



## Advantages of Union Membership

### The Overall Advantages of Union membership

- Union membership helps raise workers' pay and narrow the income gap that disadvantages minorities and women. Union workers earn 28 percent more than nonunion workers, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Union workers are more likely than their nonunion counterparts to receive health care and pension benefits, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. 89 percent of union workers (private sector) participated in medical care benefits, compared with only 67 percent of nonunion workers. 84 percent of union workers are covered by pension plans versus 56 percent of nonunion workers. **Seventy percent of union workers have defined-benefit retirement coverage, compared with 16 percent of nonunion workers.**
- Unions increase productivity, according to most recent studies. The voice that union members have on the job—sharing in decision-making about promotions and work and production standards—increases productivity and improves management practices. Better training, lower turnover and longer tenure also make union workers more productive.
- The agreements reached between unions and employers through the collective bargaining process serve to provide an element of security and certainty, and establish employee privileges and benefits which otherwise may not have been provided by an employer dealing individually with employees. Such agreements become the primary source of employee rights and responsibilities in the workplace and govern such things as wages, hours, benefits and terms and conditions of employment. They are legally enforceable and binding contracts to which the employer, employees, and the union must adhere.
- Unions play a pivotal role both in securing legislated labor protections and rights such as safety and health, overtime, and family/medical leave and in enforcing those rights on the job. Because unionized workers are more informed, they are more likely to benefit from social insurance programs such as unemployment insurance and workers compensation. Unions are thus an intermediary institution that provides a necessary complement to legislated benefits and protections.

**International Association of Fire Fighter Advantages of Membership** - One of the oldest public employee unions in America, the IAFF was formed in 1918, at a time when many fire fighters were required to live in firehouses and be on duty 24 hours a day every day, with only the occasional day off. Back then, civil service laws were few and almost all pay, promotions and other benefits came and went at the whim of local patronage.

- Since 2000, the IAFF have accomplished several important legislative milestones on behalf of over 260,000 firefighters in the United States and Canada. All of our success has been accomplished through a **bi-partisan approach to lobbying and politics.**
- Authorized and funded the **FIRE Act** which has issued grants totaling over three billion dollars to fire departments across the nation.
- Authorized and funded **SAFER** to hire 75,000 more professional fire fighters. Thus far, over 300 million dollars have been appropriated for this program.
- Raised the amount of federal dollars allocated to the fire service from under 500 million in 2000 to approximately three billion dollars today.



## Advantages of Union Membership

- Succeeded, this year (2005), in getting at least one billion dollars for **radio interoperability issues**.
- Raised the **PSOB** limit from approximately \$150,000 pre 9/11 to \$283,385 this year.
- Passed the **Hometown Heroes Act** to extend PSOB to cover heart attacks and strokes.
- Brought in over ten million dollars in direct grants to the IAFF which have been used to train thousands of firefighters in **WMD and Hazardous Materials** response.
- Utilized and leveraged relationships with DoL to protect firefighter **overtime** entitlements.
- Changed Internal Revenue Codes to allow greater flexibility and portability on **public sector pension and deferred compensation savings programs**.
- Currently, lobbying a joint House-Senate Conference Committee to provide **tax breaks for firefighter retirees to pay for health insurance** premiums. The "HELPS" Bill passed the House in December and we are fighting to preserve it in committee.
- The IAFF has played a pivotal role in securing **grant funding** through the Department of Homeland Security that has been secured by the **Santa Clara Fire Department for training and overtime funding for members of Local 1171**.

**California Professional Firefighters Advantages of Membership** Below are listed only a few of the many accomplishments of the California Professional Firefighters on behalf of the 30,000 California State firefighters and 156 IAFF Locals who are members.

### Organizations/Programs that Benefit Firefighters

- In 1982, legislation was approved establishing the **California Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (CFFJAC)**. A labor-management partnership, co-chaired by California Professional Firefighters and the Office of State Fire Marshal, the CFFJAC provides state-of-the-art training and services to apprentice firefighters in California. CFFJAC would become a nationally recognized model firefighter-training program.

CFFJAC (CalJAC) also provides members Fire Departments and Locals with thousands of dollars in funding in order to better serve FD employees and Union members. An example of CalJAC training received by Local 1171 members is the WMD-Terrorism training. Wildland firefighting boots have also been provided by using CalJAC funds.

CFFJAC was established as the exclusive state provider of the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT). CPF has opened the **CPAT Testing Center**, enabling would-be front line firefighters to take their physical ability testing easily and inexpensively and to ensure a steady flow of physically fit and capable



## Advantages of Union Membership

- firefighter candidates who can meet the demands and rigors that are required of today's modern firefighter.
- In 1984, CPF inaugurated the **Personal Exposure Reporting** system. The unique system allows firefighters to document exposures to cancer-causing chemicals in the event they face a challenge to their eligibility for workers compensation and disability benefits. **Local 1171** has since inaugurated its own PER program based on the CPF model.
  - In 1987, CPF established the **California Fire Foundation**, a non-profit foundation dedicated to memorializing California's fallen firefighters, assisting their families, aiding the victims of catastrophic fire and providing public education programs on fire safety.
  - In 1989, CPF further cemented its standing as the professional firefighters' most creative and effective advocate with the establishment of **Firefighter's Print and Design**, a full-service union print shop dedicated to providing first-class design and printing for our members and the candidates they choose to endorse.
  - In 1992, **FireStar Productions** opened its doors, a full-service video production facility, to develop video-based firefighter training. Like the print shop, FireStar has matured to become a productive studio whose client list includes CalPERS and the Sacramento Kings.
  - In 1992 the **California Firefighters Memorial** was born. CPF conceived the idea of a state memorial to honor California firefighters who fell in the line of duty. Legislation was approved that year authorizing the California Firefighters Memorial on the grounds of the State Capitol. Three years later, a site was dedicated, and legislation was approved to authorize fund raising for the Memorial, including the Firefighter License Plate and the Firefighter Tax Check Off.

Legislative Benefits Through Successful Lobbying (A sample of only a few of the hundreds of bills sponsored and successfully lobbied by the CPF)

- **CPF was a key player in 2005** in the effort to defeat a hostile Governor's plan to silence the voices of firefighters, police officers, nurses and teachers; revoke our current defined benefit retirement plan and firefighter death benefit and usurp unprecedented power for the State Executive Branch by leading the way to **defeat Proposition 75 and 76**.
- **Assembly Bill 3011** (Torres) – the nation's first cancer presumption law.
- In 1992, CPF was a key player in the battle to pass **Proposition 162**, which protected state pension funds from raids by the state.
- **Assembly Bill 539** -- legislation broadening firefighter presumption laws.
- In 2001, more than 1,600 CPF members gathered in Anaheim to help secure approval of **NFPA 1710**.
- **SB 400** (Ortiz) - Among other things, this bill provides for two new, negotiable local safety retirement formulas under CalPERS. The formulas are: 3% @ 50 for each year of service regardless of age and 3% @ 55, with the percentage accrued increasing with age.



## Advantages of Union Membership

- **SB 800** (Dunn) – Provides an automatic, non-negotiable pension cap increase from 75% to 85% for CalPERS local safety members retiring on or after January 1, 2000.
- **AB 813** (Correa) - Eliminates the option for local agencies to elect to use the following substandard CalPERS local safety retirement formulas: half-pay @ 55 and 2% @ 55.
- **AB 539** (Papan) - Under certain circumstances, this bill removes the requirement that a firefighter or peace officer demonstrate a reasonable link between the cancer contracted and the carcinogen to which he or she was exposed in order to be eligible for workers' compensation benefits. This bill also includes leukemia as a type of cancer compensable under workers' compensation. These changes apply to claims for benefits filed or pending on or after January 1, 1997.
- **SB 1695** (Ortiz) - Enables CalPERS contracting agencies to elect to provide alternative death benefits to the survivors of local firefighter members. These death benefits would allow the surviving spouse, or eligible children, of a CalPERS local firefighter member to be afforded the member's full pension in the event that the member dies having 20 or more years of credited service - a benefit that is currently awarded survivors of specified state and other local members.
- **SB 32** (Peace) - Provides workers' compensation benefits for certain state and local firefighting and law enforcement personnel who contract hepatitis as a result of performing their job-related duties.
- **AB 2469** (Reyes) - Enables the California Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (CFFJAC) to submit, for approval, uniform statewide EMT-P (i.e. paramedic) training standards to the State Emergency Medical Services Authority in conjunction with paramedic training programs.
- **AB 1850** (Correa) - Expands current law to provide surviving spouses of active fire suppression employees an educational tuition fee waiver benefit at the University of California and California State University levels - a benefit also afforded surviving children.
- **AB 1009** (Correa) - Requires all local safety retiree monthly pensions, as paid by CalPERS, to be annually restored to a guaranteed 80% of the purchasing power of the initial retirement check. AB 1009 also requires each employer to fund the benefits of its own retirees, thereby ending cross-subsidization, or the pooling mechanism that has resulted in a majority of agencies paying a higher percentage of payroll into the CalPERS employee asset pool than other member agencies. The measure provides retirees a one-time supplemental payment for the Purchasing Power Protection account benefits that would have accrued during 2000, instead of making the bill retroactive to January 1, 2000.
- **SB 575** (O'Connell) – Requires, among other things, new school construction projects to comply with specified automatic fire detection, alarm, and sprinkler systems. It also requires school modernization projects to comply with automated fire detection and alarm system requirements.
- **AB 2059** (Pacheco) – Provides survivors of deceased local firefighter CalPERS members a safeguard to protect against an interruption in health benefit coverage – a protection extended to active state employees and their families. It



## Advantages of Union Membership

also protects the financial security of a surviving spouse by ensuring that during probate, the salary or compensation owed to the surviving spouse by the deceased firefighter's employer is not limited in any way.

- **AB 1847** (Correa) – Expands current presumptive law to include bio-chemical exposures for state and local firefighting personnel, including apprentices. Bio-chemical substances include, but not be limited to, any biological or chemical agent that may be used as a weapon of mass destruction, such as a chemical warfare agent, weaponized biological agent or nuclear or radiological agent.
- **AB 1374** (Wiggins) – Clarifies existing law to provide that an industrial disability leave taken by a peace officer or a firefighter does NOT count against the time that he or she may otherwise utilize for family and medical care leave.
- **SB 1629** (Soto) – Earmarks federal funding to help offset the high cost of cross-training firefighters as paramedics. Upon receipt of federal dollars, SB 1629 enables the California Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship Program to facilitate grants to local fire agencies to help them defray the cost of providing paramedic training for their fire service personnel, including, but not limited to, instructional supplies and trainee compensation expenses.

**Santa Clara City Firefighters Local 1171 Advantages of Membership** – Santa Clara City Firefighters affiliated with the IAFF in 1954 and have enjoyed 100% membership in almost every year since inception. What follows is a sample of some of the services provided by the Union.

- Our Union is a democratic institution, run by its members. Every member has a vote in the election of local union officers and board members. Our Local has its own constitution and members vote at meetings and elections to determine policy, activities and local dues structure. Members also vote on contract approval or rejection.
- Our Union gives our members a voice. The Union does this by assisting all members to gain better pay, improved living standards, safe working environments and employment security, through collective bargaining and strength in the workplace.
- Your elected Union representatives negotiate all memorandum of understanding (MOU) contracts as the exclusive bargaining representative of bargaining unit #1 (firefighters). These contracts provide for stable, fair and equitable administration of our working environment.
- Our union gives our members a voice in policy decisions that have resulted in successful side-letter (binding) agreements to include: City Deferred Comp Committee representation; DFM scheduling; shift trades and vacations; shadow mode out of class compensation; Training Division compensation and work schedule; and safety equipment purchase (wildland boots).
- Represents (upon request) all Santa Clara firefighters in issues re grievances of City policies and procedures and/or interpretation of those policies and procedures.



## Advantages of Union Membership

- Represents (upon request) all Santa Clara firefighters in issues that directly involve or might lead to disciplinary action being taken against a member of Local 1171.
- Our Union can provide members with professional legal assistance, and legal help with worker's compensation injuries.
- Our Union has consistently negotiated the highest salary for top step firefighter in the County of Santa Clara year after year.
- Seniority Rights – Our Union contract gives recognition to time in service.
- L1171 was the causative factor in negotiating a retiree medical benefit for retired City firefighters which led to the City sponsored retiree medical program for all City employees.
- Established and funded the Santa Clara Firefighter Foundation (501c3) non-profit to benefit people in need in the counties of Santa Clara and Santa Cruz on behalf of the Santa Clara City Firefighters, Local 1171.
- Actively partners with the SCFFF to assist in the creation and facilitation of family trusts and fundraisers for L1171 members when needed.
- Provided major initial funding for the Ride-A-Wave program which was created by Local 1171 Brother Danny Cortazzo.
- L1171 provides a workplace exposure report program that tracks a member's workplace injuries or exposures throughout their entire career.
- Provides for and administers the Santa Clara Firefighters TV Club and Dental Program and actively partners with the California Association of Professional Firefighters (CAPF) to ensure the finest long term disability benefit insurance program in the State of California.
- Provided initial funding and leadership to re-establish the County Council of Professional Firefighters of Santa Clara, an organization established to provide and share information and to lobby on behalf of all firefighters in the County of Santa Clara at the County and Local level to protect the wages, hours, benefits and working conditions of firefighters.
- By energetic participation in the political process, ensures that Santa Clara firefighter's voices are heard by all elected representatives (City Council, County Supervisors, State Assembly and Senate, Federal House and Senate) over all issues that affect them especially concerning wages, hours, benefits and working conditions.
- Membership in the Benefits Communication Network which provides retirement and financial planning services.
- Community Service opportunities like MDA and fund raising for fallen firefighters (FDNY firefighters resulting from 9/11).