

Definition of 'Trade Union'

Definition: Labour unions or trade unions are organizations formed by workers from related fields that work for the common interest of its members. They help workers in issues like fairness of pay, good working environment, hours of work and benefits. They represent a cluster of workers and provide a link between the management and workers.

Description: The purpose of these unions is to look into the grievances of workers and present a collective voice in front of the management. Hence, it acts as the medium of communication between the workers and management.

Regulation of relations, settlement of grievances, raising new demands on behalf of workers, collective bargaining and negotiations are the other key principle functions that these trade unions perform.

The Indian Trade Union Act, 1926, is the principle act which controls and regulates the mechanism of trade unions. In India, political lines and ideologies influence trade union movements. This is the reason why today political parties are forming and running trade unions.

Employer/Union Rights and Obligations:

The National Labor Relations Act forbids employers from interfering with, restraining, or coercing employees in the exercise of rights relating to organizing, forming, joining or assisting a labor organization for collective bargaining purposes, or from working together to improve terms and conditions of employment, or refraining from any such activity. Similarly, labor organizations may not restrain or coerce employees in the exercise of these rights.

Examples of employer conduct that violates the law:

- Threatening employees with loss of jobs or benefits if they join or vote for a union or engage in protected concerted activity.
- Threatening to close the plant if employees select a union to represent them.
- Questioning employees about their union sympathies or activities in circumstances that tend to interfere with, restrain or coerce employees in the exercise of their rights under the Act.
- Promising benefits to employees to discourage their union support.
- Transferring, laying off, terminating, assigning employees more difficult work tasks, or otherwise punishing employees because they engaged in union or protected concerted activity.

- Transferring, laying off, terminating, assigning employees more difficult work tasks, or otherwise punishing employees because they filed unfair labor practice charges or participated in an investigation conducted by NLRB.

Examples of labor organization conduct that violates the law:

- Threats to employees that they will lose their jobs unless they support the union.
- Seeking the suspension, discharge or other punishment of an employee for not being a union member even if the employee has paid or offered to pay a lawful initiation fee and periodic fees thereafter.
- Refusing to process a grievance because an employee has criticized union officials or because an employee is not a member of the union in states where union security clauses are not permitted.
- Fining employees who have validly resigned from the union for engaging in protected concerted activities following their resignation or for crossing an unlawful picket line.
- Engaging in picket line misconduct, such as threatening, assaulting, or barring non-strikers from the employer's premises.
- Striking over issues unrelated to employment terms and conditions or coercively enmeshing neutrals into a labor dispute.