

A BRIEF GUIDE TO UNION ACTIONS

The best actions are appropriate to the issue, fun, visible, and, most of all, something that people will do. Few issues are resolved with just one action. It's okay if the first action tried doesn't get the desired result, as long as people are participating and ready to do something more. Some actions are more do-able than others, but how do-able an action is depends on the workplace. A workplace with a history of confrontation with the boss, or a well-organized membership, or strong leadership might think a parking lot rally is an easy action to accomplish. While a workplace new to direct actions might find that action daunting at first. Actions should escalate over time. This gives everyone a chance to get used to participating in actions and it gives the boss the chance to do the right thing with minimal conflict. Finally, these are *ideas*; Actions can't just be taken down off the shelf and plugged into a campaign. Create your own!

ACTION	Notes
Petitions	The petition should state the issue and the remedy. Keep a copy—signers are your base for future tactics. Preferably deliver to your target as a group.
Workplace posters	These can go on union bulletin boards and anywhere personal items (Tupperware sales, baby showers, etc.) are posted, including in your workspace.
Flyers/leaflets	A good way to communicate only if delivered person-to-person (e.g., give them to people on their way in to work).
Informational pickets	Signs should directed at eliciting public support. Good: We Serve the Community Worse: We Deserve a Raise
Mock elections	Have a ballot box in the breakroom to vote for “rudest supervisor,” “worst contract violation”, etc.
Mock awards	Give a certificate to the worst supervisor, etc.
Supervisor evaluations	Why should the boss have all the fun? Post results on the union bulletin board.
Mock funerals	The death of workplace rights, a funeral for workers' voices? Black armbands?
AFSCME/green shirts	Everyone wears the same thing or color on a given day. Can't wear t-shirts? How about green shoe laces? Green carnations on desks?
Buttons	Wear every day on your person (on purses, backpacks). Can't wear buttons? How about stickers or temporary tattoos ?
Deliver symbolic objects	Workplace too cold? Deliver a block of ice to your boss! Workplace too hot? Create AFSCME fans.
Symbolic sounds	Coordinated coughing, laughing, foot stomping, etc. Or, sometimes, silence can be just as powerful!

Break room meetings	A good way to get the word out. Must be visible. You want the boss to know you're organizing.
Organized attendance at government meetings	Fill up all the seats at the County board meeting. Want to make a bigger impact? Carry in green helium balloons.
March or Unity Break	You probably won't get someone the stature of MLK to lead it, but make it a high public visibility event anyway.
Motorcade	A mechanized march! AFSCME signs in all the car windows!
Parking lot rally or event	15 minutes before work. A short speech and then all enter the workplace together. Or pass out window signs that everyone displays in their parked cars.
Turning your back	Can be done at department meetings
Take over a meeting	Sometimes is spontaneous, but it's only a tactic if it's planned.
March on the boss	If the boss won't come to you . . .
Boycott social events	What if everyone skips the annual Holiday party? The local could hold their own or do a food drive instead.
Boycott cafeteria/ vending machines	This is a source of revenue at some workplaces. Even if it isn't, it will be noticed if it's part of a campaign.
Work-to-rule	Make the work slow down by following the contract and policies to the letter.
Reluctant and slow compliance	Following a direct order, but no faster than necessary.
Non-obedience in the absence of direct supervision	While the cat is away . . .
Overloading the administrative system	Filing voluminous paperwork, lots of information requests, etc.
Refuse overtime	Know what your contract allows, but no voluntary overtime
Strike	Labor's most powerful weapon. Know what your contract/law says. The only illegal strike is one that fails.