

## **GUIDE TO ESTABLISH A HUMAN/CIVIL RIGHTS OR WOMEN'S COMMITTEE**

Each committee is a standing committee appointed by the local union president, with the advice and consent of the executive board. The term of the committee may be the same as the officers or other standing committees, or as decided by the president.

The committee should work in conjunction with other committees in the local union to advance human/civil rights policies and programs for the organization. It is not a separate bargaining committee for women, minority or other underrepresented workers who may suffer discrimination.

By participating in union activities that foster and promote equality for all workers, the committee can become a valuable resource in unifying and strengthening the membership.

### **What can the committee do to help women, minority and other workers?**

- Work with the local union president/business manager to set up special sessions to listen to the problems confronting women, minorities and other groups of workers. Determine to what extent, if any, discriminatory practices exist in the workplace or in the union.
- Actively encourage all members to participate in union activities through internal/external organizing efforts.
- Study contract provisions to see if any clauses have a discriminatory impact on these groups or decide if other revisions or improvements are needed.
- Strengthen contract language through arbitration review.
- Examine wage patterns for possible discrimination in placement, promotion, wages, merit and other terms of employment.
- Where discrimination exists, propose the following:

An equity program to end discrimination in hiring assignments and promotions;

Solutions to job classification segregation by sex, race or other demographics;

Create openings to non-traditional jobs and assignments for all workers.

- Conduct childcare and dependent care surveys to determine employee/member needs.
- Recommend that the local union negotiate a nondiscrimination clause and an anti-sexual harassment policy in all of its contracts; both should be distributed to all supervisors, managers and employees.
- Examine pension and fringe benefit provisions in the contract(s) to see if they discriminate based on sex, race or other demographics. Recommend ways to equalize benefits in the next contract.
- Review maternity and parental leave provisions to see if they adequately protect the income, seniority and well being of parents and dependents. Determine if they meet the requirements of the Family Medical Leave Act or any other federal, state and/or local legislation. If not, prepare recommendations for improvement and expansion of those provisions.
- Support workers striking or picketing over issues of special concern to women, minorities and other workers.

These are suggested activities. Each committee will have other issues that are characteristic to their workplace that they will want to pursue. Findings and recommendations should be presented to the president/business manager or the executive board for consideration and adoption.

### **How can the committee be most effective?**

Reflect or represent the diversity of the workplace - the racial, gender, or other demographic make up.

Establish a regular meeting time and place. Send out reminder notices by mail at least a week before each meeting. Prepare an agenda to keep the meeting on track.

Set up a subcommittee or special task force to perform the work of the committee. Divide tasks when obtaining needed information.

Have a sound working knowledge of the collective bargaining agreements, IBEW Constitution, local union bylaws, and any other provisions that might affect the work to be done.

Submit periodic reports to the president or the executive board on activities, and make recommendations to the local union when appropriate.

## **What steps should be taken when creating the committee?**

The president/business manager should:

- Establish the committee by appointment or through an election process.
- Appoint a chairperson of the committee.

The committee should:

- Have at least one local union officer serve on the committee.
- Formulate a statement of purpose.
- Generate goals and objectives to carry out the mission statement.
- Record and retain minutes from each meeting.

### **Other committee activities:**

- Prepare articles for the union newsletter covering committee activities.
- Conduct educational workshops for shop stewards and members.
- Plan fundraising activities to cover expenses.
- Distribute resource information at conferences.
- Lobby at local and state levels on pertinent issues as they arise.
- Build coalitions and working relationships with other unions, associations, schools and community groups to advocate on issues of mutual interest.
- Create mentoring programs to advance opportunities for women, minorities and other underrepresented groups.

The purpose of this guide is to ensure that the activities undertaken by the committee are an integral part of the local union's overall structure. All committee activities require approval of the president/business manager.