

The Organizing Process

What does it take to organize an OPEIU aviation union at my place of employment?

There are many components involved in organizing a union at your workplace. The foundation of any organizing campaign is the willingness of several EMS professionals to become part of an active organizing committee.

What is an organizing committee?

An organizing committee is a group of EMS personnel who will work with the OPEIU staff and Organizers during all phases of the organizing campaign. They will help gather home addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, base locations, shifts, etc. The committee also follows through on assignments such as distributing union information, providing feedback, helping with strategy planning, preparing leaflets, making phone calls and getting their co-workers to sign authorization cards. The committee should consist of workers from as many bases as possible.

Do Air Transport EMS professionals have the legal right to unionize?

Yes, the law protects pilot's right to participate in union activity and they cannot be fired for participating in union activity. The Railway Labor Act Section 152. (Fourth) General Duties states: "No carrier, its officers, or agents shall deny or in any way question the right of its' employees to join, organize, or assist in organizing the labor organization of their choice, and it shall be unlawful for any carrier to interfere in any way with the organization of its' employees". Medical professionals must conduct organizing during their free time and in non-work areas.

Once the committee is formed and the necessary information gathered, what is the next step?

The next step is to get medical crewmembers to show their interest to unionize by signing authorization cards. The signed cards are used to achieve majority support for union representation and to get a secret ballot election conducted by the National Mediation Board (NMB).

When would we have an election?

After a majority of the eligible medical crewmembers have signed union authorization cards the OPEIU will file an application for a secret ballot election at the NMB. After the NMB receives the application it conducts an investigation. Once the NMB determines that all protocols have been met a secret ballot election is scheduled.

What is the process for the secret ballot election?

The secret ballot election is conducted by the NMB. All NMB elections are by telephonic/internet voting. The complete election timeframe takes place within 90 days. Four to five weeks is typically allowed for the voting process. The ballot tally takes place at the NMB headquarters in Washington, DC. To win an election 50% plus one of who votes must vote yes.

When does the collective bargaining process begin?

After a successful election the carrier must by law begin negotiations. Before negotiations commence all new bargaining unit members are surveyed about what they would like to have in the new contract. Contract proposals are then prepared from the survey results. The medical crewmembers also elect a negotiation team. The negotiation team works closely with the OPEIU skilled negotiator throughout all phases of negotiations.