COLUMBIA GAS WORKERS UNITE

JANUARY 2024

MORE UTILITY WORKERS VOTE TO JOIN THE UWUA

All around the country, utility workers are joining together as UWUA members. It's a growing movement powered by the very workers who power America.

OHIO

Most municipal workers in Greater Akron are Unionized, but for a long time, that wasn't the case for the employees of Louisville, Ohio. New managers always wanted to force changes on employees. At the same time, they delegated extra responsibilities to employees without appropriate increases in compensation.

Employees approached management about their concerns, and were told that management didn't represent them. That's the truth! After meeting with representatives from several Unions, Louisville employees decided to join the UWUA, and we're happy to have them. These are the hardworking people from water and sewer, the street department, and the parks department.

The election was held January 3, 2024, and everyone is eagerly anticipating new dates to begin bargaining. Welcome to our Union family, Louisville!

MAINE

In Maine, Cogentrix-Rumford Power employees who operate a 265-megawatt combined cycle natural gas power plant in Rumford voted to Unionize and become the newest members of the UWUA. Concerns about working conditions and job security led workers at the plant to take collective action.

The process of organizing moved quickly for these workers. The first meeting with UWUA staff and the group took place in early September and the election took place November 15 and 16. The group is ready to negotiate their first contract and awaits a date on which the negotiations will be scheduled. What a win!

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NEW JERSEY

Employees of the City of Bordentown, New Jersey's public works department successfully Unionized as UWUA members via card check. As of December 1, 2023, the UWUA is now the certified representative.

A demonstrated majority of the unit employees designated UWUA as their exclusive representative. There are currently a total of 13 employees in this group which will be a part of Local 601 membership. Congratulations!

Thank you to everyone here in Ohio who's already involved in our organizing efforts. Haven't connected with us yet? It's not too late! Call Deirdre (484-678-8896), Valerie (202-412-5258) or J.J. (330) 631-1751 for more information and to get involved.

WHY WE'RE ORGANIZING

PAY: LET'S GET IT IN WRITING

There's always strength in numbers. That's how Unions work! Workers are always better off when we band together.

It's also why we're stronger when we're united across locations. A Union that represents every op center will be much stronger than a Union that only represents one or two op centers!

This strength in numbers is always important, but it's critical when it comes time to negotiate pay as part of a Union contract. Having all of us – from every op center – represented at the bargaining table gives us that much more strength. And it means the employer can't divide and conquer – not when we all speak as one!

Bargaining a strong contract is about many things: working conditions, healthcare and other benefits, job security, and of course, pay. With collective bargaining, Columbia Gas workers in Ohio will be able to play a role in determining base wages and salaries, cost of living adjustments, the conditions and timing for determining wages, and more.

Once bargaining is completed and a majority of members ratify the resulting contract terms, we can have some well earned peace of mind. Having a ratified Union contract will allow each and every one of us to see what our pay and cost of living adjustments will be for the entire duration of the contract. Even that duration is something we will all vote on and help determine.

Many UWUA contracts have labor grades that reward experience, advanced training, and taking on new types of work. In many instances, the more qualifications we earn and the more responsibility we have, the more we can make! UWUA already has just this kind of provision in other collective bargaining agreements.

The facts are clear. We all stand to gain when we join together as a Union and bargain for better pay.

THE TRUTH ABOUT CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Q&A WITH UWUA SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FRANK MEZNARICH

Senior National Representative Frank Meznarich – who has also been a UWUA member for 45 years – shares his insights from negotiating over 20 contracts.

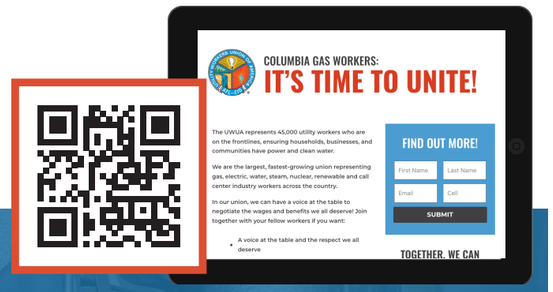
Frank Meznarich, UWUA Senior National Representative

Q: For members who want to be involved in contract negotiations, how does that process work?

A: One of the first things that members will have to do is elect their officers and negotiations committee, and then we (the national reps) will need to meet with that committee. We'll talk to the members about what they need and formulate a plan on how to go about the negotiations, for everything from benefits to wages to hours and more.

Q: Have you ever negotiated a contract where the negotiations led to lower wages or loss of any benefits?

A: No, never. In fact, I've never negotiated one where workers didn't get an increase. That's one of management's scare tactics: telling people that Unionizing will lead to lower wages, which is not true. I've done my share of contracts over the years, and that's a completely false statement.



Learn more at: ColumbiaWorkersUnite.org

Q: What kinds of benefits can Union members expect to gain from the bargaining process?

A: Number one, they will now have recourse if they are being treated unfairly – they are no longer at-will employees. There will be a grievance procedure and arbitration, not to mention that members will be able to negotiate wages, sick time, vacations, health and safety policies, and more. Safety, to me, is one of the most important parts of my job: making sure workers go home every day after work the same way they left in the morning.

Asked for any final thoughts, Frank left us with this: "I've been a dues-paying member of the UWUA for 45 years, and to me, there is no better investment in your future than the dues you pay to your Union."

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UPDATE: COLUMBIA GAS' SURVEILLANCE PLAN

Throughout this campaign, Columbia Gas workers have been concerned about the issue of surveillance cameras and microphones being placed by their employer to monitor them and record their conversations. When we come together as a Union, though, we can have a say on this critical issue. Already, Columbia Gas has agreed to UWUA's proposal to meet with workers from Unionized facilities to discuss camera surveillance.

QUESTIONS? CALL DEIRDRE (484) 678-8896, VALERIE (202) 412-5258, OR J.J. (330) 631-1751.