



# Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO

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*An AFL-CIO “Union City”*

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## WHAT IS THE LABOR MOVEMENT

As the voice of working people in local communities across the United States, the AFL-CIO Central Labor Councils, like the Washington Metropolitan Council (MWC), is the heart of the American labor movement.

By uniting labor unions from across the region and mobilizing the local community, the MWC plays a critical role in local, state, and national issues.

The Council's affiliated unions represent over 150,000 area union members in every line of work, from service and hospitality industries, retail sales, and communications to transportation, manufacturing, construction and building trades, and, of course, the public sector at all levels, including DC government.

### Our priorities include:

- Creating family-sustaining jobs for all;
- Investing in education, infrastructure, healthcare, and transportation;
- Improving the lives of workers through education, quality job training, career advancement and livable wages with good benefits;
- Ensuring fair, progressive tax policies;
- Making high-quality, affordable healthcare available to everyone;
- Holding corporations and government more accountable to ensure that taxpayer dollars serve the public good; and
- Ensuring that a worker's universal right to organize and to bargain collectively for wages, hours, and conditions of work are maintained and enforced.

***Bringing Labor Together Since 1896***

***[www.dclabor.org](http://www.dclabor.org)***

# CORNERSTONE ISSUES OF LABOR

## **Collective Bargaining**

Collective bargaining is the heart and soul of a labor union. Collective bargaining occurs when a group of people, such as the workforce at a company, bands together to increase its negotiating power.

## **Better Wages and Benefits**

When people negotiate through collective bargaining, they gain better wages and benefits. Decent raises, predictable schedules, and family-friendly policies don't just happen without working people coming together and advocating for better workplaces.

## **Workplace Safety**

The labor movement has always led the charge to protect working people from workplace injury, illness, and death. Working with allies, labor has won strong protections against hazards and stronger rights for workers. Through organizing and collective bargaining, unions have gained protections that are even more robust, and rights that have given workers a real voice in safety and health at the workplace.

## **Pay equity**

In 2016, women in unions made 23 percent higher wages than those not in a union. Moreover, unions have narrowed the gender wage gap to just 6 percent (compared to 16 percent for non-union). Plus, unions are also more likely to have various types of paid leave to balance work and family.<sup>1</sup>

## **Building Power for Working People**

Union members work together to negotiate and enforce a contract with management that guarantees things like decent raises, affordable health care, safer workplaces, job security, and a stable schedule.

## **Voice of the People**

Unions give a unified voice for all working people by advocating for legislation and regulations that keep us safer, healthier, and enjoying a higher quality of life. Many union members are politically engaged. We advocate for the public servants who will best serve the interests of working people at all levels of government. Together, we are re-writing the rules of the economy, so they benefit the 99% instead of the wealthy few.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Policy Institute "Unions help narrow the gender wage gap," Gould, McNicholas April 3, 2017