

# MID-ATLANTIC PIPE TRADES ASSOCIATION

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PLUMBERS - STEAMFITTERS - SPRINKLER FITTERS  
PIPE FITTERS - PIPE WELDERS - HVAC SERVICE TECH



## Summer 2020

# MAPTA TIMES

## “The Game’s been good to me!”

Member of LU 110 Norfolk, VA.

Growing up, I never had a dream job so to speak. I never wanted to be a doctor, a lawyer, or an astronaut. I could have cared less about which trade I worked to be honest. I did know however, that if I was going to pick a trade, it had to be a Union one! My dad, being a strong union man, albeit an electrician, never missed a beat when proclaiming the reason, we had anything nice was because of his union affiliation. He would say things like, “You like that steak boy? Well, you thank the union for that steak!” and “I pay my dues before I pay my mortgage, because without a union I would not own a house!” Those statements truly resonated with me growing up. Now for my dad, those statements were particularly true. He worked roughly 15 years non-union before having the opportunity to join a union. He could clearly see the differences in the benefits between the two.

At any rate, growing up, my family and I had everything we could ask for. So, when the time came for me to graduate from High School and transition into manhood, the decision was clear. I was going to join a union apprenticeship program. That is exactly what I did. Now, one bit of difference between myself and my dad is that I do not trust electricity. If I can not see it or smell it, I don’t trust it. So almost arbitrarily, I chose to apply to UA Local 110’s plumbing and pipefitting apprenticeship program. Lucky enough for me, I got accepted! I never looked back since! Although it had been hard work, the fruits of my labor were well worth it! The benefits were evident at an early age. At 21 years old and only a 3<sup>rd</sup> year apprentice, I was even able to purchase my own house! The game has certainly been good to me!

Now as time progressed so did I. I am now fortunate enough to be able to help educated potential members on what it is the union is all about. A job that is easy because I am so passionate about it! But not only that, a job that is easy because the benefits of the Union speak for itself! I love my job, and I love my Union. I would not change my decision to join for the world!

# Myths and Facts about Unions

**Myth:** Unions are special interest groups.

**Fact:** The workers are the Union and a Union is an organization of working people that stand up for the rights on the job and in society. Unions also bring people together in the community to stand up for issues that matter to all working people.

**Myth:** Unions are rapidly shrinking.

**Fact:** The number of Union members has stayed steady for the past 50 years, but the workforce itself has grown. Over 16 Million working men and women in the United States are Union members.

**Myth:** Unions are political organizations that elect only Democrats:

**Fact:** Unions political work is not about Democrats or Republicans, its about electing people who stand up for the working people. Most Unions work involves fighting for better contracts and improving workers lives and the lives of their family members.

**Myth:** Unions force workers out on strike often.

**Fact:** Members of the United Association and most other Unions vote on the acceptance or rejection of a contract and to strike or not. Ninety nine percent of contract negotiations are settled without a strike. A strike actually means there is no agreement between the employer and employee. No one ever wants to go on strike.

**Myth:** Unions only want the workers dues money.

**Fact:** Money that workers pay in dues goes back into running the organization and keeping the local unions operating. The benefits and improvements the workers win in pay, benefits, and fair treatment through their Unions are far greater than the cost of dues. Dues levels are set by each local Union to offset the cost of day to day operation cost.

# “\$400.00 a month back in my pocket” *“Oh yeah, I am in”*

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## Member of LU 669 Virginia

I know a lot of construction workers have been on a jobsite and someone approached you to talk to you about the union. Some of you talk to them and might not believe what he is saying, or some blow them off because you hear bad things about unions. Well here is my story.

I was approached three times in six months on several different jobsites. The first time, I did not know anything about a union, so I listened some, then got back to work. The second time the union representative showed up, I asked a few questions about the benefits they had talked about. Later that day they sent me the pension and second retirement information I requested.

The pension alone is a great thing, ask some of your older workers around your jobsite, how they are going to retire or if they will be able to. A pension is where you get a monthly paycheck till you pass away. Then on top of that Social Security will be a subsidy when we retire. So now we are getting two paychecks in, which will be great. I know it is hard for younger guys to think about retirement, but it sneaks up on us fast, I did not think about it either. They explained the second retirement as a benefit that I would get as a contractor contribution of \$2.75 per hour going into a fund like a 401k and does not come out of my paycheck, the contractor pays it, giving me more money in retirement. So, this alone adds up to \$5,700 dollars a year; plus, if the fund investment returns do well that goes on top of my retirement money. Which is what any Financial person would tell you to put into a 401k out of your own paycheck especially if a contractor is going to match any portion. As a younger guy I did not want to do that, money out of my pocket, NO WAY. But if the contractor is going to contribute on my behalf, how could I not even think about this. Also, the Contractor was going to pay my Health Insurance for the whole family, I pay nothing out of my paycheck. In those days that was going to put an extra 400.00 a month **back** into my pocket, oh yeah, I am in.

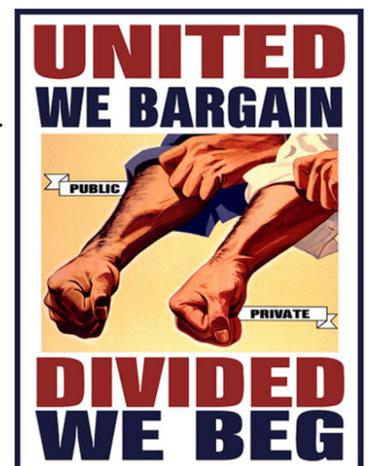
So, the 3<sup>rd</sup> time the union representative showed up, they took me to lunch so I could really sit and talk about these benefits some more. I filled out the paperwork at lunch and they had me a new job the next week. I have not looked back; everything has been what they said. You do not have to go to the boss to try to negotiate your own raise, it is all set by the contract from the union. Every job has its up and downs, you will never get away from that. The union is here to make the workers lives better, this is a career, not just a construction job. I know it is scary decision to make, but being a union Sprinkler Fitter has been worth it to me.

## Need a Voice?

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### Member of LU 486 Baltimore, MD.

Almost everyone has at one point felt unheard or powerless as an employee. Joining a union simply means that you and your colleagues have a say because you negotiate important elements of employment conditions together. That could mean securing wage increases, better access to health care, workplace safety enhancements, and more reasonable and predictable hours. Through collective bargaining negotiations, the union also works with management to develop a process for settling disputes that employees and their managers are unable to settle individually.



# UNDERSTANDING “RIGHT TO WORK”

What does it mean to live in a “right to work” state? Many employees confuse “right to work” with “right to a job,” and think that they cannot be fired without being given a reason – but this is not the case. In actuality, “right to work” laws tend to benefit employers rather than employees, despite the name, and so it is important for both employers and employees working in the Commonwealth of Virginia to better understand the term.

## What does Right to Work mean?

The term, “right to work” has nothing to do with an employee’s entitlement to his or her job. Instead, it references laws that have been passed in many US states that prohibit union security agreements between companies and labor unions. In other words, employees in right to work states cannot be compelled to join a union or to pay union dues, but still may receive the benefits and protections of unions if they work in a unionized environment. This may sound like a protection for employees, since they cannot be forced to pay for union representation that they do not necessarily want. However, the practical effect of right to work laws is to make it harder for unions to exist, since they inevitably have less access to funding. Thus, individuals who support labor unions generally oppose right to work laws, while individuals who want their state to be more attractive to businesses and to employers (and to keep the costs of labor down) generally support right to work laws.

## Misconceptions:

Remember, right to work laws have to do with labor unions, not the individual rights of employees regarding their employment. So it is important to keep in mind that working in a right to work state like Virginia does NOT mean that:

- You have the right to your job
- Your employer has to provide you a reason for your termination.
- You have the right to get your job back.
- You have a legal case (“cause of action”) because you were terminated for no reason.

It is more important to know that Virginia is an “at will employment” state. That means that, unless you have an employment contract that says otherwise, your employer is free to end your employment without warning and without giving any reason. And you too have the right to leave your employment without warning and without giving any reason. Your employment is “at your will” and “at your employer’s will.” And as long as the termination of employment was not for an illegal or discriminatory reason, it does not have to be fair.

*The NLRA (National Labor Relations Act) is a federal law that grants employees the right to form or join unions; engage in protected, concerted activities to address or improve working conditions; or refrain from engaging in these activities.*

**“RIGHT TO WORK” IS WRONG**

## Labor Quotes

“Only a fool would try to deprive working men and working women of their right to join the union of their choice.”

~Dwight D. Eisenhower

“Where free unions and collective bargaining are forbidden, freedom is lost.”

~Ronald Reagan

# *“Some misinterpret what UNION MEANS!”*

Member of LU 602 District of Columbia

When I first joined Local 602 in 2004, I just wanted to have a job where I made good money, had great benefits as well as safe working conditions. At the time I didn't know exactly what union meant. Some misinterpret what “UNION MEANS”.

A labor union should always have its members best interest at heart. It starts with your Business Manager and has a trickle-down affect onto the Business Agents depending on the particular size of your local. Your union is only as strong as the members in the field that make unions possible. I know firsthand the officers have built something very special over the past 125 years.

Collective Bargaining is the heart and soul of the local. It is called a “Collective Bargaining Agreement” (CBA). The CBA is the most important thing we as union members have. For every contractor that is signed as a signatory contractor they employ workers from that particular union. So, once you belong to a union you can get involved by attending the union meetings so that your voice is heard instead. Members can ask for anything to be put into the CBA, but it doesn't mean that it will be. That is where the Business Manager will negotiate with Contractors to try to get the best contract for the members while making sure the contractors will still make profit margins while giving their employees a good living wage.

I am very proud to call myself a union member and the bonds that I have made with other members are forever. We are all working toward one common goal where we will all receive good wages, healthcare, and the biggest of all a pension check that members & surviving spouses will get for life throughout retirement. It was the best choice I made, and I can only hope you will consider the same as well.



Dr. David M. Baxter, a Protestant Minister, delivered the following church sermon. He had been asked for advice by a group of workers, as to whether or not they should form a union where they work.

## **WHY A UNION?**

As long as there is organized capital, there will be organized labor. And, that is as it should be in a democratic society.

The true union member wants to help, and not hinder, his employer. He realizes that the more successful, the business is, the more successful the employee will be... if he receives fair value for his labor, and a fair share of the profits he has helped produce.

A working man's life is valuable. Every time the clock ticks, there goes a second off that life. When he sells the hours of his life to make a profit for someone else, he is entitled to all he can get for those precious hours.

Workers try to get as much as possible for the hours of their lives that they sell to their employers. By himself, this is difficult. He can be broken like a stick. But, breaking a bundle of sticks is not so easy.

That is why working people organize unions: to help in getting a share of the profits they bring into a successful business. Unionism has brought about, in addition to reasonable pay, better working conditions, more job security, and more leisure time for workers to enjoy vacation and pension benefits.

It is an ignorant man who values his life cheaply, sells it cheaply, and works hours to make his employer richer, to the extent that he keeps himself poor.

Well-paid organized-labor is a good thing for any town. The more a worker earns, the more he has to spend. And the more he spends, the better it is for the merchant, the farmer, and everyone else.



## DO YOU KNOW

# 35 THINGS YOUR EMPLOYER CANNOT DO!

**It is unlawful for your employer, supervisor or foreman to interfere with, restrain or coerce employees seeking to organize or join a union.**



1. Attend any union meeting, park across the street from the hall or engage in any undercover activity which would indicate that the employees are being kept under surveillance to determine who is and is not participating in the union program;
2. Tell employees that the company will fire or punish them if they engage in union activity;
3. Lay off, discharge, discipline any employee for union activity;
4. Grant employees wage increases, special concessions or benefits in order to keep the union out;
5. Bar employees serving as union representatives from soliciting employees for membership on or off the company property during non-working hours;
6. Ask employees about union matters, meetings, etc. (Some employees may, of their own accord, discuss such matters. It is not an unfair labor practice to listen, but to ask questions to obtain additional information is illegal);
7. Ask employees what they think about the union or a union representative;
8. Ask employees how they intend to vote;
9. Threaten employees with reprisal for participating in union activities. For example, threaten to move the plant or close the business, curtail operation or reduce employee benefits;
10. Promise benefits to employees if they reject the union;
11. Form a "company union," dominate, or give financial support or other assistance to a union;
12. Announce that the company will not negotiate with the union;
13. Threaten to close, in fact close, or move the business in order to avoid dealing with a union;
14. Ask employees whether or not they belong to a union, or have signed a card or petition for union representation;
15. Ask an applicant, during the hiring interview, about his/her affiliation with a labor organization or how he/she feels about unions;
16. Make antiunion statements or act in a way that might show preference for a nonunion worker;
17. Make distinctions between union and nonunion employees when assigning overtime work or desirable work;
18. Purposely team up nonunion workers and keep them apart from those supporting the union;
19. Transfer workers on the basis of union affiliation or activities;
20. Choose employees to be laid off in order to weaken the union's strength or discourage membership in the union;
21. Discriminate against union people when disciplining employees;
22. By nature of work assignments, create conditions intended to get rid of an employee because of his/her union activity;
23. Fail to grant a scheduled benefit or wage increase because of union activity;
24. Deviate from company policy for the purpose of getting rid of a union supporter;
25. Take action that adversely affects an employees' job or pay because of union activity;
26. Threaten workers or coerce them in an attempt to influence their vote;
27. Threaten a union member or union supporter through a third party;
28. Promise employees a reward if the business is not unionized;
29. Tell employees overtime work and premium pay will be discontinued if the business is unionized;
30. Say unionization will force the company to lay off employees;
31. Say unionization will do away with vacations, or other benefits and privileges presently in effect;
32. Promise employees promotions, raises, or other benefits if they get out of the union or refrain from joining the union;
33. Start a petition or circular against the union. Encourage or take part in its circulation if started by employees;
34. Urge employees to try to induce others to oppose the union or stay out of it;
35. Visit the homes of the employees to urge them to reject the union.

**Any of the acts listed above may constitute a violation of the National Labor Relations Act, as amended.**

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Stamp

**ATTENTION**  
**ALL PLUMBERS, PIPEFITTERS,**  
**STEAMFITTERS,**  
**SPRINKLER FITTERS & SERVICE TECHS**

Please visit our website or scan the QR code

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