

WHAT A UNION CAN AND CAN'T BARGAIN OVER, UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S REALLY ON THE TABLE

The Railway Labor Act (RLA), the law that governs contract negotiations, does not require an employer to bargain over every aspect of the business. Only wages, hours, and other working conditions for employees in the bargaining unit are subjects of negotiations.

Bargaining topics are classified into two categories, including:

MANDATORY SUBJECTS



Negotiation Required, Agreement Not Guaranteed

These are the things both sides have to talk about during bargaining. But here's the catch: just because it's discussed doesn't mean it will change, improve, or even stay the same.

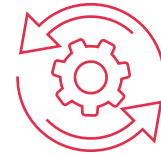
- Wages
- Health insurance and other benefits
- Work hours and shift schedules
- Working conditions (For example: work, safety, seniority, and employee conduct rules)
- Employees can be forced to pay union dues, even if they never wanted the union

Bottom line

Negotiation doesn't mean automatic improvement.

- There is no time limit on negotiations, so it can be a long, tedious, drawn out process
- During negotiations, your wages, benefits and working conditions stay in "status quo" until an agreement is reached

PERMISSIVE SUBJECTS



The Employer Keeps the Decision-Making Power

These are topics the union can ask about, but the employer is not required to bargain over them.

- The direction and growth of the organization
- Things that are required by law like staffing, FMLA, and ACA
- Budget decisions and financial planning
- How we deliver care and serve patients
- Staffing decisions
- What equipment, supplies, or technology we use
- Working with outside vendors or subcontractors
- Operational considerations and decisions

Bottom line

The union cannot require bargaining over how the employer is running things. Those decisions stay with leadership.

Employees could end up with less, more, or the same as they have now as a result of the collective bargaining process. For example, benefits such as PTO or retirement contributions could be traded away for other things you don't agree with or are worth less to you.



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