

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE: POINTS TO REMEMBER

- 1. DO NOT MISS A TIME LINE! When in doubt, file!** If you are unsure if a member has a "grievable" complaint and you are close to deadline for filing, file the grievance, now. You can sort out later if the problem is really grievable or if another strategy is more appropriate. You can always withdraw a grievance after it has been filed.
- 2. Involve the grievant in the process.** Inform them along the way, explain the process, and have them present at the grievance meeting. Be honest about your expectations - no grievance is ever a "sure win".
- 3. Don't promise what you might not be able to deliver.** Don't promise the grievant that his/her case is a "slam dunk" as no grievance is a "sure win". You can't guarantee a win and might be setting up high expectations that will not be met.
- 4. Document well.** Keep a log of all phone conversations including dates and times. Confirm all verbal settlements and agreements in writing.
- 5. Class Action Grievances can be filed.** If there is no individual grievant or there is a practice that more than one person, you can file a class action grievance. For example, you might discover that a supervisor has been improperly administering the contract language on overtime distribution for a period of time. A class action grievance might be appropriate in this case.
- 6. Talk to all parties that might be affected by a grievance.** Protection of one person's rights might have a negative impact on another's. For example, you could represent somebody whose bidding rights were denied. The remedy that you are asking for would displace the person who got the job. You need to tell the grievant that it is necessary to talk to the other member and explain to him/her that you, as a steward, have a responsibility to protect the integrity of the language so other people's rights will not be violated in the same way. Remember that we represent all members.

7. **Try to exhaust each step before advancing to the next.** Timelines can be extended but should always be in writing. If the boss is unreasonably delaying the process, you might want to make a strategic decision to move on and refuse to extend timelines further.

8. **Union should not be responsible for delaying the process.** Members complain about the process taking so long. We are also guilty of delays. The best way to avoid this is to prepare early. Don't wait for the last minute and then realize you did not request the information you needed to prepare your case.

9. **Actively enforce the contract.** On language grievances, if you see a violation, file. Talk to the member(s) affected and involve them in the process, if possible.

10. **Any contact with members is an opportunity to organize.** Remember that some issues are great organizing opportunities. If it is deeply felt by many people, consider organizing around the issue by involving them in workplace actions and tactics.

11. **Remember your Duty of Fair Representation.** The Union cannot discriminate against non-members or for any other reason that people are given non-discrimination rights under the law. Don't dismiss any complaint out-of-hand.

12. **Don't operate in a vacuum.** Do not hesitate to consult more experienced stewards, your Chief Steward or President, or staff representative. You are not expected to know all the answers.

13. **Communicating with others is essential to solidarity.** Remember that the Union's ability to serve all the members is weakened when the various parts of the organization are not coordinated. Leaders and members should know their responsibilities, as well as their rights, in the grievance procedure. You should always keep your Chief Steward informed.