OVERVIEW OF POSTDOC UNIONIZATION
Unionization and the Postdoc

The National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) is providing this page as a resource for the postdoctoral community. The NPA maintains a neutral position on unionization:

The NPA is a professional association whose mission is to advance the U.S. research enterprise by enhancing the quality of the postdoctoral experience. The NPA is a 501(c)(3) charitable tax-exempt organization, supported primarily through grants and other charitable contributions. The educational and scientific purposes of the NPA, under 501(c)(3) rules, preclude the NPA from supporting or opposing the unionization of postdocs, as well as from providing representation for postdoctoral employees wishing to engage in collective bargaining activities with their employers. (*Approved by the NPA Board of Directors, November 21, 2010.*)

We are frequently asked whether the NPA is a union. The NPA is not a union. The NPA does not engage in collective bargaining or conflict resolution between employers and employees. The NPA works on the national level to secure positive change for postdoctoral scholars.

Some Facts About Unionization

- Depending on the contract between a union and an organization, employees may be restricted in talking directly to the administration or supervisors regarding their compensation, benefits, or grievances. Certainly, they cannot be represented by any other organization but the union in regard to their compensation and benefits.

- In many states, when unionization occurs at an organization, all employees must pay a fee to the union, regardless of whether they choose to become Full dues-paying Members of the organization. The requirement for paying of fees is usually controlled by State law.

- “In the Foundation-won U.S. Supreme Court CWA v. Beck decision, the court affirmed that workers have the right to refrain from formal union membership but can still be forced to pay a reduced fee for union monopoly bargaining in their workplaces.” – National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, Inc.

- Dues are calculated in various ways. One example is to have union dues be a small percent of the person’s salary, like 1%.

- Unions engage principally in collective bargaining and negotiated grievance procedures.

- Unions do not usually provide career development services or networking opportunities across a spectrum of organizations.

- If a union votes to strike, members are expected not to work.

- A significant portion of membership dues go to a union’s strike fund.

- Unions are 501(c)5, tax-exempt organizations
Resources regarding this topic can be found at:

- [http://www.nlrb.gov/](http://www.nlrb.gov/)
- [http://www.nrtw.org/](http://www.nrtw.org/)
- [http://topics.law.cornell.edu/wex/labor](http://topics.law.cornell.edu/wex/labor)

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