



HOW TO GET AFGE IN YOUR WORKPLACE

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Fellow Federal Workers,

In these uncertain and stormy times, the need for collective action has never been more pressing. Across the country, workers like you are standing up to ensure their voices are heard and their rights are protected.

As President of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), I am proud to lead an organization that serves as a beacon of strength and solidarity for over 800,000 members. Now, more than ever, we must ensure every worker has the power and protection that comes with being part of a union.

This guide is a resource for those who are ready to take the first step toward organizing your workplace. Whether you're just starting to think about forming a union or are already gathering colleagues to join you, this guide will provide you with the tools and strategies needed to succeed. This guide is designed to empower you at every stage of the effort.

Why organize? The answer is simple: a union gives us the strength to stand together and negotiate for better working conditions. But it's more than that. A union is a voice in decisions that affect our lives and our work. It's a safeguard against unfair treatment, a shield in times of crisis, and a platform to push for policies that reflect our values and priorities. When we organize, we build power—power to improve our workplaces, our communities, and our futures.

As part of AFGE, you are not alone. You have the support of a nation-wide network of dedicated members and staff who are committed to your success. Together, we can overcome challenges, face down uncertainty, and create a brighter future for all federal and D.C. government workers. Organizing isn't just about addressing the issues of today; it's about building the foundation for a stronger tomorrow.



The real power of a union lies in its members. It's the conversations you have with your coworkers, the bonds you form, and the collective action you take that will make the difference. With determination and unity, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

I am proud to stand with you as you begin this journey.

In solidarity,

Everett Kelley
National President
American Federation of Government Employees



How to Start a Union with AFGE

1. Contact AFGE

Reach out to the us for expert [guidance and resources](#) (afge.org/member-benefits/join/starting-a-union). AFGE has extensive experience organizing federal workers and will help you understand the process, provide training, and assign experienced staff to support your efforts.

2. Complete a New Unit Intake Evaluation

Work with an AFGE to determine if the proposed unit is a suitable target for organizing efforts. (www.surveymonkey.com/r/DY78KK5)

3. Know Your Rights

Under the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (5 U.S.C. Chapter 71), federal employees have the legal right to form, join, or assist a union. You have a right

to form a union without fear of interference, coercion, or reprisal. The law protects you. This statute is enforced by the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), the federal agency that oversees labor relations within the government.

4. Form an Organizing Committee

Assemble a small group of trusted coworkers who are committed to improving your workplace. This committee will:

- o Develop a plan for organizing.
- o Communicate the benefits of unionization to colleagues.
- o Identify workplace concerns to address collectively.

5. Gather Support

Collect signatures on AFGE authorization cards, demonstrating interest in forming a union. The FLRA requires signatures from at least 30% of the employees in the proposed bargaining unit to file a petition

Contact AFGE

New Unit Intake Evaluation

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File a petition with the FLRA

Election Campaign

Certification and Negotiation

for an election. However, AFGE recommends gathering a majority to show strong support, at least 50%.

6. File a Petition with the FLRA

Once enough signatures are collected, AFGE will help you file a petition for a representation election with the FLRA. The FLRA will review the petition to ensure the bargaining unit meets statutory requirements, such as being appropriate and clearly defined. This petition must include:

- o The proposed bargaining unit (the group of employees eligible for union representation).
- o A description of the workplace and its management structure.
- o The showing of interest (the signed authorization cards).

7. Election Campaign

After the FLRA approves the petition, an election will be scheduled. The FLRA will conduct a secret-ballot election. A simple majority of those voting is required for AFGE to become your exclusive representative.

8. Certification and Negotiation

If the election is successful, the FLRA will certify AFGE as the exclusive representative of your bargaining unit. With support and guidance, your unit will:

- o Elect workplace leaders or join an existing local.
- o Start negotiations with management to establish a collective bargaining agreement that defines your rights, benefits, and working conditions. Alternatively, you may



be covered under an existing contract, with the opportunity to participate in negotiations for the next agreement. The path to power at work really is that simple, and it all begins with you.

UNIT DESCRIPTION

SAMPLE FLRA CERTIFICATION

Included:

All professional employees of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in the Memphis Region, including but not limited to: Hydrologic Technician, Physical Science Technician Records Management Specialist, Supply Technician, Maintenance Worker, Equipment Operator, Warehouse Specialist and Motor Vehicle Operator.

Excluded:

All management officials, supervisors, employees engaged in federal personnel work in other than a purely clerical capacity, and any other employees excluded under 5 U.S.C. § 7112(b).

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Your Legal Right to Start a Union with AFGE

Federal employees possess specific rights and protections when initiating and participating in union activities, as outlined in the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (FSLMRS), 5 USC § 7101 et seq. Understanding these rights is crucial to ensure lawful and effective organizing efforts.

Key Rights Under the FSLMRS:

1. Right to Organize:

- Employees have the right to form, join, or assist a labor organization without fear of reprisal.

2. Right to Representation:

- Once a union is recognized as the exclusive representative, it is responsible for representing the interests of all employees in the bargaining unit without discrimination.

3. Protections During Union Formation:

- Employees have a legal right to organize a union with freedom from retaliation, such as firing, detention or demotion.
- Employees are safeguarded against retaliation for participating in union-related activities, such as signing petitions, attending meetings, or distributing literature.

The Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) is the independent agency responsible for administering the FSLMRS. The FLRA investigates ULP charges, conducts union elections, and provides training to both agencies and unions to promote effective labor-management relations.

Conclusion:

Federal employees are entitled to organize and engage in union activities with robust legal protections. Familiarity with these rights ensures that employees can advocate for improved working conditions and representation without fear of retaliation.





The Importance of a Good Workplace List

When collecting showing of interest cards to form a union, having an accurate and detailed list of your coworkers in the proposed bargaining unit (the group who will be voting in the election) is essential. This list is the foundation for your organizing efforts, helping you track progress, identify supporters, and build momentum for your campaign. Here's why a good list matters, how to use it effectively, and how to collect and refine information through list work.

Why a Good List is Important

1. Understanding Your Coworkers:

- o A comprehensive list helps you know who is eligible to sign showing of interest cards and ensures no one is left out. Missing even a small group of coworkers can weaken the effort to reach your goals.
- o It also allows you to identify trends in support, such as which teams or locations are more receptive to unionizing and where additional effort is needed.

2. Organizing Strategically:

- o With a detailed list, you can prioritize outreach to individuals or groups who may influence others. Leaders, well-connected coworkers, or activists can serve as key allies in spreading the word and encouraging participation.
- o Tracking progress on the list helps measure

how close you are to achieving the required 30% minimum support—and ideally, exceeding it to 51% or more.

3. Building Relationships:

- o A good list ensures that every coworker feels included in the process, which fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose. It also gives you the opportunity to tailor conversations to specific concerns or workplace issues.

How to Use the List

1. Segment the Workforce:

- o Organize the list by department, location, or workgroup to ensure systematic coverage. This prevents duplication of effort and ensures every coworker is contacted.

2. Track Progress:

- o As coworkers sign showing of interest cards, update the list to reflect who has signed, who needs follow-up, and who may need more information or encouragement.
- o Use tools like spreadsheets to keep the list organized and up to date.

3. Identify Leaders and Influencers:

- o Pay attention to coworkers who are trusted or respected by others. These individuals can be instrumental in convincing hesitant coworkers to participate.
- o Mark potential leaders on the list for targeted conversations about joining the organizing committee or taking on more active roles.

Name	Shift	Position	Location	Cell	Home Email	Issues	Signed SOI
John Smith	Rotating	Park Ranger	Remote	555-123-0000	user0@example.com	Safety	Yes
Sarah Johnson	Day	Park Ranger	Telework	555-123-0001	user1@example.com	Boss	Yes
Michael Williams	Night	Facility Manager	On-site	555-123-0002	user2@example.com	Safety	No
Emily Brown	Night	Law Enforcement Ranger	On-site	555-123-0003	user3@example.com	Job Security	No
David Jones	Night	Park Ranger	On-site	555-123-0004	user4@example.com	Boss	Yes
Jessica Miller	Rotating	Interpretive Guide	Telework	555-123-0005	user5@example.com	DOGE	Yes
James Davis	Evening	Administrative Support Assistant	Telework	555-123-0006	user6@example.com	Scheduling	Yes
Ashley Wilson	Evening	Law Enforcement Ranger	On-site	555-123-0007	user7@example.com	Safety	Yes
Robert Martinez	Evening	Museum Technician	Remote	555-123-0008	user8@example.com	Safety	Yes
Laura Anderson	Day	Visitor Use Assistant	Remote	555-123-0009	user9@example.com	Scheduling	No

How to Collect and Refine Information

1. Engage Coworkers in Conversation:

- o When asking someone to sign a showing of interest card, ask questions about their concerns and what changes they'd like to see in the workplace.
- o Use these conversations to gather details about their job roles, work locations, and any coworkers to whom they are close. This information strengthens your understanding of the workforce.

2. Map Relationships:

- o Use the list to build a “map” of workplace relationships, identifying natural social groupings, team dynamics, and informal leaders.
- o Knowing who interacts with whom helps you plan effective outreach strategies and ensures you’re addressing the right people.

3. Keep the List Confidential:

- o Protect the privacy of your coworkers. Store the list securely and avoid sharing sensitive information except with trusted organizers.
- o Transparency with coworkers about how the information will be used builds trust and encourages more open conversations.

How to Do List Work

1. Verify the Accuracy of the List:

- o Cross-check the list with coworkers to confirm that names, job titles, and contact information are correct. This ensures no one is unintentionally left out.

2. Assign Follow-Up Tasks:

- o Divide the list among organizers or volunteers to ensure consistent follow-up with everyone on the list.
- o After initial outreach, note which coworkers need additional conversations, materials, or follow-up meetings.

3. Track Commitments and Responses:

- o Use the list to track who has signed, who has expressed interest but hasn't signed yet, and who may need further persuasion.
- o Document any issues coworkers bring up during conversations so that you can address them in future meetings or use them to build your campaign message.

Conclusion

A well-maintained and thoughtfully used coworker list is one of the most powerful tools you have when collecting showing of interest cards. It ensures your campaign is organized, inclusive, and strategic. By using the list to understand your coworkers, track progress, and identify key influencers, you can build the support needed to form a union and create lasting change in your workplace.



Building an Organizing Committee

Every union in the country that exists today was at one point just an Organizing Committee. Your Organizing Committee will be the heart of your efforts to organize your union. The Organizing Committee is composed of workplace leaders from every group, shift, position, and demographic in the workplace, leading the effort to start your Union. The leadership offered by the Organizing Committee should provide direction and inspiration for other workers who want to get involved. Depending on the climate in your workplace, it may be necessary to conduct this step in private.

- Your committee should ideally be made up of at least 10% of the workplace (e.g., 100 workers would have an organizing committee of 10 or more respected workplace leaders).
- Those who serve on this committee must be well respected by their co-workers. The loudest, most opinionated voice is not always the right voice for this job.
- The Organizing Committee must also be representative of your workplace demographics in terms of position, shift, age, gender, ethnicity, etc. Your potential members must be able to see themselves represented as you build your union.
- Organizing Committee members should have the ability to answer questions about the union, the organizing process, and the collective bargaining process.

- Those who serve on this committee should understand that organizing is labor intensive and time consuming, although deeply rewarding!
- Target existing networks within the department to identify potential leaders to serve on the Organizing Committee

Potential Existing Networks:

- o Senior members of the department
- o Department “hard chargers” who are involved with training, answering questions from coworkers.
- o Departmental sports teams/Fantasy sports leagues
- o Those who organize birthday celebrations/retirement parties.
- o Leaders of prayer groups/co-worker outings



Showing of Interest Card

A showing of interest card is a form that federal employees fill out to express their interest in forming or joining a union. These cards are an essential part of the process overseen by the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), which regulates labor relations for federal employees. The cards serve as proof that there is enough support among employees to warrant holding a union election. Here's a detailed breakdown of what these cards are, how they work, and why they're important:

1.mPurpose

- o The card shows that an employee supports union representation for their workplace.
- o It does not make someone a union member or require them to pay dues. It simply indicates interest in having an election to decide on union representation.

2.Content of the Card

A showing of interest card typically includes:

- o The employee's name: This must match their official records.
- o The employee's signature: The signature is critical because it verifies the card's authenticity.
- o Date of signature: Cards are only valid for one year from the date of signing, according to FLRA rules.
- o Employer Agency and work location: This ensures the card applies to the correct bargaining unit.
- o Statement of interest: A simple declaration like, "I support the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) representing me for collective bargaining purposes."

3. Legal Validity

- o The FLRA requires that at least 30% of employees in the proposed bargaining unit sign showing of interest cards before an election petition can be filed.
- o For stronger support, AFGE requires at least

50% to demonstrate clear interest.

4. Privacy and Confidentiality

- o Showing of interest cards are kept confidential. Neither your employer nor other employees will see who signed the cards.
- o Only the FLRA and the union organizing the drive have access to the cards, and they are used solely to verify the percentage of support.

5. What Happens After Signing?

- o Once enough cards are collected, the union files a petition with the FLRA.
- o The FLRA then verifies the signatures to ensure the cards meet the legal requirements.
- o If the threshold is met, the FLRA schedules a secret-ballot election to let employees vote on whether they want union representation.

One-on-One Conversations About Signing Showing of Interest Cards

One-on-one conversations are the most effective way to engage coworkers and encourage them to sign showing of interest (SOI) cards. These personalized discussions allow you to build trust, address concerns, and explain the importance of forming a union. *Do not have these conversations during work time.*

Follow these steps to ensure your conversations are impactful and lead to action:

1. Prepare for the Conversation

- Know Your Audience: Review your coworker list and learn about the individual you're speaking with. Understand their role, concerns, and any shared experiences.
- Have Materials Ready: Bring an SOI card and be prepared to explain its purpose and importance.
- Set a Comfortable Tone: Choose a time and place where the conversation can happen without interruptions or pressure.



SHOWING OF INTEREST

I, the undersigned employee hereby call for an exclusive recognition election to be conducted by the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) for the purpose of determining whether AFGE shall be our collective bargaining agent.

Print Name

Personal Telephone

Address

State Zip Code

Signature

Home Email

Date

Job Title

Agency

Work Location

I understand this petition is confidential for use by AFGE and does not obligate me to join or pay fees or membership dues to any union or union local.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO



2. Start with an Introduction and Build Rapport

- Begin with a friendly and informal approach:
- o "Hi, I'm [Your Name], and I've been working here for [X years]. How long have you been with the agency?"
- Share your story about why you support forming a union. This builds a personal connection and encourages them to open up.

3. Identify Issues That Matter to Them

- Ask open-ended questions to uncover their workplace concerns and priorities:
- o "What do you enjoy most about your job?"
- o "In your time on the job, would you say things have gotten better or worse?"
- o "Are there any problems you would like to see improved?"
- o "If you could change one thing about our workplace, what would it be?"

4. Agitate and Connect to the Union Solution

- Highlight how those issues affect them and their coworkers:
- o "Does that seem fair to you?"
- o "How does that impact your daily life or your family?"
- Explain how forming a union can help:
- o "Workers like us have used unions to negotiate for better telework policies, fairer pay, and safer working conditions. That's something we can achieve here too."

5. Ask for a Commitment

- Clearly and confidently make the ask:
- o "The first step toward making these changes is signing this showing of interest card. Your signature shows you support having a voice in our workplace."
- o "You've talked about wanting things to change—signing this card helps us get there."
- Be ready to address any hesitation and provide reassurances about confidentiality or the process.



6. Follow Up

- End the conversation by setting expectations and staying engaged:
 - “Thanks for signing! If you have any other questions or think of coworkers who might want to sign, let me know.”
 - “Can I check back with you later to hear how things are going and share updates?”

Tips for Success

- Listen More Than You Talk: Focus on their concerns and perspectives. This shows you value their input and helps build trust.
- Stay Positive and Respectful: Avoid arguing or pressuring them. Instead, emphasize the benefits and importance of working together.
- Document Progress: Record whether they signed the card, expressed interest, or need follow-up. This helps track campaign progress.

By following this structured approach, you can effectively engage coworkers and build the support needed to start a new union.



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