

# **Member Resource Guide**



**Kenneth R. Boyd**  
**President &**  
**UFCW International Vice President**

**Terry Kramer**  
**Secretary-Treasurer**

**[www.ufwlocal1546.org](http://www.ufwlocal1546.org)**

## Welcome to UFCW Local 1546!



It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the ***United Food & Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) Local 1546.***

You are now a member of an extended family of Local 1546 workers ó nearly 30,000 strong ó who work in the retail grocery, meat packing and processing, and nursing home industries.

As a Local 1546 member, you are part of a union ó and in fact, part of a Labor Movement ó that strives to raise the living standard of workers and their families.

Your union contract ensures you guaranteed wages, benefits, and a voice on the job that you otherwise may not have. Your union provides a grievance procedure should your employer violate the terms of your contract; and because of your union contract, you can never be terminated without cause.

When you become a Local 1546 member, you take on the responsibility of membership as well.

Keeping in mind that your union is only as strong as its members, I hope you will actively and enthusiastically support the efforts of your union as we organize new members and bargain with your employer for the best possible contracts.

I also hope you will take advantage of the additional benefits available to you and your family through your union membership, and participate in the many educational, political, and charitable events that Local 1546 holds each year.

As President of UFCW Local 1546 and an International Vice President of the UFCW, I am dedicated ó along with our outstanding group of Union Reps., organizers, communicators, and office staff ó to bettering the lives and livelihoods of our members and their families, and thereby raising the bar for all of America's workers.

We're glad to have you join us and become a part of this great movement! Together, we will carry on this proud tradition.

Welcome to the UFCW Local 1546 family!

In solidarity,

Kenneth R. Boyd  
President and UFCW International Vice President

## Who are we?

We are Local 1546 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, the UFCW.

The UFCW, affiliated with Change To Win, is an International Union representing workers from a diverse range of industries including grocery and drug retailers; meat cutting, processing, and packing; chemical works; nursing home and healthcare facilities, and many others.

The UFCW has Local Unions spread throughout the United States and Canada. Local 1546, a union merged in January, 2002, from former UFCW Locals 100A, 1540, and 546, represents nearly 30,000 members throughout the state of Illinois, part of Northwest Indiana, and dotted throughout several other states.

Our members work in retail grocery and drug stores, in meat packing and processing plants, in leather processing plants, in nursing homes, and in a number of other retail settings.

## **At UFCW Local 1546, we believe that:**

- Our first obligation is to negotiate the best possible contracts for our members, and then to see to it that the terms of those contracts are enforced through the filing of grievances, when necessary, and through committed and caring service to our members.
- Our Local Union is only as good as its members. Participation in the daily work of the Local is the job of every Local 1546 member, and the leadership of this union encourages and welcomes the input and involvement of all of its members.
- This Local Union should be a source of a wide range of additional benefits for its members and their families whenever possible and appropriate. We, therefore, establish relationships with organizations and vendors for the purpose of securing a variety of life-enhancing and money-saving benefits for Local 1546 members and their families.
- Every group of workers ó large or small ó deserves union representation and a decent union contract. Therefore, we are committed to organizing the un-organized workers

within our region who seek out the benefits of Union representation.

- We, as all unions, have an obligation to all working families ó union and non-union ó to fight for the rights of workers by supporting and encouraging legislation that promotes workplace safety and the overall betterment of the lives of working families, and furthers the cause of the Labor Movement in America. We, therefore, encourage our members to register and vote, and to be politically informed and politically active citizens.
- As a union, we should work for a society that is free of racism and sexism and committed to equal opportunity for all citizens.
- In conjunction with the UFCW and its other Local Unions, we have an obligation to be a good citizen and work to improve life in our communities. We do this in part by supporting our official charity, the *Leukemia & Lymphoma Society*. The members of Local 1546, therefore, participate fully ó year after year ó in a variety of fundraising events for this worthwhile cause.

# Union Member Rights

## Union members have:

- a right to a union contract
- a right to know the names of their union officials and contact information
- a right to vote on approving all contracts
- a right to vote on whether or not to strike
- a right to have workplace grievances investigated and processed fairly and in a timely manner
- a right to vote on local elected officers and local elected delegates
- a right to seek union leadership posts
- a right to participate in union activities
- a right to freedom of speech and assembly
- a right to request a union constitution/by-laws

## Weingarten “Union” Rights

*Weingarten rights are legally enforced protections ensuring that a union member has representation during any possible disciplinary meeting.*

*If you are in a situation where you feel you need union representation, read the following word for word to your supervisor to declare your Union Rights.*

öIf this discussion would lead in any way to my being disciplined or terminated or have any effect on my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my Union Representative, Officer or Steward be present at this meeting. Without representation, I choose not to participate in this discussion.ö

## Know Your Union Facts:

### What is a contract?

A union contract is the most effective legal document that a worker has on an employer's ability to determine worker wages, hours and working conditions. Without a contract, a worker is considered an **"at-will"** employee and subject to the commands of the employer.

With your input as a union member, a contract has been negotiated with your employer on your behalf ó a contract which is a legally binding document specifying your wages and wage progression, your rights on the job, your vacation, your healthcare benefits and pension, and nearly all other conditions of your employment. Should your employer violate any terms of this contract, a grievance procedure is firmly in place to resolve the problem.

Your contract is valid for a specified period of time and, upon its expiration, a new contract is negotiated by a committee comprised of trained union negotiators and rank & file union members.

Before negotiations begin, the committee asks for input from all members who will be affected by the contract (or the Bargaining Unit).

When negotiations conclude, and a tentative agreement is reached between the union bargaining committee and the company, the contract is presented to the members of the bargaining unit for a vote to accept or reject it.

Although the committee will recommend acceptance or rejection to the voting members, the final vote by the members ultimately determines whether the contract will take effect. The contract is ratified only when more than 50% of voting members vote to accept it.

Every contract is different, so one of the most positive things that you, as a union member, can do for yourself is be familiar with your union contract. To get the most out of it be sure you know what's in it!

*Do you have questions about your union contract?  
Do you believe your employer has violated the terms of  
your contract? Call your Local 1546 Union  
Representative for help.*

## What is a grievance?

Your Union contract will spell out what is a grievance and how grievances are processed. The process usually includes several steps and is called the grievance procedure.

What is the purpose of the grievance procedure?

- To enforce the contract
- To interpret the meaning and intent of the contract
- To settle workplace problems in a systematic way
- To help to establish and protect workers' rights
- To give workers a voice on the job by providing them with an opportunity to tell their side of the story
- To promote workplace harmony

If a member files a grievance with his or her Union Representative, the first step is to try to resolve the situation directly with management. If it is not resolved at that time, the next step is to follow the grievance procedures as stated in the Union contract. This may, in some cases, lead to a final step called arbitration where the decision is final and cannot be appealed by either the union or management.

## What is a Union Steward?

In many work locations, Local 1546 has trained one of your co-workers and fellow union members to act as a liaison between you and your employer, or you and your union Representative.

Your Union Steward knows your contract, understands its language, and knows the proper procedures to follow regarding discipline and the filing of grievances. He or she stays informed about ongoing negotiations, work actions, and other union activities.

Your Steward often serves as a captain or team leader for fundraising projects or other union sponsored events.

And, your Steward is kept aware of available union benefits and upcoming union meetings and events.

Do you have a problem at work that can be handled at store level, or a simple question that doesn't require getting in touch with your Union Rep.? Your Union Steward is there to help.

# Union Dues

## *Why do I pay Union Dues?*

Local 1546 is a self-sustaining, not-for-profit organization that exists for the betterment of its members. Your dues pay for expenses incurred in contract negotiations, servicing members, legal fees, organizing new members and communicationsí just to name a few in a very long list.

It is wrong to assume that you merely pay dues as a return investment for financial gain. Union members pay dues for the same reason civic, faith-based, cultural, business, and professional association members pay dues: It costs money to run an organization, and particularly in our case, it also costs money to defend the best interests of the membership.

## *What **don't** my Union Dues pay for?*

It is illegal for Union Dues to be used as contributions to union electoral campaigns, federal political campaigns, and the private benefit of any union employee.

## *How are my dues paid?*

Depending on your employer, your dues may either be deducted directly from your pay each month, or you will be billed separately.

## *How much are my dues?*

Union dues vary depending on the field you work in and your rate of pay. Overall, your Union Dues are a great value considering the higher wages and increased benefits you enjoy as a result of your union membership.

## Know Your Union Terms

**Arbitration...** A process by where a neutral third party (similar to a judge) hears a grievance case and makes a final decision. Most grievance procedures have arbitration as the last step and both the union and management agree to accept the decision of the arbitrator.

**Bargaining unit...** A specified group of workers who bargain collectively with the employer. The unit may include all the workers in a single location or in a number of locations, or it may include only the workers in a single craft or department, such as meat/fish/deli or grocery.

**Best offer/Last offer/Last, best and final offer...** An offer is a voluntary but conditional promise submitted by the company to the union for acceptance. It is common for the company to make multiple offers at various stages of the negotiating process, sometimes referring to them as "best offers" and "last offers." Generally, it is what the company terms its "Last, best and final offer" that the union will present to the members of the bargaining unit for a vote to accept or reject it.

**Change to Win...** Change to Win was founded in September 2005 by seven unions and six million workers who left the AFL-CIO. The seven affiliated unions are: Teamsters, Laborers, Service Employees, Carpenters, Farm Workers, UFCW and UNITE HERE.

**Collective bargaining...**A process by which workers, through their own bargaining committee, deal as a group to determine wages, hours and other conditions of employment. Normally, the result of collective bargaining is a written contract which covers all workers in the bargaining unit.

**Contract...**Written, legally enforceable agreement for a specified period between the company and its employees represented by a union. It sets down and defines conditions of employment (wages, working hours and conditions, overtime payments, holidays, vacations, benefits, etc.) and procedures for dispute resolution known as grievance procedures.

**DOR (date of ratification)...**The DOR is the actual date that a contract is voted on and ratified by the membership. Terms of the contract, however, including any pay raises and benefits, do not necessarily take effect on that date. The contract itself stipulates effective dates for all such conditions of employment.

**Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)...**FMLA allows eligible workers to take up to 12 work weeks in any 12 month period for the birth or adoption of a child, to care for a family member, or if the workers themselves have a serious health condition.

**Informational Picketing...**A type of picketing done with the express intent not to cause a work stoppage, but to publicize a labor dispute or information concerning the dispute.

**Just Cause...**A reason an employer must give for any disciplinary action it takes against a worker.

***National Labor Relations Act, NLRA...***The NLRA was enacted in 1935 to guarantee workers in the private sector the right to unionize, engage in concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection. The enforcement arm for the National Labor Relations Act is the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Its duties are; to issue and decide on complaints charging unfair labor practices, and require such practices be stopped; and to certify bargaining representatives for employees in their dealings with employers.

***Seniority...***Privileged status attained by an employee because of the length of continuous service with the same employer, and which usually affects wage progression, eligibility for benefits, and scheduling preferences, according to the specific terms of the contract.

## Why Does Your Union Get Involved in Politics?

Who gets elected (on the local, state or federal levels) to office can and often does have a significant effect on the laws that impact working families.

Being active in the political and legislative arena is another important way that Local 1546 works to guard the livelihoods of the members we serve and represent.

Our union lobbies to create and/or protect laws that work in favor of our members, and against those that aim to hurt them.

Over the years, unions have supported and helped pass some life-changing legislation for workers, including:

- Child Labor Laws
- 40-Hour Work Week (Fair Labor Standard Act)
- Minimum Wage
- Social Security
- Medicare
- Family & Medical Leave Act
- OSHA (Work Safety Laws)

Local 1546 also educates our members on the records and likely behavior of specific candidates, in an effort

to help elect pro-labor office seekers and defeat those with demonstrated anti-union views.

What happens in the halls of government can directly impact our ability to represent the members, so it is our responsibility as your union to be involved on your behalf in the political and legislative arenas.

### **Active Ballot Club**

#### **Join the ABC- Because Politics Matter!**

The gains that Local 1546 makes for our members at the bargaining table can be lost in the halls of government. That's the reason behind the Active Ballot Club (ABC), the voluntary, non-partisan political arm of Local 1546 and the UFCW. The goal of the ABC is to elect pro-labor candidates and promote legislation that favors working families.

The cost to belong is only about \$1.00 per month, or about \$12.00 per year. *(Union dues are not used to financially support the ABC, and contributions are not tax deductible.)* ABC can be deducted from your paycheck, or you can buy an ABC card to become a member. *See your Union Representative to learn how you can join!*

## Your Union's Community Involvement

***The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society:***  
The official charity of the UFCW and Local 1546



With more than 640,000 people in the U.S. living with blood cancers -- and a new patient diagnosed every 5 minutes -- the need for help is great! For many years, the UFCW has had a unique partnership with the *Leukemia & Lymphoma Society*. Local 1546 holds several events throughout the year to raise funds for this great cause, and every penny we raise goes to fund the research that will someday find a cure for leukemia, lymphoma, and other blood-related cancers.

As a part of our long-standing agreement with LLS, none of the money raised by the UFCW is ever used for administrative costs, or any purpose other than research. So when Local 1546 members work hard to raise funds for this cause, they always know that the money they raise will be put to the best possible use: finding a cure!

To learn how you can help this great cause, call the Local 1546 Communications Department at 847-593-3500.

## Union Extras

As a UFCW Local 1546 member, you are entitled to a number of special benefits in addition to those negotiated in your contract.

Discounts on various services, from insurance to vision care to mortgages, are available to you simply because of your union membership.

### Union Plus

Here are just a few examples of some great benefits you and your family are eligible for through **Union Plus**, special program available to UFCW members.

- Union Plus Mortgage program
- Union Plus credit card
- Travel and merchandise discounts
- Discounted legal services! *and much more!*

*To learn more about these great union benefits, visit our website at [www.ufcwlocal1546.org](http://www.ufcwlocal1546.org) and click on "Member Benefits," or contact your Union Representative.*

## **Your Credit Union**

If your individual collective bargaining agreement allows you to join our Credit Union, consider this:

- Just \$25.00 opens your account and makes you a full shareholder in the Credit Union
- Your account has no minimum or maximum amount requirement
- The UPWA Credit Union is conveniently located at our Main Office at 1649 W. Adams in Chicago

*For more information about your Local 1546 Credit Union, contact your Union Representative.*

## **Local 1546 Scholarships**

Local 1546 awards ten scholarships each academic year to members or their dependents who qualify.

Four \$1,000 awards each are given to applicants who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement. Six additional \$500 awards are given to applicants who qualify and are selected in a random drawing.

For more information about the Local 1546 Scholarships or any of a number of other scholarships available to Local 1546 members, visit [www.ufcwlocal1546.org](http://www.ufcwlocal1546.org) or ask your Union Representative.

### **Additional Local 1546 Benefits**

Throughout the year, Local 1546 also makes available to its members special event and entertainment discounts. These benefits will be promoted in advance in the union newsletter, on the union website, and on the union bulletin board at your work location.

*For information on any of our special event and entertainment benefits, call the Local 1546 Communications Department at 847-593-3500, or ask your Union Representative.*

## Let Us Know

### Change of Address

**Don't make a move...without letting us know!**

Local 1546 sends important information via U.S. Mail to you on a regular basis.

Newsletters, collective bargaining updates, notices and much more are mailed to you. But if we don't have your current address, you may not receive Union mail!

Don't be left out! If you move, notify Local 1546 of your new address right away. Your employer is not obligated to give us your change of address...it's up to you! Inform the Union!

Please call Local 1546 at 312-733-2999 or 847-593-3500 or toll-free at 1-800-592-3508.

## **Applying for a Withdrawal Card**

If you are terminated, laid off, taking a leave of absence, or end your employment for any reason, make sure to request a withdrawal card from UFCW Local 1546.

This will help you avoid the payment of back dues or reinstatement fees should you decide to return to work or seek other employment under the jurisdiction of the UFCW in any of our fifty states and Canada.

The withdrawal card will be issued to you at no cost; the only requirement is that your fees are paid in full and your dues and assessments are paid through the month in which you work.

Also, please be advised that the withdrawal card must be requested within 30 days of leaving your employment.

To request a withdrawal card, call or write to our Chicago or Suburban UFCW Local 1546 office.

## **Information You Need**

To reach your Union Representative or for information regarding membership issues such as dues, withdrawal cards, address or phone number changes, or general union membership questions, call your Union office. All Local 1546 office hours are Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

### **Main Office**

**1649 W. Adams Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60612  
Phone: 312-733-2999 / Fax: 312-733-4369**

### **Suburban Office**

**2246 Palmer Dr. Unit 101  
Schaumburg, IL 60173  
Phone: 847-593-3500 / Fax: 847-593-3515**

### **Rochelle Office**

**315 Cherry Avenue  
Rochelle, IL 61068  
Phone: 815-562-4661**

### **Colona Office**

**P.O. Box 345  
Colona, IL 61241  
Phone: 309-658-3365**

If you need to reach your Union Rep. and don't know his or her name, be prepared to provide the name of your employer and the address of your workplace.

All Local 1546 Union Representatives are assigned to cover a territory comprised of many workplaces that employ numerous members. Except for their one office day each week (during which time they handle paperwork, replenish their supplies, attend meetings, and take care of a variety of important office matters), your Union Rep. is out in the workplaces that Local 1546 represents providing service to our members during the rest of the week. If your Union Representative is not in the office, your message will be returned as soon possible.

**Organizing Department / 847-593-3500**

Do you know a group of workers interested in learning more about union membership? Call the Local 1546 Organizing Department in complete confidence.

**Communications Department / 847-593-3500**

For questions, comments, or information regarding the **State of the Union** newsletter; the Local 1546 website; Scholarships; *Leukemia Society* fundraiser events; Political events; Meetings and educational events; and English as a Second Language classes.

## ***Other Union-related Offices***

### **Local 1546 Health & Welfare Information**

**UFCW Unions and Employers Midwest  
Health Benefits Fund**  
1300 Higgins Road, Suite 300  
Park Ridge, IL 60068-5713  
847.384.7000 or toll-free at 1.800.621.5133

**UFCW Union and Employers Calumet Fund**  
1300 Higgins Road, Suite 300  
Park Ridge, IL 60068-5713  
847.384.7000 or toll-free at 1.800.621.5133

**UFCW Local 1546 Health & Welfare Fund**  
(Formerly known as the "Local 100A Fund")  
1649 W. Adams Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60612  
312.829-0850

**Zenith Administrators**  
(Formerly known as the Food Handlers' Health  
& Welfare Fund)  
P.O. Box 5000  
Frankfort, IL 60423-5000  
312.649.0444 or toll-free at 1.877.225.9141

**Jewel Health Benefits Fund  
(SuperValu ASC Benefits)**  
P.O. Box 20  
Boise, Idaho 83726  
toll-free at 1.800.969.9688

\*If your Fund is not listed here, please contact your Union  
Representative for additional information.

**Local 1546 Pension Information**

**UFCW Unions and Employers Midwest  
Pension Fund**

1300 Higgins Road, Suite 300  
Park Ridge, IL 60068-5713  
847.384.7000 or toll-free at 1.800.621.5133

**UFCW Union Industry Pension Fund**

(National Pension Fund)  
P.O. Box 6000  
Frankfort, IL 60423-6000  
312.649.1200 or toll-free at 1.800.531.2385

**UFCW Local 1546 Pension Fund**

(Formerly known as the "Local 100A Fund")  
1649 W. Adams Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60612  
312.829-0850

\*If your Fund is not listed here, please contact your Union  
Representative for additional information.

## **Workers' Compensation Questions**

Members of UFCW Local 1546 with questions about Workers' Compensation and/or injuries that occur on the job may contact (at no charge or obligation) the law firm of Jacobs, Burns, Orlove, Stanton and Hernandez at 312-372-1646.

## **Are Unions really needed?**

If the world were perfect and all employers were fair, honest and shared fully with workers, maybe not.

But even if employers were perfect, workers might still want to organize. Humans organize themselves into groups that make sense to them. Human beings have the God-given right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Workers care deeply about their jobs and want a voice in workplace decisions.

We live in an economic society devoted more to bottom-line profit than to people. Most corporate decisions that hurt workers are not driven by a desire to hurt workers, but rather a desire to increase profits or compete in a very competitive global market. Individual workers need an organized voice to challenge the priorities of companies and our economic system.

In our society, unions are the primary vehicles for worker representation in the workplace. Over the years, unions have proved themselves as advocates for justice in the society. Many workers view union as advocates for justice for the future.

*\*A special editorial from the Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice.*



My Union Rep. is \_\_\_\_\_

My Union Steward is \_\_\_\_\_

I can reach my Union Rep. at \_\_\_\_\_

Important notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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# **UFCW 1546 Member Orientation**

Complete and return this portion to your Union Rep.

*I have received and understand my UFCW Local 1546 member orientation.*

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

Member Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Member Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

Print Union Rep. Name \_\_\_\_\_

Union Rep. Signature \_\_\_\_\_