

FCFT STEWARD



FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

STEWARDS' RIGHTS

Overview

As an FCFT Steward, you're entrusted to protect the rights of FCPS workers and defend our contracts. Our style is active and aggressive. It's the best defense against bosses who try to undermine hard-won gains. To be effective, it's important to know the tools and protections we have as Stewards and as workers.

Our tools: the contracts, the grievance procedure, our union rights, and, most important, worksite unity and organization. Less well-known, perhaps, are the protections under the law, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). The NLRA applies to most private-sector workers. Most public sector workers are protected by similar state or federal laws. (Check with your FCFT staff person about applicable laws.)

ENFORCE YOUR CONTRACT



FCFT Representation:
representation@fcft.org
s.ronayne@fcft.org
m.peele@fcft.org
e.vanderhoff@fcft.org

No Reprisals

The boss is not allowed to use discipline, either real or threatened, or any other form of intimidation to discourage you from doing your job as steward. For example, you can't be denied overtime opportunities, promotions, job transfers, bumping rights, or any other benefit you are entitled to as punishment for doing an aggressive job. Nor can management assign you to the most undesirable jobs or more closely supervise you than other workers.

Equal Standards

Some supervisors try to hold stewards to higher standards than others. They'll say, "You, of all people, should know the rules," when some rule has been broken. This is illegal, too. You're not a "super-worker" and you can't be singled out for unusual discipline to "set an example" or because you should "know better." The only exception: not carrying out contractual responsibilities required of elected union officials.

What To Do

If the boss breaks these rules, the union should most likely file both a grievance under the contract as well as an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charge with the Labor Board (NLRB). The time limit for filing a ULP charge is within six months of the violation. Contact your FCFT staff member before filing an Unfair Labor Practice charge.

Workplace Organization

As in the case with most other grievances, a workplace strategy for solving the problem is often much more effective than dealing with the NLRB — especially because the Labor Board is often frustratingly slow to respond. But, if you feel that a ULP charge should be filed, talk with your FCFT staff member and local officers about the best way to proceed.

The Equality Rule

A critical protection is known as, "The Equality Rule." This acknowledges that as a Steward you are likely to be faced with confrontations from management — confrontations that could lead to discipline under the normal rules of employer-employee relations. Yet, under "The Equality Rule," you are "legal equal" to the boss. But, it's only in effect when you are acting in your role as a Steward, not when you're acting as an individual employee. You're acting officially when you investigate and argue grievances, request information, and otherwise defend operational and licensed instructional bargaining unit members.

You can openly disagree and argue vigorously with management during grievance meetings; question management's authority; and, demand certain actions of management, all without risking disciplinary action. There are some limits to what you can do, though. Threats of violence and actual violence are prohibited, as are extreme profanity, name calling, and personal attacks. Be unwavering. To prevent supervisors from claiming you "exceeded the limit," it's wise to have another steward or FCFT or FEA member with you during meetings with management.