

Citizen Action: Supports the right of Wisconsin Voices workers to organize

Posted on Wednesday, Dec 23, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Milwaukee: Over the past 6 weeks there has been controversy concerning an organizing drive by employees at [Wisconsin Voices](#) to form a union. Citizen Action of Wisconsin believes the right to form and join unions is a fundamental human right. Citizen Action is a union employer, and has had a staff union for over two decades

We sent the Wisconsin Voices Interim Director and board of directors a detailed letter on November 13th urging them to recognize the union. We have since remained in contact with the board and have repeatedly encouraged them either to grant immediate recognition or to agree to a swift card check recognition process.

Citizen Action has a long history of working closely with Wisconsin's union movement, we were founded as a labor-community coalition, and have over 40 labor affiliates. We are equally committed to the network of civic engagement organizations that collaborate through Wisconsin Voices.

As a founding partner, we believe Wisconsin Voices is a critically important organization in the progressive ecosystem, and urge its leadership to work with the staff to recognize and implement their desire to form a union.

First, the right to form and join labor unions is a fundamental human right which is codified in the United Nations [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). We believe that all progressive organizations should recognize and support the right of workers to form unions, not only in theory but in practice. This includes every Wisconsin progressive group, not only Wisconsin Voices. As the current federal process is rigged against workers, meaningfully supporting the fundamental right to form a

union means immediate voluntary recognition.

Second, as an organization committed to racial equality, we believe Wisconsin Voices has a special obligation to embrace union rights. Unions played a vital role in the United States in creating an African American middle class. The withering attack by large corporations on union rights over the last forty years has taken a great toll on racial equity, dramatically reducing the availability of family sustaining jobs with benefits for Black and brown working class people. Milwaukee's shocking racial disparities are in part a consequence of the flight of good union jobs from the North Side of Milwaukee, where most African Americans in Wisconsin live.

Third, in our experience, giving employees a union voice at work improves the organization, and leads to more collaborative decision making which reflects the views of all workers, not only the most effective internal advocates. At Citizen Action, we have had a staff union for over two decades. From the perspective of the current management of Citizen Action, the staff union relationship has been very positive and made us stronger. As unions are themselves democratic organizations, we have had challenges from time to time. The value of having a union is not that we always agree; it is that we have a structured way to work out our differences and move forward together. We firmly believe that sharing power with our organizers and staff members makes us a more unified and effective organization.

We urge the management of Wisconsin Voices to meet with your staff to voluntarily recognize the union they are requesting.