

The Professionals Guild of Ohio



PGO UNION NEWS

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**Professionals
Guild of Ohio**

SERB Reaffirms Right to Strike

On January 22, 2019, after two years of working under an expired collective bargaining agreement, the faculty at Wright State University went out on strike. The strike came after the university administration declared a bargaining impasse and implemented its “last best offer.”

That offer included no pay raise, which was the case for five of the previous eight years. The offer also canceled existing workload agreements and gave deans and chairs discretion over merit pay in lieu of a negotiated formula in prior contracts. The “last best offer” additionally included changes to professors’ health care and their rights to summer teaching assignments. All of the final terms had been rejected by the faculty union.

Justifying its final offer, the university claims there is a need to rein in historical overspending, including via a \$53 million budget reduction last fiscal year. The faculty union counters by blaming the so-called budget crisis on the board’s non-instructional expenditures, such as new campus housing units and million-dollar settlements in federal violations involving improperly administering student loans and work visas for foreign students.

In response to the strike, the university administration filed an action in the State Employment Relations Board

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(SERB), seeking a ruling that the strike was “unauthorized.” The university administration’s basis for claiming the strike was “unauthorized” was in part because of workload. The administration claims that workload is prohibited from being part of a collective bargaining agreement. It also claimed that the strike substantially interfered with the university’s “right to continue offering public services.” Under this ruling, the faculty union would be required to cease all strike activity.

SERB’s ruling was to reject the university’s position and to reaffirm the position that strikes are lawful, even though strikes are “by their nature are disruptive and designed to cause inconvenience.”

“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will... The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those they oppress.”

-Frederick Douglass



**February is
Black History
Month**

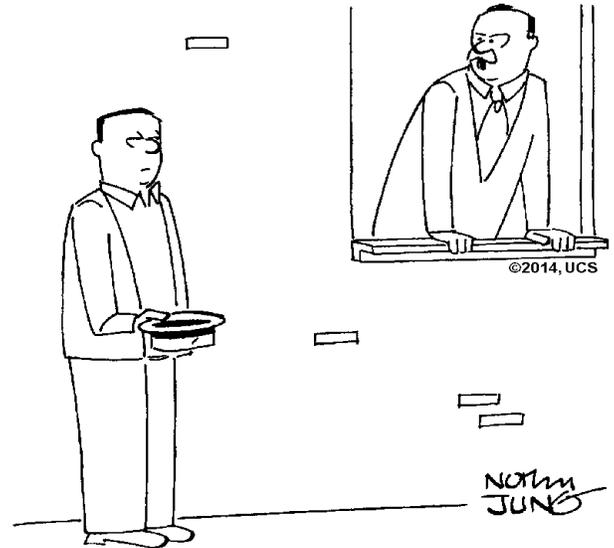
Your Right To Public Records

As an employee, union member, and general member of the public, you have the legal right to obtain information from your employer. Questions ranging from compliance with your contract, being prepared for negotiations, to preparing for or investigating a grievance can be answered in a public records request.

According to Ohio Revised Code 149.011, a record has three elements. It is (1) stored on a fixed medium (paper, computer, film, audio/video, etc.); (2) created, received or sent under jurisdiction of a public office; and (3) serves to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, and other activities of the office.

The types of documents you can request are varied, and not necessarily limited to a particular list. However, the following is a list of some of the types of documents associated with information requests:

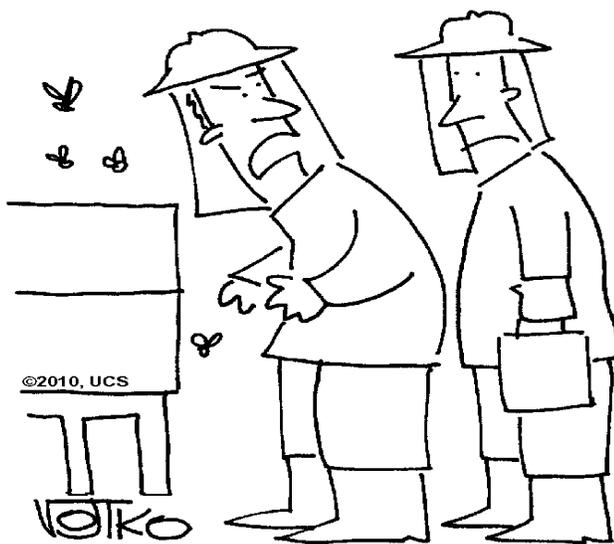
- Accident reports;
- Air quality studies;
- Attendance records;
- Bargaining agreements for other units;
- Customer complaints;
- Contracts with outside parties;
- Disciplinary records;



"I'd prefer you didn't do that on your breaks!"

- E-mails;
- Employer manuals, guidelines, and internal policies;
- Investigatory files;
- Job descriptions;
- Leave requests;
- Payroll records;
- Meeting minutes;
- Personnel files;
- Schedules;
- Seniority lists;
- Time cards;
- Training manuals; and,
- Wage and salary records.

Record requests can be made to public offices. To comply with your requests, copies must be provided within a reasonable time period after receiving the request, or if you are there to inspect the records they shall be promptly prepared and available for inspection at all reasonable times during regular business hours. If your request is denied, you must be provided with an explanation, including legal authority, and be provided with an opportunity to revise the request. The organization should also tell you the manner in which the records are maintained. Lastly, the public office cannot deny or delay response to a request based on a proclaimed burden or



"Of course there's no honey! You've gotten management bees instead of worker bees."

expense. As the requester, you can choose the medium upon which to receive the records.

If you would like to request any public records related to your status as an employee or union member, or have any questions on how to do so, please contact your union representative.

2018 Cost of Living

Inflation is the increase in the cost of things over time. Thus when there is inflation, it takes more money to buy the same things (food, gasoline, etc.) than it did in the past. Inflation is regularly measured on a monthly and yearly basis.

Inflation is important because it can effectively decrease your real wages. For instance, over the past twelve months inflation has been two percent. This means that on the whole you will need to earn two percent more money this year than you did one year ago in order to maintain the same purchasing power.

2019 Minimum Wage Increases

The minimum wage in Ohio has been increased to \$8.55 per hour, effective on January 1, 2019. This is a 25 cent (3 percent) increase from last year’s rate. Ohio’s minimum wage increase was based on an “inflation adjustment,” and will benefit over 67,000 workers.

Eighteen additional states rang in the New Year with minimum wage increases for workers. The in-



“I don’t want a bunch of ‘yes-men’ around here, Robert. I want ‘yes-sir-men!’”

creases ranged from a 5 cents adjustment in Alaska to a \$2.00 per hour increase in New York City. Several states, including Ohio, increased their wages as the result of automatic adjustments for inflation. In other words, the states try to ensure that the minimum wage supports to same level of spending each year.

The increases in five other states were due to wage levels set by state legislatures and approved by lawmakers. Adjustments in the last six states were the result of ballot measures approved directly by voters during previous elections. Over 5 million workers have realized pay increases on January 1st as a result of these adjustments; however, more than half of the country still remains at the federal minimum wage level of \$7.25 an hour.

2019 IRS Mileage Rate

Effective on January 1, the 2019 IRS mileage rate for business miles is 58 cents per mile. This rate is up three and a half cents from the 54.5 cents per mile in 2018. The standard mileage rate for business use is based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile. Taxpayers also have the option of calculating the actual costs of using their vehicle rather than using the standard mileage rate.

Check your PGO contract or employer travel policy to see if you get this IRS mileage rate increase.



“I see from your ‘rezoomay’ that you’re quite a creative speller.”

The Push To Unionize Amazon Workers

Amazon is the retail giant that brings you a variety of goods and products with a quick turnaround. In addition to rapidly expanding its workforce and locations, the company reports that it has more than 75 fulfillment centers in North America and employees more than 125,000 workers full time. Amazon also prides itself on the fact that they offer all of their workers in the United States a minimum wage of \$15.00 per hour. Despite boasts of higher wages and adequate healthcare benefits for employees in Amazon warehouses, it still may not be enough for its employees.

Workers at Amazon facilities in Minnesota were amongst the first to force management to the bargaining table this past summer. They were reportedly the first known group to ever get the company to negotiate. Amongst their complaints were issues with ever-increasing productivity rates, religious accommodations, air conditioning in the summer, and heating in the winter. Workers also claimed that management created a hostile work environment that prevents them from seeking proper medical treatment, taking bathroom breaks, or reporting safety issues. Feeling that their concerns were not properly addressed, some of the Minnesota workers ultimately rallied outside facilities in December; however, it is unclear whether any solutions were reached.

The Company also recently announced expansion of its headquarters to two additional locations outside of Washington D.C., and in Long Island, New York. Both cities gave Amazon billions in sub-

sidies and tax breaks, and some residents fear the rise of the cost of living as a result of the new headquarters. Labor advocates, however, are concerned about the reputation of the aforementioned working conditions that come with Amazon.

A union campaign led by the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union was launched at an Amazon warehouse in Staten Island, New York. The union is also seeking to organize Whole Foods, which was recently acquired by Amazon. Issues that workers want addressed are similar to those shared by the Minnesota employees—namely a manageable workload and multiple safety concerns. With the giant company still rapidly expanding, however, it is certain that it will push back with all its force against any unionization efforts.

PGO Board Meeting Change

The PGO Executive Board has changed the date for its' April meeting from April 27 to April 13. This meeting will be held in Dayton at the Montgomery County Children Services offices and will begin at approximately 10:30 a.m.

PGO Board Election Scheduled

The PGO Constitution requires that an election of state union officers be held this year. Nominations for officers must be made by a Nominations Committee composed of one member chosen by each PGO Council. Additional nominations may be made by a petition signed by one percent of the membership and presented to the executive director by April 13. The candidates for the various union offices will be finalized during the Nominations Committee meeting following the April 13 Executive Board meeting. Ballots will be mailed to members in May and must be returned by June 15.



"Your plant still not unionized, eh Fred?"

We Need Your Help!
 The PGO is updating its membership data base to prepare for the upcoming election of state union officers. If you have moved, or if you have never received mail from PGO, please contact our office to update your contact information.