

**OUTLINE of
“ALL ABOUT LABOR UNIONS” for EMERGE OREGON**

I. Introduction

- A. Labor and unions and your campaign: Where everything fits in.
- B. Audience Questions:
 - 1. Who here has experience with a union?
 - 2. Who here has experience with labor? (Everyone should)
 - 3. What do we think of when we think “labor” or “union”?
 - a) Positives
 - b) Negatives
 - c) Neutral / Definitional
 - 4. Who do the unions work for? Who is our “customer”? (Members)
- C. Important for this presentation and for your future engagement: ASK, ASK, ASK questions! If you don’t know, ask.

II. Why unions?

- A. Union goals: Power/Prosperity for working people
 - 1. Union membership is linked to individual prosperity
 - 2. Union trends are linked to broader regional or national prosperity
 - 3. Broader benefits of unionization often lift up women and particularly women of color (Jayaraman)
 - 4. Rising wages are particularly beneficial in Oregon, where we rely on income taxes for revenue. As wages rise, public costs decrease.
- B. How do we bring that about?
 - 1. Organizing
 - 2. Bargaining
 - 3. Legislating (more about whether this is “core” mission later)

III. What defines a union?

- A. Ask audience for simple and objective criteria
- B. There is no single definition of “union.”
 - 1. No definition in ORS
 - 2. Kind of a good definition in federal law
- C. Why?
 - 1. Unions come in all shapes, sizes, and organizations.
 - 2. Legal entities may include clubs, 501(c)5 nonprofits, corporations, LLCs, Facebook groups, covens... whatever. So long as they are recognized by 50% or more of employees as an exclusive bargainer of their interests to management.
- D. Unions within the labor community are NOT monolithic. More like a high school than an ant colony. There are often rivalries. Divisions include:
 - 1. Type of industry (public v private sector)

- a) Different policy goals, especially such as tax revenue issues for publics or prevailing wage for privates, etc.
 - b) Also differences in public sector levels (federal v state v local)
- 2. Type of governance structure
 - a) Some like UFCW 555 are very unitary, with a single “local” covering the whole state. Others like AFSCME have different locals for each job site and coordinate through a Council.
 - b) Some have a single executive committee that handles everything; some have different bodies for different decisions or use direct democracy for some decisions.
 - c) Some like IAFF (Firefighter) affiliates have locals and Councils that coordinate through a national or international umbrella organization. Others, like police unions, have no national umbrella and the individual local is the ultimate authority.
- 3. Affiliation
 - a) Some are affiliated with AFL-CIO, and some are not (or are affiliated with other coalitions)
 - b) Some are affiliated with certain industry groups within other coalitions, and these affiliations are not always neatly nested. (I.e: Union X may be part of Council Y, and Council Y may be an affiliate of Coalition Z, but Union X might not be affiliated with Coalition Z.)
 - c) If all else fails, consider the flow of member dues to get an idea of where influences and pressure points are.
- 4. Cultures
 - a) Some unions are extremely jobsite oriented (only care about organizing and bargaining), and others might have a broader social agenda. (Talk about why *Janus* may have crystalized some of this.)
 - b) Many unions are strongly Democratic. Others are mixed or nonpartisan. Some are predominantly Republican.

IV. How to engage your local local

- A. Finding a point of contact
 - 1. Good resource: OregonCapitolClub.org
 - 2. Different unions have different structures. Some varying positions you need to contact might be:
 - a) Union president
 - b) “Business manager”
 - c) Secretary-Treasurer
 - d) Government Affairs Director
 - e) Independent Contractor
 - f) Etc.
- B. How to make the union care about you and your candidacy

1. Relationships cut through the clutter
2. Avoid obvious faux-pas:
 - a) Printing at a non-union printer (this is a bellwether test)
 - b) Going over someone's head because you didn't like their answer
 - c) Anything that generally conveys a lack of underlying respect for the union, its members, or its officers. (*Misssteps are learning opportunities, but respect should be endemic.*)
3. Unions *love* educating candidates
4. Consider the decision makers and their process:
 - a) They have to be able to justify spending members' dues on your candidacy, whether through direct contributions or their time.
 - b) Any elected position that deals with workers or labor (which is all) can make a compelling case to at least one union.
 - c) Most unions are transactional, even if they pretend not to be.
 - (1) Unions have a responsibility to spend members' money wisely.
 - (2) Ultimately a contribution is an investment. And you are what they are investing in: a successful campaign and continuing relationship with an elected official who shares their values.
 - (3) This is not "quid pro quo," because it doesn't mean that there's a specific request.
5. Audience discussion:
 - a) Examples of "positive" elements in a pitch.
 - (1) Ability to independently describe why union values are important to them.
 - (2) Understanding a policy issue but still seeking input from the union.
 - (3) Clear description of how the office you're seeking can help promote shared values. (Legislative candidates: Prepare for "What committees do you think you'll request if you win?" and be able to explain how at least one of those relates to union's objectives)
 - (4) Being direct and up-front, even with awkward issues.
 - b) Examples of "negative" elements in a pitch.
 - (1) Not wanting to discuss policy, or not caring.
 - (2) Already having everything figured out.
 - (3) Clearly not having done a modicum of research.
 - (4) Lying, or misinformation without an attempt to correct.
6. The Process
 - a) Differs from union to union.
 - (1) Sometimes skewed toward one individual making recommendations; sometimes a very broad committee or convention process.

(2) Sometimes a regimented online process; sometimes informal meetings.

b) Questionnaires

(1) Unions want to know where their priorities are in terms of vote counts, so above all, be honest.

(a) Ex: If you back out of a commitment later on, your relationship in that union will have a tougher time making the case for supporting you to their board/committee/members.

(b) Avoid surprises.

(2) We care most about three things on the questionnaire:

(a) Your yes/no answer on a commitment question,

(b) Your values (and can you express them),

(c) Honesty. *(The lobbyist you're working with on the policy side and the person checking over questionnaires is often the same person, and even if not they will talk to each other, so it is not advisable to try and throw one of them under the bus to the other.)*

C. What you might expect from the union

1. Unions are different and support is just as different.

2. Campaign Support; Might focus on:

a) Cash money

b) In-kind administrative support (such as office space)

c) Volunteers

d) Printing services

e) Outreach

3. Office Support; Might focus on:

a) Policy research and development

b) Turnout to rallies or other events

c) Provision of testimony

d) Outreach around issues

4. Find ways to stay connected with union allies in odd-numbered years!

a) We love being able to report back to membership.

V. Takeaways (Hopefully)

A. Though unions have common threads and values, unions are all different. Get to know each one like you're meeting someone new.

B. Unions are transactional; you're asking for them to make an investment in your future. Think about what the union is looking for on their side of that investment (again: not a specific quid pro quo, but more along the lines of what issues you want to work on and what values you bring to what table).

- C. The labor world is complex and the web of union relationships is also complex. Not having a transcendental understanding of how it all fits together... is normal. Be willing to ask questions.
- D. Policy is complex, and not all unions share the same views on all policies. Be willing to ask questions.
- E. Honesty and respect are always a good bet.
- F. Unions love finding good candidates to support. If you're that candidate, we want to meet you!

Prepared for Emerge Oregon by
Michael Selvaggio, UFCW Local 555
503-739-3629 | m Selvaggio@ufcw555.org