

# Union Member Rights and Officer Responsibilities Under the LMRDA and CSRA

**T**he *Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act* (LMRDA), which applies to the National Education Association and some NEA affiliates, and the *Civil Service Reform Act* (CSRA), which applies to members of the Federal Education Association, guarantee certain rights to union members and impose specific responsibilities on union officers. The United States Department of Labor's Office of Labor Management Standards (OLMS) enforces many of the provisions of these laws, while certain provisions, such as the member bill of rights, may only be enforced by union members through private suit in federal court.

## Union Member Rights

**BILL OF RIGHTS** – Union members have:

- equal rights to participate in union activities
- freedom of speech and assembly
- voice in setting rates of dues and assessments
- protection of the right to sue
- safeguards against improper discipline

**COPIES OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS**— Union members and nonunion employees covered by the agreements have the right to receive and inspect copies of collective bargaining agreements.

**REPORTS** – Unions are required to file information reports, copies of constitutions and bylaws, and an annual financial report with OLMS. Unions must make the reports available to members and permit members to examine supporting records for just cause. The reports are public information and are available from OLMS.

**OFFICER ELECTIONS** – Union members have the right to:

- nominate candidates for office
- run for office
- cast a secret ballot
- protest the conduct of an election

**OFFICER REMOVAL** – Local union members have the right to an adequate procedure for the removal of an elected officer guilty of serious misconduct.

**TRUSTEESHIPS** – Unions covered by the LMRDA may only be placed in trusteeship by a parent body for the reasons specified in the LMRDA or CSRA.

**PROHIBITION AGAINST DISCIPLINE** – A union or any of its officials may not fine, expel, or otherwise discipline a member for exercising any LMRDA or CSRA right.

**PROHIBITION AGAINST VIOLENCE** – No one may use or threaten to use force or violence to interfere with a union member in the exercise of LMRDA or CSRA rights.

## Union Officer Responsibilities

**FINANCIAL SAFEGUARDS** – Union officers have a duty to manage the funds and property of the union solely for the benefit of the union and its members in accordance with the NEA Constitution and Bylaws. Union officers or employees who embezzle or steal union funds or other assets commit a federal crime punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment.

**BONDING** – Union officers or employees who handle union funds or property must be bonded to provide protection against losses if their union has property and annual financial receipts which exceed \$5,000.

**LABOR ORGANIZATION REPORTS** – Union officers must:

- file an initial information report (Form LM-1) and annual financial reports (Forms LM-2/3/4) with OLMS.
- retain the records necessary to verify the reports for at least five years.

**OFFICER REPORTS** – Union officers and employees must file reports concerning any loans and benefits received from, or certain financial interests in, employers whose employees their unions represent and businesses that deal with their unions.

**OFFICER ELECTIONS** – Unions must:

- hold elections of officers of local unions by secret ballot at least every three years.
- conduct regular elections in accordance with their constitution and bylaws and preserve all records for one year.
- mail a notice of election to every member at least 15 days prior to the election.
- comply with a candidate's request to distribute campaign material.
- not use union funds or resources to promote any candidate (nor may employer funds or resources be used).
- permit candidates to have election observers.
- allow candidates to inspect the union's membership list once within 30 days prior to the election.

**RESTRICTIONS ON HOLDING OFFICE** – A person convicted of certain crimes may not serve as a union officer, employee, or other representative of a union for up to 13 years.

**LOANS** – A union may not have outstanding loans to any one officer or employee that in total exceed \$2,000 at any time.

**FINES** – A union may not pay the fine of any officer or employee convicted of any willful violation of the LMRDA.

**The above is only a summary of the LMRDA and the CSRA Standards of Conduct. A more detailed fact sheet from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS), including contact information for OLMS, can be found at [dol.gov/olms/regs/compliance/comp\\_pubs/LMRDAFactSheet2017.pdf](https://dol.gov/olms/regs/compliance/comp_pubs/LMRDAFactSheet2017.pdf)**