bargaining unit.

**Recognition picketing** – Picketing to persuade or coerce an employer to recognize a union as the bargaining agent of his employees. Recognition picketing is subject to certain restrictions under the 1959 amendments to the National Labor Relations Act.

**Reinstatement** – Placing a worker back in a job he has lost without loss of seniority or other job benefits. Usually ordered by the National Labor Relations Board, together with back pay, as a remedy in discrimination cases.

**Reopening clause** – Clause in a collective bargaining agreement providing for reopening negotiations as to wage rates, etc., during the term of the agreement.

**"Right-to-work" law** – State law prohibiting a union shop, closed shop or any other union-security arrangement that requires employees to join a union as a condition of retaining employment. Extremist groups, right-wing politicians and their corporate backers want to weaken the power of workers and their unions through these "right to work" laws. Their efforts are a partisan political ploy that undermines the basic rights of workers. By making unions weaker, these laws lower wages and living standards for all workers in the state.

**Run-off election** – A second election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board in which no choice receives a majority of the ballots in the first poll. The run-off allows a selection between the choices receiving the largest and second largest number of votes cast in the original balloting.

## S

**Scab** – A union term generally applied to a worker who refuses to join coworkers in a strike. Sometimes applied to members of a non-striking union who pass through a striking union's picket line.

**Secondary activities** – Strikes, picketing or other activities directed by a union against an employer with whom it has no dispute in order to persuade or coerce that employer to stop doing business with, or to bring other pressure against, another employer with whom the union does have a dispute..

**Secondary boycott** – Refusal to deal with a neutral party in a labor dispute, usually accompanied by a demand that he bring pressure upon the employer involved in the dispute to accede to the boycott's terms.

**Seniority System** – granting preference in job security, promotions or other rewards to employees in accordance with their length of service.

**Shift differential** – Premium paid to workers on other than the day shift to compensate them for

their inconvenient working hours, See also "premium pay.

**Shop steward** – Union member ordinarily elected to represent workers in a particular shop or department. The shop steward collects dues, solicits new members, announces meetings, and receives, investigates and attempts the adjustment of grievances.

**Sit-down strike** – A strike in which the workers refuse to work but stay inside the employer's premises.

**Sixty-day notice** – The notice that, under the Taft-Hartley Act, must be given by either party to a collective bargaining agreement when desiring to reopen or terminate it, no strike or lockout may be begun during the sixty days.

**Strike** – A concerted and sustained refusal by workers to perform some or all of the services for which they were hired.

**Strike benefits** – Sums paid by a union to its striking members, and sometimes to nonmember strikers, to help finance them during a strike.

**Strikebreaker** – Workers hired during a strike primarily for the purpose of defeating the strike.

**Strike vote** – A vote conducted among employees in the bargaining unit on the question of whether they should go out on strike.

**Supplemental unemployment benefits (SUB)** – Payments by employers to laid-off workers (usually through trust funds) to supplement state unemployment compensation benefits.

**Sympathetic strike** – Concerted work stoppage by employees of Employer A to express sympathy for striking employees of Employer B and to exert indirect pressure on B.

## T

## U

**Unfair labor practice-proceeding** – National Labor Relations Board proceeding to determine alleged employer or union unfair labor practices.

**Unfair labor practices** – Those employer or union activities that are classified as unfair by federal or state labor relations acts.

**Unfair lists** – A boycott device used by unions, involving the circulation, by publication in union papers or by other means, of the names of employers with whom a union is disputing or with whom the union seeks to force to take certain action, such as ceasing to deal with a party to a labor dispute.

**Unilateral action** – Action by only one of the parties involved in the collective bargaining

relationship. Often it is designed to undercut the other side.

**Union security clause** – Provision in a union contract requiring employees, as a condition of employment, to maintain union membership or pay union dues or requiring an employer to check off dues from employees' wages.

**Union shop** – Form of union security that employees must, within a certain time after they are hired or after a compulsory-unionism contract is executed, join the union and maintain their membership as a condition of employment.

## V

## W

**Wage differentials** – Different rates of pay for the same general type of work, the variations resulting from differences in conditions under which the work is done, differences in performance standards or differences in the types of workers.

**Whipsawing** – Successive surprise strikes by a union against one after another of the various employers in an industry or in an employer's association so that no employer knows which one will be "sawed off" next.

**Wildcat strike** – A strike called without the consent of the union.

## X

## Y

**Yellow dog contracts** – Agreements signed by workers as a condition of employment in which they promise not to join or remain in a union. The National Labor Relations Act, the Norris-LaGuardia Act and the Railway Labor Act all prohibit them.