

Action Agendas for Local Union Committees



WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE.

Your Women's Rights Committee helps the Local fight sex discrimination which is prohibited by law. The Committee pinpoints areas of discrimination, then does something about it by involving the local leadership, membership and interested people—especially women—who have not as yet joined. Both the employer and employees are made aware that AFSCME stands for fair treatment of every person—regardless of sex. The Committee is a vehicle for justice—and also a vehicle for encouraging women to join the union.

This **ACTION AGENDA** is designed to help your local set up a Women's Rights Committee. It contains material to be used by the Committee Chairperson to get the Committee going and report on progress.

Recruiting Women's Rights Committee Members

- Start with two or three members of the Organizing Committee who would like to work on a Women's Rights Committee.
- They in turn should recruit new people, not already involved, to join the Committee.
- Look for people interested in, or wanting to learn about women's rights. Some people may already be involved in the women's rights issues through the Coalition of Labor Union Women or NOW—National Organization for Women, or other similar groups.
- Also, the Women's Rights Committee should try to have a good cross section of the employees—from different departments, wards, office floors, and other work areas and different shifts.

Note:

Each Committee needs a Chairperson. Under AFSCME's Constitution, that person is appointed by the President of the local union and approved by the Executive Board.

The Organizing Committee should give the President a list of suggested candidates to head the Women's Rights Committee.

Sex Discrimination: Action Program

It is against the law to discriminate on the basis of sex.

“Sex Discrimination on the Job” (a copy is attached) is a survey which will help the union find out if and where the employer is discriminating. By completing it, and then doing something about the problems you find, you can let other women employees learn that the union is working for them.

And as they see that the union is interested in them, they will be encouraged to join with you.

What happens first?

To work with the survey, go over it carefully first. Then split up the work. Have different teams of two or three people check out sections where problems are likely to be found.

Make extra copies of the survey and get others to help in your investigation. Talk not only to our members, but to those who haven't joined. Your interest in their job situations might persuade them to help and join.

What to look for.

Many people are not aware of what constitutes discrimination.

Many think that the only time you can prove sex discrimination is when exactly the same work is done by a man and a woman, but the man is paid more. The law is broader than that and does not demand such a tight case.

The general thrust of the law is that qualifications for any aspect of employment should be based on ability to do the job, not sex.

UNDER THE LAW . . . there are three main avenues which you can use to change conditions of discrimination and, in some cases, to win back pay.

- ▶ **The Equal Pay Act** — covers all public employees. It deals with equal pay (including most fringe benefits) for substantially equal work. It does not cover hiring or training, and is enforced by the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor.



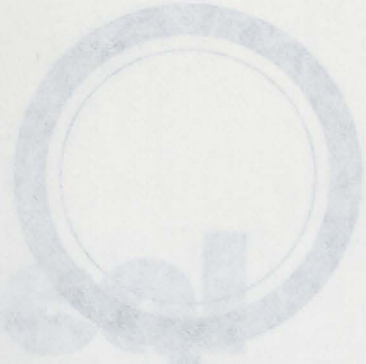
- ▶ **Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act** — is a federal law covering public employees in every aspect of employment. It is enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Back pay can be awarded for up to two years.
- ▶ **State Fair Employment Practices Acts** — often cover basically the same area as Title VII. If your state has such an act, it will probably be enforced by a Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC).

In Building Your Case, REMEMBER . . .

- (1) You do not have to show that Management *intended* to discriminate, only that their actions *resulted* in discrimination.
- (2) Statistics alone may be enough to prove your case. For example, you do not have to show why or how certain low level job classifications contain all or mostly women, only that they do. Management then must prove that such a situation is not the result of discrimination.
- (3) Even though a current policy is not in itself discriminatory, it is unlawful if it reinforces or maintains the results of past discrimination. For example, if a training program only accepts people from a certain job category, and because of past discrimination there are not women in that job category, the training program may be discriminatory — in violation of the law.

It is a violation of federal law for management to take any retaliatory action (termination, demotion, or any form of punishment or harassment) against any individual or labor union because either has filed a charge of sex discrimination, or testified or in any way participated in the investigation.

What To Do



1) Survey

The Sex Discrimination Survey will help you investigate the conditions at your work place. Be sure that every area of employment is checked, including recruitment, advertising for recruitment, testing, hiring, transfers, up-grading, training, selection for training, promotion, lay-off, termination, seniority, wages, and fringe benefits.

The government can help, but if you have a case let's use the union first to try to solve the problem on the job. The law often moves slowly — the union should act quickly. Working closely as a committee within your local will give the members a feeling of togetherness and strength, and will make management stop and listen.

The committee, once they think they have evidence of sex discrimination on the job, should:

Make the local union leadership aware of the problem — officers, executive board, chief steward, stewards and the organizing committee all should be informed.

2) File a grievance

With the help of the President and Chief Steward, start action on grievances — include as many people who are affected as possible in the grievances.

3) If management drags its feet on your grievance

(a) Pick issues that affect a number of women — the more people affected the better.

(b) Pick as your first target issues that you believe can most easily be won. It helps to have victories — gives confidence to your committee and other women.

(c) If your target issues affect more than one woman, then —

Demand a meeting with the Supervisor or Department Head to meet with your committee and the Local President and/or Chief Steward on the unsolved problems.

Before the meeting:

With the help of the President and/or Chief Steward set up smaller meetings in different sections, wards, floors, departments, etc., explaining the problems to fellow employees.

Be clear what you want management to do – and what you will do next if management doesn't move.

Practice before you meet with management – assign roles for different people to take part so one person doesn't do all the talking.

At the meeting:

Bring as many people as possible. Each committee person should be responsible for bringing at least one other person.

Get the specific commitments on action from management and when that action is to take place.

If management does not respond, then make sure they know you will take further steps – and what they are – if demands are not met. Management should be clear that you are ready to escalate if necessary. Make sure that you keep a written record of the demands made and the response of management.

Remember:

This meeting with management is only one tactic. You can go on to fight on several fronts if necessary to win your grievances on sex discrimination.

4) Other actions to take:

(a) Filing additional grievances through the regular procedure – get as many as possible.

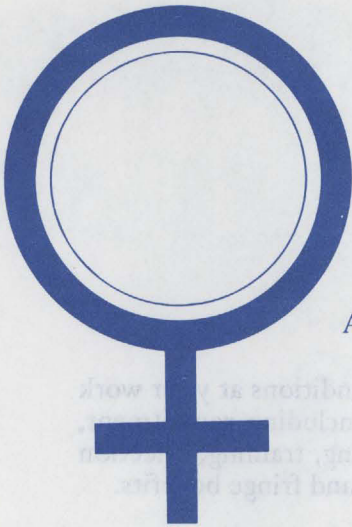
(b) Raise issues at labor management meetings – make sure officers and stewards understand you want their active support.

(c) Publicity – to the employees, to the press about discrimination against women.

(d) Contact friendly state legislators.

(e) Request hearings if possible.

(f) The local can explore filing charges with the proper Federal and state agencies. Before moving in that direction check on what's the best approach with our Program Development Department in Washington. If the situation looks as if it will move on to possible court action – check first with the General Counsel's Office of AFSCME in Washington.



Progress Reports To The Local Union

The Chairperson should report on the progress of the Committee at:

- Organizing Committee Meetings
- Executive Board Meetings
- Membership Meetings
- Through leaflets

In your leaflets and publicity make sure everyone knows what you have done—members and especially those who haven't joined yet—show them that by joining AFSCME they have a voice in ending discrimination.

When reporting, remember—your mood will get across to the people you are speaking with and they will respond to it. Show your enthusiasm about the importance of your work; let everyone know how you feel so they will share your role in building the union.



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