



The Facts on Official Time

What union representatives do on official time:

1 Representing coworkers in matters affecting conditions of employment:

- Union representatives may use official time to represent their coworkers in matters such as grievances, disciplinary actions, and other disputes with management.
- They can assist employees during investigations, hearings, or meetings regarding workplace issues.
- For example, a union representative can use official time to defend the job of a coworker fired for partisan political purposes or other types of unlawful discrimination.

2 Negotiating contracts:

- They are allowed to engage in negotiations with management over matters affecting conditions of employment, such as collective bargaining over maintaining safe work environments, job training opportunities, the provision of adequate work equipment/supplies, protection against illegal discrimination, and other working conditions.
- While federal unions are forbidden from negotiating over wages and benefits by law, they are permitted to negotiate procedures for challenging wrongdoing by agency management – such as disciplinary actions taken in retaliation for protected whistleblowing activity.

3 Meeting with management:

- Union representatives can meet with management to discuss workplace issues, employee health and safety initiatives, changes in policy, the use of new technology and computer systems, or other concerns that affect employees.

4 Filing complaints or grievances:

- Union representatives can use official time to file complaints or grievances on behalf of employees in order to protect them from illegal, or arbitrary and capricious agency conduct, like illegal nepotism or favoritism, or age or disability discrimination.

5 Consulting with employees:

- They can use official time to meet with employees to discuss workplace issues, concerns, or union activities relating to maintaining a safe, fair workplace.

What the law already prohibits union representatives from doing on official time:

1 Political activities:

- Union representatives are prohibited from using official time for political activities, including campaigning for political candidates or engaging in lobbying efforts unrelated to labor issues.

2 Personal business:

- They are not allowed to engage in personal activities, such as taking personal phone calls, running personal errands, or attending to matters unrelated to the union's representational responsibilities during official time.

3 Fundraising or union recruitment:

- Fundraising activities, such as organizing events to raise money for the union or recruiting new members, cannot be done during official time.

4 Strikes or disruptive actions:

- It is illegal for federal workers to strike.

5 Work not related to representing employees:

- Official time should be used for union-related activities that facilitate the labor-management relationship. Any activity that is not directly related to representing workers, negotiating contracts, or resolving workplace issues is generally not conducted on official time.