

## Building Power at the Bargaining Table.

One of our fundamental core issues is our right to collectively bargain for better working conditions and benefits. We often spend a lot of time defending this core value, but once in a while we get to support proactive legislation around this right. Legislation like [PA H.B. 1481](#), recently introduced by PA Assembly Representatives Mandy Steele and Dan Miller.

H.B. 1481 would allow workers who are unemployed due to a labor dispute to be eligible for unemployment compensation (UC) benefits. This means locked out workers would be immediately eligible for UC benefits, and striking workers would be eligible after a 30-day waiting period allowing them to sustain the work stoppage.

It also means big opportunities to gain leverage during the negotiating process. **And that means power at the bargaining table.**

We understand workers locked out of their jobs by their employers should not have to bear the financial burden of total lost income when a decision is made completely outside of their control. The out of date systems of the PA Labor Relations Board often starve out our members, and most will go their entire careers without collecting any UC benefits, despite paying into the system diligently. Instant UC benefit eligibility for locked out workers is an earned safety net for people who are going through some of the hardest times they will ever experience.



While the right to strike in the private sector is legally protected by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), realistically there is an economic barrier that can intimidate union members from freely exercising this right and tip the scales in favor of employers at the bargaining table. The decision to strike is a serious undertaking that is not made lightly by union members. Two of the biggest factors playing into this decision are the loss of income and lack of access to basic supports, like food assistance, over the course of the labor dispute. If the right to strike is a legal guarantee, then there should be economic systems of support in place to bolster this right.

**Addressing our core issues legislatively will level the playing field for Pennsylvania's working families and put them on the right path to secure and build the middle class. Stay tuned to Rapid Response to find out how you can help push Pennsylvania H.B. 1481 over the finish line.**

For additional questions about this issue or ways to get involved in Rapid Response, contact Maurice Cobb, USW District 10 Rapid Response Coordinator, at (717) 313-3045 or [mcobb@usw.org](mailto:mcobb@usw.org).