

# WHAT AN AMNH UNION CAN DO FOR YOU!



## **Q: What is a union and how does it work?**

A: A union is an organization of workers united to make decisions about our working conditions. As a union we can negotiate a contract defining our pay and benefits and setting our workplace rights. Unions are democracies. We elect officers to represent our interests. The officers in our “local” are our coworkers. A local is part of a bigger union—in this case, our local will be part of DC 37, NYC’s largest public employee union. DC 37 already has 2 locals at AMNH.

## **Q: Why should I join a union?**

A: As lone employees trying to bargain with a big institution, we don’t have much power. But as a union we’ll have hundreds of fellow workers backing us up, along with professional union negotiators and union lawyers to talk to the museum’s administration.

The union will negotiate for us about:

- Pay, raises, pay equity, workplace safety & hazard pay
- Job security and seniority
- Work schedules, including both on-site and work-from-home (WFH) scheduling issues
- Health insurance, retirement, pension, & 401K
- Vacation, sick, and comp time
- Family and medical leave, disability insurance
- Protection from workplace harassment
- and much more!

## **Q: How does pay compare between union and non-union employees?**

A: According to the US Dept. of Labor, in 2021 the median pay for union workers was 20% higher than for non-union workers! If we’re not in the union, any raise we get is up to AMNH—they have no obligation to raise our pay, even if the cost of living goes up. As a union, we have a say in what is fair pay for our jobs. Our contract will mandate that we get raises on a set schedule. During 2020–2021, when non-union workers at AMNH had their salaries frozen (or worse), union workers got whatever raises their contracts mandated.

## **Q: I am worried about COVID-19, workplace safety, and recent violence at other museums. How can the union effectively intervene to improve our workplace safety?**

A: Our union at the museum has been addressing safety issues which affect ALL employees for many years. Union employees have had the job security to file complaints about unsafe working conditions with OSHA, NYC, and NYS throughout the pandemic. Our union pushed for the increase in pay and the bonus for frontline workers, and continues working to increase pay for all. A new, larger union will have even more power to advocate for worker safety. Our current contract demands that AMNH provide appropriate safety equipment. Our next contract will do the same. From footwear for workers on their feet all day, to COVID-19 protection for staff working with the public, to training for workers handling hazardous machines or materials, we, as a union, will prioritize and advocate for our own safety, and maintain relationships with appropriate regulatory agencies.

**Q: HR sent me an email saying I might lose my benefits if I join the union. Is that true?**

A: HR is giving us biased and incomplete information. Every current member of DC 37 Local 1559 is getting the same amount of vacation and sick time as non-union employees. The vacation and sick time roll over, year after year. And if you're a union employee and have unused days left when you leave or retire, you can cash out your unused time and get paid for it!

Unions exist to fight for our quality of life across the board. Our union will negotiate a contract with the museum, including the things we think are important. If we feel the Aetna plan is important, we will negotiate for it. If we feel the Cigna dental plan is important, we will negotiate for it. The museum already offers these plans to union workers: members of Local 306, the AV staff union. We will demand the same benefits options for all our members (for both full-time and part-time workers). They can afford to give them to us—they currently do! Additionally, the museum will want us to keep their insurance plans; their rates will soar if plan membership drops too low. They have an incentive to keep us on their plans.

**Q: What about my pension? Will I lose my pension if I join the union? Will my age of retirement change?**

A: We would never accept a contract that reduces the value of our pensions or pushes back retirement age.

**Q: The museum doesn't pay me much, and I'm concerned about union dues.**

A: Union dues are currently about \$29 per pay period. The union does not currently have any part-time members, but we will, and we will amend our Union Constitution to have either reduced or "sliding scale" union dues for part-time workers. And when we successfully negotiate raises for our members, our dues will feel worth it.

**Q: My job consists of anything my supervisor wants me to do, including things like standing outside in the cold. How can the union help with unreasonable "as assigned" duties?**

A: With a union, we get to negotiate a contract that specifies what our jobs entail and what conditions we will work under. Your managers will not be allowed to change the nature of your job, giving you more work without more pay.

**Q: I have a lot of flexibility in my job. I can choose when and how I work. Will I have to give that up if I join a union?**

A: The contract specifies each particular job title and its particular working conditions. If you need flexibility to do your job, we can negotiate that into the contract. Besides, there is nothing requiring museum managers to be flexible with you now.

**Q: What other advantages can a union provide?**

A: Legal representation, even for non-work problems. Education opportunities, representation during HR meetings about disciplinary infractions, better protection against layoffs and schedule changes. More info about all this coming soon!

