



# OPEIU LOCAL #9 Newsletter



For Bulletin Board Posting

FEBRUARY 2016

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## **PLEASE NOTE MEETING LOCATION**

**General Membership Meeting  
Tuesday, February 16, 2016  
6:00 p.m.**

**Milwaukee Professional  
Firefighters Local 215  
5625 W. Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53213  
(enter thru door in parking lot)**

## **“WHAT IS A UNION”**

A union is an organized group of workers who collectively use their strength to have a voice in their workplace. Through a union and with the assistance of a union representative, workers have a right to impact wages, work hours benefits, and other work related issues.

All of the benefits and protections workers enjoy today came about as a result of the organized labor movement in this country. Some of these benefits are the minimum wage, social security payments, the eight hour work day and weekends, overtime pay, and safety standards in the workplace (OSHA).

The reason to have a union is to have a voice in the workplace. Unless employees are organized, management is free to discipline, terminate, and

give very little in wages and benefits to their employees. Union members as a whole make higher wages and better benefits than those that are not part of a union. In fact, union workers on an average receive 30% higher wages than the non-union workers. Only 14% of non-union workers have guaranteed pensions, and 92% of union workers have jobs that provide health insurance coverage while only 68% of the non-union has health insurance coverage provided by their employer.

The Union helps protect employees from unjust termination through the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Because of this, most union employees cannot be terminated without “just cause”. Whereas non- represented employees are considered to be “at-will” employees and can be fired at any time for almost any reason.

The CBA is the heart and soul of the labor union. A CBA bands together employees to give them leverage in negotiating an agreement. Take for instance a non-represented employee has to go to the HR department and/or his supervisor to request a wage increase. It is solely up to the employer whether or not this individual receives a wage increase or not. Whereas in a CBA the employer cannot be selective in whom they want to give raises to, because the union negotiates on behalf of the entire membership not just one or two. The CBA allows the employee to receive vacation pay, holidays, bereavement and many more benefits that the non-represented employee may not automatically receive.

Finally, one other key benefit of working as a union employee is that you have a union

representative working on your behalf if you have a personal issue with your employer. Non-union employees have to contact the human resources department for assistance, but keep in mind the department is part of the employer and will look out for the employer's best interest first before looking out for the employee. Meeting with a boss and employer HR representative can make an employee with an issue feel outnumbered or vulnerable. A union representative will come with you into a meeting with the employer to help resolve the issue.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

### Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship

The Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship offers active and retired members as well as their sons and daughters a scholarship for higher education in the first two years of education. The full-time scholarship is for \$3,250.00 the first year and \$3250.00 for the second year. Part-time scholarship is for \$1,325.00 the first year and \$1,325.00 the second year.

Deadline to submit the application is April 30, 2016 and the application must be signed off by the President or Secretary-Treasurer. Please visit: [www.opeiu.org](http://www.opeiu.org) for further information.

### John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship

This scholarship is **for members only**. There will be ten (10) scholarships awarded with at least one (1) in each region of the OPEIU. Each scholarship has a total maximum of \$3,250.00 and the deadline to submit the application is April 30, 2016. Please visit [www.opeiu.org](http://www.opeiu.org) for further information.

## VALENTINE'S DAY

Quite a few Americans celebrate Valentine's Day on February 14<sup>th</sup> each year, but where and when did this special day begin. Legend has it that it either came from pagan times, while others link it to one or more Saints from early Christian Church, and still others link it to the beginning of bird mating season. Many scholars believe that St. Valentine of the holiday was a priest and lost favor with Roman emperor Claudius II around 270 AD. Legend has it that Claudius II had prohibited the marriage of young men claiming that the young men made better soldiers if they were not married. St. Valentine secretly would perform marriage ceremonies until he was caught and put to death. Another legend has it that while St. Valentine was in prison he fell in love with the jailer's daughter and prior to being executed sent her a letter signed "from your Valentine".

Around 498 AD Pope Gelasius declared February 14<sup>th</sup> as St. Valentine's Day to honor the martyr Valentinus and end pagan celebrations.

In the Middle Ages people in England and France believed that birds started looking for their mates on February 14<sup>th</sup> thus strengthens the idea of Valentine's Day as a romance and lovers day. It gained ground and soon lovers were exchanging love notes and gifts like flowers.

Finally in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in England exchanging handmade cards with hearts, cupid, and lace and giving gifts became common. Then around 1850 it became widespread in the United States. Today the holiday has become a booming commercial success. Around 25% of all cards sent throughout the year are sent on Valentine's Day. Enjoy your Valentine's Day!

**As always, if you have any concerns or issues, please call or email the office.**

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