



*Please reach out to Steve Smith with the IBEW
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Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Why unionize?

State House employees care deeply about their service to the residents of the Commonwealth and the legislators they serve. To better serve Massachusetts, it is critical we guarantee clear rights and protections for ourselves and those who will serve as State House employees in the years to come.

Unionizing will grant us the right to collective bargaining; clear and comprehensive contracts; well defined roles and responsibilities; freedom from harassment and discrimination; equity in aspects of work; a healthy and supportive workplace; and a unified voice when the time for negotiations arise. See our [Core Values Document](#) for more information on why a State House union is necessary.

These efforts are in no way a condemnation of our bosses or current leadership, but rather a desire of employees to ensure a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities, a safe work environment, and a defined path to address any future concerns.

2. Do I need to tell my boss?

You are not required to tell your boss, and legally, your boss is not allowed to ask you about unionizing, either.

However, when we reach majority support (that will be demonstrated by signed union authorization cards), we will present the Speaker and Senate President with the opportunity to recognize your choice to be union members. Having your boss's support at that time would be beneficial to our success.

Staff members should discuss with each other the appropriate time to have that discussion with your boss (if at all). It is important to remember that this is not about your boss but rather about bringing a safe work environment to the State House where your contributions are recognized and creating an opportunity to develop a meaningful career.

3. Should I tell my boss?

Your boss can be a very important part in our success. It is your choice to evaluate their reaction to our effort.

4. What does this process look like from beginning to end?

- Conversations with co-workers
- Informational meetings
- Signing authorization cards declaring your wish to be represented by the IBEW
- Your signature is confidential.
- A simple majority of signatures of the proposed work group is necessary in order for IBEW Local 2222 to become your exclusive bargaining agent

- We will submit our signatures to an arbitrary third party for verification
- We will give the Senate President and Speaker of the House the opportunity to recognize our majority
- If necessary we will submit our petition to the DOL for certification
- You choose your bargaining committee and negotiations begin

5. I have a good relationship with my boss. They let me take time off whenever I need to and I can leave early on a Friday if things are slow. Will I lose this type of flexibility and independence if I join?

Flexibility exists in most union settings. As long as the flexibility doesn't have a negative impact on co-workers then your union would fully support it.

6. What about our conditions of employment do you expect to change with a union?

A union contract will consist of mutually (between the staff and the state) agreed upon conditions of employment including, but not limited to, hours of work, protection from unfair treatment, pay, benefits, etc.

7. How does it work for a union to negotiate a contract?

You will nominate coworkers to serve on the bargaining team. These co-workers will work alongside Local Union 2222 Business Manager Myles Calvey, who has over 30 years of experience successfully negotiating contracts with some of the largest companies in the country, including Verizon and Siemens.

8. How can a union help address harassment?

Harassment in the workplace is illegal and with a union you will have a safe, effective and legal system to deal with it.

9. How can a union help address poor management or abusive office environments created by a legislator who is my supervisor, but can't be fired?

Joint labor management committees are common in union contracts where the parties meet to discuss issues of concern. If a legislator is found abusive that is a violation of the law and will be dealt with accordingly.

10. Once a union is formed, is there anything that could happen to cause the union to break up?

At the expiration of your contract you could take a vote to disband the union.

11. Many staff experience challenges in the State House, but certain staffers experience additional challenges as members of marginalized groups. How is this Union committed to supporting the particular needs of marginalized groups, including people of color, women, LGBTQ+ folks and individuals with disabilities.

We are committed to ensuring everyone has a safe, equitable workplace and that employees who currently face unsafe working conditions -- including harassment, discrimination, and a hostile work environment -- are able to access redress. Similarly, we recognize the importance of prevention and support in transforming and incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the State House. Being a part of a union gives workers a voice at the table so that all of us can better advocate for these goals.

To have a deeper understanding of our shared values as a union, read our founding guidelines.

12. Have staff in other State Legislatures successfully unionized?

Staff in the Maine State Legislature are unionized; however it is important to note that the structure of the Main staff is different than Massachusetts, with the legislative staff employed by an independent legislative bureau.

There have also been legislative efforts to codify the rights of California legislative staff to unionize that have been ongoing since 2018. There are currently organizing efforts in two other New England states.

13. Does current Massachusetts state law enable us to unionize? Or do we need enabling legislation?

Every attorney we have discussed this with has a different opinion. If we need enabling legislation, we will get it.

With 700,00 members in the IBEW and 400,000 members of the state AFL/CIO we are proud of our part in the success of most of the elected officials in the State House because of a shared goal of seeing everyone treated with dignity and respect. And that is what this campaign is about.

We also have a team of leaders who are committed to developing political and communication strategies for all possible reactions.

14. Are there union dues if the simple majority of legislative staffers choose to unionize?

Yes, 1% of your base pay and \$19 a month. The 1% will go to the local IBEW office and the \$19 goes to the international union organization. No dues will be required until you accept your first contract and designed by the workers.

15. If the simple majority of legislative staffers choose to unionize but I do not, will I still be required to pay these dues?

Yes. If the simple majority of staffers choose to unionize all current staffers will pay the annual 1% of base pay and \$19 per month upon acceptance/signing of first contract.

16. What should I do if a reporter asks me about this effort?

Out of respect to your colleagues, please do not share information about this effort with the press. Not everyone is comfortable having the effort public and we should respect this need for discretion.

We encourage you to say no comment, or I can't talk now. If a reporter contacts you, please reach out to Steve Smith immediately to let us know so we can evaluate how to move forward.

17. Will my boss or leadership be able to find out if I joined?

No, unless you tell them personally. Legally, a signed union card must be kept confidential. We cannot, nor would we, share it with your employer.

18. What do you do with my email?

We have a private list and will only have you BCC'ed on emails with updates or meeting alerts.

19. What happens if I am retaliated against?

Reach out to Steve Smith immediately. IBEW has resources to support you including, if necessary, legal resources.

20. I want to tell my colleagues. How should I go about this?

Great! We encourage you to use your judgement about where and with whom to have these conversations. We especially encourage caution for talking about this process inside the State House and be thoughtful of who could overhear. Conversations may only occur before or after work hours or on lunch/social breaks. *Do not pressure anyone to sign a card or join the union.*

21. I am on board. Now what?

Sign a card, then have conversations with your co-workers, identify their concerns, set up small meetings to discuss the value of collective bargaining with the goal of pledged support. We can't organize a building of over 800 staffers without you!