

3 WAYS THE LAW PROTECTS UNION STEWARDS

THE EQUALITY RULE

The rule applies when stewards are doing union business, not when they're working at their job.

- Stewards have special status
- The steward's role in grievance meetings and other areas of union representation is that of and equal to management's role
- In these representation situations, the steward is not bound by the rules of boss-worker conduct, where the worker ranks beneath the boss, obeys boss, doesn't question boss's knowledge or authority, etc.

For example, when engaged in union business, stewards may:

- Raise their voice when talking with management
- Use forceful language and gestures
- Threaten legal action
- Disagree or show lack of respect for management's opinions and decisions
- Refuse to do what a supervisor tells them to do **AS A STEWARD**
Example: ("Diane, do NOT file any more grievances about rates on those machines!")

There are limits. Even when doing union business, stewards may not:

- Physically assault management or threaten violence or physical harm
- Engage in personal attacks or name calling
- Use extreme, unprovoked profanity
- Encourage slowdowns or wildcat strikes prohibited by the contract

THE NO REPRISALS RULE

- For doing their work as union representatives, stewards can't be:
- Denied promotions or transfer opportunities
- Denied overtime
- Assigned less desirable work
- Supervised more closely
- Harassed, intimidated, disciplined or threatened with discipline

THE EQUAL STANDARDS RULE

Stewards can't be held to a higher standard (or allowed to lower standard) of work performance.

HOW DO YOU ENFORCE THESE PROTECTIONS?

If your supervisor or some other management person is clearly violating these protections, you owe it to yourself and to the union to protect their actions. You can either file a grievance (because the employer is violating the law) and/or file charges with the labor board and/or a ULP. If you allow the company to get away with it, not only will the employer continue to ignore your protections but they will probably start treating other stewards the same way.