

Governance Principles

Adopted by the National Executive Committee March 3, 2012

One Coherent Organization

There are always a number of different parts of the Union (locals, regions, committees or bargaining units) with some decision-making authority.

All of these bodies must operate within the overall governance of the Union as a whole.

Staff are hired, assigned by and accountable to the Union, not to the specific area to which they are assigned.

All parts of the Union should be accountable to the Union's governing bodies (first Convention and then the National Executive Committee).

Responsibilities and Obligations of the National Executive Committee to the Membership

Conduct the business of the Union in a way that ensures democratic, responsible and effective administration of the Union.

Create and foster solidarity amongst its members.

NEC must not have conflicted loyalty to the interests of the membership.

Operate from a team approach.

Members of the National Executive Committee do not act or exercise authority as individuals, but only as members of a collective body.

Represent the entire membership of the Union, not just a particular constituency of the Union.

In all decision-making processes of the Union, individual National Executive Committee members shall always put the interests of the membership ahead of any personal or group-specific interests.

Once a decision has been reached by the National Executive Committee, individual members have an obligation to stand by that decision in any group or individual communication with members.

Appropriate Conduct of the National Executive Committee

Decisions by the National Executive Committee should be:

- a) based on the best knowledge available;
- b) be ethically justifiable and true to Union philosophy; and
- c) be made in the best interests of the membership at large.

Each National Executive Committee member has the obligation to:

- a) participate actively at National Executive Committee meetings;
- b) have respect and consideration for the opinions of all other National Executive Committee members; and
- c) make decisions based on discussing and weighing information put forward.

National Executive Committee members have an obligation to express their views; informed individual input into the decision-making process is critical.

If they oppose a recommendation made by the National Executive Committee, they have an obligation to provide constructive criticism and propose an alternative.

It is not productive for the Union to have an Opposition Party within its National Executive Committee.

It should not be the job of a National Executive Committee member to obstruct the decision-making process, but to facilitate the process in an informed manner.

There may be rare occasions when a National Executive Committee member is not able to accept a National Executive Committee decision. On those rare occasions he / she has an obligation to identify the issue and her / his reasons to the National Executive Committee and be open about the disagreement.

If a National Executive Committee member is consistently unable to accept the decisions of the majority after debate and discussion, that member should consider whether the Union is well served by this kind of constant internal frustration of the will of the majority. However, this should not be interpreted that one should not be critical and vocal.

National Executive Committee members must take the care and caution to report decisions and the reasons for those decisions accurately, not just their individual opinions about the decisions that were made.

Appropriate Role of the National Executive Committee

Develop a strategic plan for the Union's overall objectives and set the direction for the Union in terms of its bargaining, servicing and legislative / public policy objectives.

It is not the role of the National Executive Committee to implement that strategic plan and direction.

Implementation involves the operations and administrative side of the Union, which are the responsibilities of the Union's staff as directed by the Union's President and her / his designate.

The National Executive Committee is responsible for directing the Union, not managing it.

Members of the National Executive Committee do not supervise or direct staff.

The Union's President and his / her designate are to be responsible for the implementation of National Executive Committee decisions and directions between meetings of the National Executive Committee.

Members of the National Executive Committee do not normally deal with the day-to-day operations and administration of the Union.

The National Executive Committee should not redo the work of the Union's Management Committee, the staff and/or its various committees.

The National Executive Committee, however, shall consider recommendations from the Management Committee, the staff and / or the Union's various committees, and either accept or reject those recommendations.

Staff working with Committees of the Union

When staff are assigned to Committees, they do not become employees of the Committee. They remain employees of the Union under the authority of their direct supervisor / manager.

The staff's role is to assist the Committee. They do not get their authority from the Committee; but from the senior person who makes the assignment.

Committees within the Union should have specific mandates given to them by either Convention direction, the National Executive Committee or the President. Committees are not governing bodies of the Union.

Bargaining Committees have their own unique objectives and the staff's job is to assist them in reaching those objectives.

The staff must also incorporate the Union's overall bargaining objectives into the objectives of individual Bargaining Committees and ensure that Bargaining Committees operate within the Union's mandate.

If the Committee wants to do something that is non-compliant with the Union's policy, the role of the assigned person is to reinforce the Union's policy upon the Committee.

The staff person must also work with her / his supervisor to draw this to the attention of senior representatives of the organization.

Accountability

The Union must require performance from the people responsible for the operation of the organization.

Moving the responsibility, is not the answer. If the Union does that, those who were responsible for doing the job cannot be held accountable.

Elected members are not the employees of the Union.

If elected members start to do the work of designing, implementing and administering programs, the staff who are hired to perform those jobs are no longer accountable. In fact, they are prevented from performing their jobs.

Staff should be professionally able to perform the job they were hired to do.

If staff are unable to carry out the duties of their job, they should be held accountable.

Elected Officers are not:

- a) trained to do staff jobs.
- b) expected to be "experts" on implementation.
- c) not elected to do staff jobs.

Decisions often need to be revisited. How is the Union progressing? If the Union is not progressing well, why not?

The National Executive Committee and Committees should have a system of keeping track of what they want to do and how well they're doing it.