

# What is a Union?

At the basic level, a union is a group of workers acting together to improve their job. This can include:

- Raising wages
- Improving safety
- Removing or changing disrespectful supervisors
- Increasing worker control over hours
- Gaining paid sick days and vacation
- Increasing control over work rules
- Gaining company funded health insurance or pensions
- Dealing with management favoritism
- Improving job security.



Many things we take for granted were created by labor unions. For example, in many industries 100 years ago, the standard work day was 12 to 16 hours, including Saturdays and at least half a day Sunday. Workers organized to reduce the length of the work day, the work week (weekends), and the work year (paid holidays and vacation). They even reduced the amount of your life you have to work by winning pensions.

In your job as a trucker, your workdays are still long because there is not yet organization to force high enough rates to allow you to quit after eight hours. With a union, you can win the rights that others have. You can force the companies to pay fuel surcharges and get rates up so that you have more time for yourselves and your families.

Possibly the most important improvement workers can gain with a union is job security. Without a union, depending on state laws, a supervisor or manager can fire a worker for any reason, or for no reason. It is simple for a company to fire one worker, but when workers stand together they can make it much more difficult. Many unions have forced management to abide by rules that strictly define when management may discipline workers and what type of discipline may be applied in a given situation. This greatly reduces the power of management to play favorites or fire workers they don't like for breaking minor rules.

Finally, to be successful at winning workers' power a union must be a democracy. This is the opposite of how a company is run. All final decisions in a company are made by the top managers who then pass policy down to the supervisors who in turn force workers to obey or be fired. Since you have to have a job to live in this economy, it puts your survival in the hands of people who want to pay you as little as possible, cut corners on safety, and provide no benefits. Until workers organize to democratize the economy, we are at the mercy of those people.

The power of a union is your collective power as drivers. Without you, nothing moves. A company can fire a lone person who speaks out. If you hire a lawyer, even he has to rely on the goodwill of the courts. But with a union, the power is in your hands. Take it.