

ENGAGING LABOR UNIONS



ORGANIZATIONS FOR OUTREACH

Labor unions are comprised of workers from many sectors of the economy who agree to have the labor union represent them in negotiating with management over working conditions, pay, and benefits with their employer. Here are some of the names of labor unions that have local affiliates and may be inclined to participate in tobacco-free movement efforts.

- **American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees** (AFSCME)
- **Service Employees International Union** (SEIU)
- **International Brotherhood of Teamsters** (Teamsters)
- **United Food and Commercial Workers** (UFCW)

Labor in California Today¹

There are more than 3,500 labor unions that represent about 16 percent of the estimated 15 million workers in California. The percentage of workers represented by unions is 7th in the nation, at 17.6 percent.

How Are Labor Unions Organized?

Most labor unions are organized at national, state, and local levels. For example, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters has a California Public Affairs Council that works on state issues and also has locals that represent classifications of workers. For example, Teamsters Local 2010 represents workers in higher education institutions.

Union locals include workers and leaders in a particular community, geographic or classification-based. There are also federations of unions such as the California Labor Federation (AFL-CIO) which represents 1,200 unions in the state.

What's the Connection to Tobacco?

The tobacco industry markets to the same communities that labor unions fight for. The California Labor Federation was a leading proponent of the landmark CA Smokefree Workplace Act and its implementation. In 2016, the SEIU California State Council actively supported Proposition 56 and a package of legislation to strengthen tobacco laws.



Why Would We Want To Engage With Unions?

Labor unions care about improving workplace health and safety, addressing disparities among low-income Californians, LGBTQ+ and communities of color, and improving the health of our communities. Some state unions have supported tobacco policy, contributing their political and organizational power to these victories.

Why Would Labor Unions Want To Join Us?

The tobacco-free movement works on local campaigns and activities to improve public health and the livability of communities workers live in. While most workplaces are smokefree, many outdoor worksites are not. For public employee unions, reducing tobacco's financial toll can free up precious resources for government budgets that benefit union workers.

SOME KEY FACTS

\$3.5 Billion

Smoking costs California taxpayers about \$3.5 billion a year in healthcare costs for tobacco-related diseases.² Unions pay the price in higher health care premiums or costs in health plans.



Tobacco companies target their advertising and marketing campaigns at communities of color and low income communities, two communities that make up the majority of union members.^{3,4}



An estimated one in eight people who smoke in the US belongs to a labor union.^{5,6}

How Do I Engage with Labor Unions?

Prior to engaging with labor unions, consider the following:

- Can your work contribute to labor's work and priorities. Would your coalition be willing to express support in favor of current labor issues?
- Is your coalition or campaign labor-friendly? Does your organization use labor-friendly printers with the union "bug" on your printed materials? Will your team avoid a picket line or stand in solidarity during a strike? When going to union offices, do you arrive in a union-built car and bring union-made resources?

Engagement with labor takes effort. Connecting with labor unions may happen outside of 9-5 working hours. For labor organizations, ensuring fair wages, benefits, and working conditions are the top priorities—so how do your issues intersect with these priorities?

KNOW WHAT TO SAY

Say This...	Don't Say That
Unions	Unions and their members
Working people	Blue collar workers
We want to be partners in positive social change	We want your support for our priorities

To Learn More:

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Citations

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