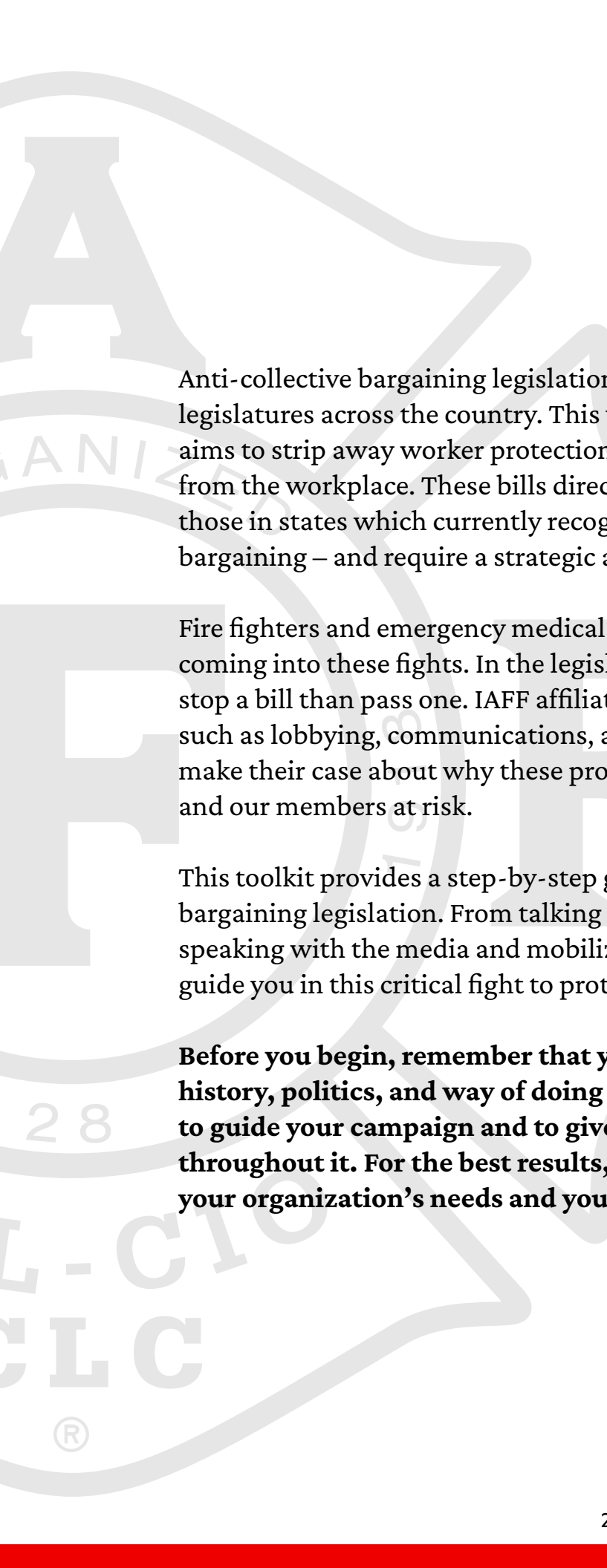


INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS



COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT

MARCH 2025

A large, light gray watermark of the IAFF logo is visible in the background. It features a stylized fire helmet with a large 'A' on the front, and the text 'INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS' and 'IAFF' are partially visible.

Anti-collective bargaining legislation is being introduced in state legislatures across the country. This well-funded and coordinated attack aims to strip away worker protections and eliminate fire fighters' voices from the workplace. These bills directly threaten IAFF members – even those in states which currently recognize fire fighters' rights to collective bargaining – and require a strategic and well-coordinated response.

Fire fighters and emergency medical workers have a strong advantage coming into these fights. In the legislative process, it's much easier to stop a bill than pass one. IAFF affiliates must use every tool available, such as lobbying, communications, and membership mobilization to make their case about why these proposals put the safety of the public and our members at risk.

This toolkit provides a step-by-step guide for fighting anti-collective bargaining legislation. From talking points and social media posts to speaking with the media and mobilizing your membership, this plan will guide you in this critical fight to protect your right to a collective voice.

Before you begin, remember that your state has its own unique history, politics, and way of doing things. This toolkit is meant to guide your campaign and to give you important areas of focus throughout it. For the best results, you should tailor this plan to fit your organization's needs and your state's politics.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIRST STEPS	4	CALLS TO ACTION (CTAs)	10
TALKING POINTS	5	CALL SCRIPTS	11
SOCIAL MEDIA	6	MEDIA.....	12
GRAPHICS	7	EVENTS	13
KEY FACTS.....	8	ENGAGING THE PUBLIC	14
EMAILS TO MEMBERSHIP	9	OP-EDS	15



COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



FIRST STEPS

As soon as a collective bargaining bill is introduced in your state legislature, you should activate your response plan. This includes beginning a lobbying effort to push back, a communications strategy (for both your members and the public), and a process for decision-making on key considerations among your executive board. Do not wait to respond just because you think a bill is unlikely to pass.

If you believe there's a reasonable chance an anti-collective bargaining bill could be put on the floor of either chamber during the legislative session, or if one has been introduced, you should do the following:

1. Contact your DVP

- Bringing your DVP into the situation immediately puts the bill on the IAFF's radar and can open up significant resources to help your campaign.

2. Begin coordinating with IAFF HQ

- The IAFF Government Affairs and Communications Divisions can assist in developing and implementing your response, forming a media strategy, and identifying the political challenges you will likely need to confront.

3. Organize a mandatory call with your Local presidents

- In a collective bargaining fight, all hands must be on deck. Your Local presidents need to understand the seriousness of the situation and be engaged starting on Day 1.
- Explain to your leaders the key points of the bill, how it will impact them as fire fighters and as labor leaders, what your strategy is for defeating the legislation, and how your presidents can help.
- Set the expectations of what you'll need throughout the process. This effort should be viewed as a multi-front campaign and not just a lobbying effort. You'll need to win hearts and minds.
- Invite your DVP and IAFF staff to join the call.

4. Assign roles to your executive board

- Make sure each person on your e-board knows what their responsibilities will be during this fight.
- Key issues that should be assigned a lead role: Legislative and lobbying, public communications and media, member outreach, and coordinating with allies.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



TALKING POINTS

During your campaign, all leaders and members in your organization must maintain a consistent message. Strong message discipline gives you a better chance of breaking through the public discourse. Avoiding mistakes, confusion, and unwanted distractions will ultimately help your message resonate with policymakers and the public.

When coordinating your theme and message, provide the following talking points to your executive board and all affiliate leaders:

KEY MESSAGES

- [Bill number] is a **direct threat to public safety** in [state].
- [Bill sponsor] claims to care about fire fighters and police officers, but this bill proves otherwise.
- This bill **attacks first responders under the guise of “fiscal responsibility.”** There’s nothing responsible about putting the safety of [state] communities at risk and denying fire fighters a seat at the table.
- It **jeopardizes safety** by risking proper staffing, safe working conditions, adequate trainings, and fair pay. Fire fighters know the consequences of ignoring these factors all too well.
- There’s a reason **[Bill #] has bipartisan opposition (IF APPLICABLE)**. Republicans and Democrats know this legislation is a disaster in waiting and will set public safety back decades.
- Collective bargaining is a critical tool for fire departments to recruit and retain the staff needed to serve the community.
- **[State] is already facing a fire fighter shortage**, and this legislation will make it significantly harder to close the gap.
- Look at Los Angeles and the wildfires that ravaged California, or the recent fires that devastated Maui. Every fire fighter is vital to ensuring a swift and safe response.
- Passing [Bill #] would cause a mass exodus of fire fighters from [state] by sending a message that their voice won’t be heard and that they are not valued.
- Hundreds of fire fighters will flee to neighboring states that recognize the risks that fire fighters take each day and values their contributions to dialogue about public safety.
- **Removing collective bargaining weakens our safety standards.** It means longer hours, higher burnout, and more frequent and severe injuries among fire fighters.
- This bill will ultimately **cost [state] taxpayers more.**
- Understaffed fire departments have slower response times which result in more property damage, higher insurance costs, and longer recovery periods for affected communities.
- Fewer fire fighters on the scene also jeopardizes our own safety when responding to emergencies.
- Every elected officials’ primary duty is to ensure their community is safe. Any [state] lawmaker who votes for this bill is making it clear that cheap political wins are more important to them than the well-being of our state.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- We strongly recommend focusing on the bill’s impact on public safety as a key part of your argument. Voters care deeply about feeling safe in their communities, and any legislation that they feel threatens that safety will grab their attention. This is especially important in more conservative states where labor rights are not as accepted.
- You should personalize talking points that fit your state’s unique needs.
 - For example, fire fighters in Florida may need to add additional talking points focused on fire fighters’ work responding to hurricanes and other severe weather events.
- Make sure your talking points are digestible, on message, and accurate. Members should never repeat incorrect information, as it will damage your credibility.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



SOCIAL MEDIA

Utilizing your social media channels should be a major component of your campaign. You and your Locals should post at least once a day on all social media channels (Facebook, X, Instagram, etc.) to raise awareness of your fight and increase public engagement.

Sample social media posts about the bill:

1. IMPORTANT UPDATE!

The #[state] legislature is pushing a bill to strip ALL #firefighters of their collective bargaining rights. This bill not only threatens our wages and working conditions, but it threatens the safety of the communities we swore an oath to protect.

Call your state representatives and demand they vote NO on this disastrous bill: [state capitol switchboard number]

#CollectiveBargaining #Keep[insert state]Safe
#[bill number (i.e., #HB267)]

2. ATTENTION [STATE] PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS

[State]'s #firefighters are under attack. [Bill #] is being rushed through the [state] legislature in an attempt to end collective bargaining, and remove critical protections that keep #firefighters and our communities safe.

This bill can't become law. We must make our voices heard.

Call your representatives and demand they vote NO on [Bill #]! (state capitol switchboard number)

#[bill number] #JoinTheFight

3. CALLING ALL [STATE ORG] MEMBERS

[Bill number], which is being pushed by @ [Lead sponsor] in the state [House/Senate],

denies #firefighters a voice in the workplace and threatens the safety of every single [state resident (ie: Californians, New Yorkers, etc.)]. This bill is unnecessary, reckless, and dangerous.

Tell your state lawmakers to vote NO on #[Bill number] today! (Link to VoterVoice)

4. Collective bargaining keeps #firefighters and the communities we serve safe.

That's why [Bill number] is a disaster for [state]. This legislation threatens public safety, will worsen our state's fire fighter shortage, and will ultimately end up costing taxpayers more.

#CollectiveBargaining #[Bill number]

5. Collective bargaining rights aren't just about wages and benefits. They're critical to ensuring #firefighters have the staffing, training, and resources needed to keep the communities we serve safe.

[Bill number] threatens the safety of every person in our state, and the [state] legislature MUST reject it.

Tell your representatives to vote NO: (link to VoterVoice)

OTHER TYPES OF POSTS

It's important to highlight the negative impacts of the bill on social media, but you'll also want to post other content to reaffirm your members as public servants. These types of posts include:

- Fire fighters performing charity, community, and volunteer work
- Fire fighters performing their jobs (check department guidelines first)
- Anything that shows fire fighters doing good for their community, either on the job or in their personal capacity (preferably in a way that's fire service related).

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT

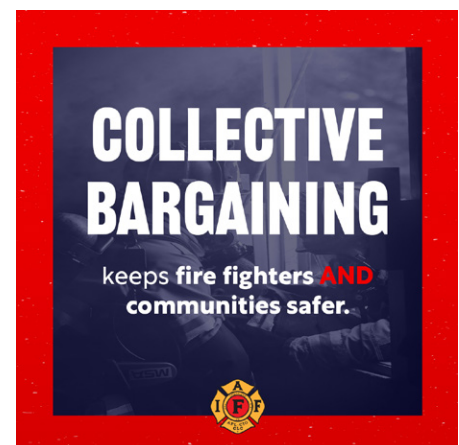


GRAPHICS

Graphic cards are a great way to share information on your social media channels. They offer compelling visuals and can convey important information in a quick, digestible way for the reader. This page includes examples of graphics provided by the IAFF you can utilize in your fight.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- IAFF HQ can help with designing graphics if you need assistance. Please reach out to your DVP first.
- Services like Canva offer a free and user-friendly way to design graphics. You can add logos, colors, and fonts into Canva as well.
- Keep your branding consistent throughout your graphics.



COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



KEY FACTS

Having data and statistics to support your arguments about the benefits of collective bargaining is an important part of strengthening your position. Below are some important data points to implement in your messaging to members, lawmakers, and the public.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS IMPROVE FIRE FIGHTER SAFETY AND SAVE LIVES

- A 2021 academic study found that states with expanded collective bargaining rights for fire fighters had fewer fire fighter fatalities.
- A recent U.S. Department of Labor report found unionized workplaces have “less traumatic injuries and fatalities and better health and safety practices.”

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING KEEPS FIRE DEPARTMENTS STAFFED

- Studies have shown that workplaces with collective bargaining agreements have lower turnover rates and higher employee engagement, ensuring fire departments have the proper staffing needed to do their jobs effectively.
- A study from the Economic Policy Institute found that expanding collective bargaining rights is “particularly important at a moment when state

and local governments face staffing shortages and serious challenges to recruiting and retaining qualified employees.”

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RESULTS IN BETTER SERVICE AND LESS HARM DURING EMERGENCIES

- A Cornell University study of public sector collective bargaining found that “cooperation results in improvements in both the delivery of public services and the quality of work life.”
- The American Journal of Public Health has identified that “collective bargaining contracts promote better public health.”

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING KEEPS FIRE FIGHTERS PROPERLY TRAINED FOR ALL TYPES OF EMERGENCIES

- As public safety experts, it's important that fire fighters have input in the types of training they're obligated to conduct.
- Collective bargaining contracts between fire fighters and their employers often include important training requirements to ensure they're prepared for each possible emergency they may encounter. Ending these agreements removes fire fighters from this process, and could lead to improperly trained fire fighters on the job.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



EMAILS TO MEMBERSHIP

As you work through this campaign, you'll want to keep your membership informed on what's happening and give them the tools they need to get involved – and stay involved – in the fight. State association leaders should send regular updates to members as the legislative process unfolds.

Here's a draft initial email notifying members about the bill.

SUBJECT LINE: URGENT – [State] legislature is trying to end our right to collective bargaining

Brothers and Sisters,

Since [Year], fire fighters and emergency medical workers in [state] have had the right to engage in collective bargaining with their employers over wages and benefits, workplace safety, retirement security, and more. But this fundamental right is under attack, and we need your help.

[Bill number] has been introduced in the state [House/Senate] by [lead sponsor]. The legislation, as it is currently written, would strip us of the right to engage in collective bargaining. I can't stress enough how big of a threat this proposal is to our livelihoods and safety as fire fighters, and to the safety of those we protect. Fire fighters and emergency medical workers in other states have already had their voices silenced by anti-union legislation. We cannot allow [insert state name] to be next.

This bill is part of a nationwide attempt to gut protections for workers. Interest groups with deep pockets – like ALEC and the Heritage Foundation – are doing all they can to steal the victories we've achieved since the [state org] was formed. We can't let them win.

We need all [State org] members to join the fight against this attack on worker protections. Therefore, our executive board is asking all members to:

- Call your state representatives and urge them to vote NO on [Bill] by clicking here (link to VoterVoice) or by calling [state capitol switchboard].
- Share social media posts from the [state org] and other fire service organizations to spread the word about our fight.
- Attend rallies, protests, committee hearings, and press conferences focused on opposing the bill (more information to come).
- Talk to your neighbors, friends, and anyone else about this shameful attack on fire fighters' rights to advocate for ourselves and our communities.

We will continue to send updates as the [state org] works to kill this dangerous bill. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us or your Local president.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



CALLS TO ACTION (CTAs)

You must provide your membership with ways to get involved in the fight. Not only does it let your state lawmakers know that people are focused on this issue, but it also allows your members to feel emotionally invested in this effort. Below are some options for pushing CTA's to members:

1. Voter Voice

- The IAFF can help your state association set up a VoterVoice campaign through the Government Affairs and Political Action Division.
- These campaigns set up pre-drafted emails for your members to send to their state lawmakers. All members need to do is type in their personal information (name) and address (to know which lawmaker is theirs).
- The IAFF can set these up at **no cost** for state associations and they can be shared on all social media channels.

2. State Capitol Switchboards

- Every state legislature has a switchboard to connect the public to their state representatives or senators.
- Regularly sharing this number can allow your members and the public to engage in the conversation and get involved in the legislative process.

- Incorporate this number into email communications, social media posts, and other messages to your members and the public.

3. Petitions

- Many websites allow you to draft/share petitions online at little-to-no cost.
- Petitions offer another way for members and the public to get involved. Depending on how many signatures you receive, these can be another great talking point for your communications plan.
 - Example: "Thousands of Californians have already signed our petition opposing this bill because they know it will make our communities less safe."
- Share your petition links on social media channels and in your email communications to members.

4. Rallies and Events

- Coordinate with your local presidents to ensure members attend rallies, protests, and other events to raise awareness about the bill.
- Send regular messages with relevant logistical info: Who, what, when, where, why.
- See the events section for more information.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



CALL SCRIPTS

Having your members call their state lawmakers is an important part of your campaign. However, these conversations are only effective when everyone says the right thing.

Below is a script that you should give your membership during the fight. Sending this script can also act as a “Call to Action” for your state association and as a reminder of the need to engage.

SCRIPT

Hello,

My name is _____ and I’m a fire fighter/emergency medical worker from _____ county. As a constituent of Rep./Senator _____, I’m calling to strongly urge him/her to oppose HB/SB [Bill number].

As fire fighters, we rush toward danger every single day. We’re willing to put our lives on the line to serve our communities and protect our neighbors. But in return, we need a say on the issues that directly impact our livelihoods and whether we return home from our shifts.

HB/SB [Bill number] will make fire fighters less safe and threaten the safety of the communities we swore an oath to protect.

On behalf of [state] fire fighters, please oppose HB/SB [Bill number] when it comes up for a vote.

Thank you for your time.

NOTES

- *All state lawmakers’ phone numbers can be found on their website or by calling your state capitol’s switchboard.*
- Many offices will ask for your name and address to verify you are their constituent. Be prepared to provide this information.
- Avoid getting into a debate with the person on the other end of the call. The goal here is not necessarily what you’re saying, but the volume of calls. That is what helps to pressure lawmakers.
- Keep it polite, direct, and on message. And don’t be afraid to call their office regularly to remind them of your position.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



MEDIA

During this campaign, you'll want to ensure you're telling your story to lawmakers and the public. The media is critical to helping you do that.

1. Utilize your existing relationships with reporters

- When you're ready to begin speaking with the media, the first thing you should do is reach out to friendly reporters you have worked with previously. Target reporters covering the state capital, labor issues, or other related beats.
- Be ready to walk through the bill, the impact it will have on fire fighters and emergency medical workers, and the risk it poses to the greater public.

2. Reach out to the IAFF for a media list

- The IAFF Communications Division can provide you with a media list, which includes contact information for reporters covering your state.
- Communications can also provide media training to those going through these types of fights. Contact your DVP to request this assistance.

3. Designate a single person to be the "face of your fight"

- Having a single voice to speak about your fight is an important part of keeping your message consistent.
- This person will typically be the state president. But if the state secretary-treasurer or other member of your e-board is more comfortable in front of a camera, don't be afraid to assign this role to them. While titles can be important, the speaker's confidence and comfort appearing on camera is key to making a good impression.

4. Designate a single person to be your media contact

- Assign one member of your e-board to field all media inquiries. This will help to ensure you do not miss opportunities to speak to the press

and will show reporters you're easily accessible, increasing the likelihood they continue to come back to you for quote and interviews.

- Media inquiries can come at all hours of the day. Make sure whoever is assigned this role is readily available, reliable, and has demonstrated strong communication skills.

5. Send press releases and quotes throughout your campaign

- Many reporters (especially for local news) prefer a quote to an interview. Have pre-approved quotes on the bill to readily send to reporters. This will help you get your message out to the public whenever a reporter reaches out.
- Send press releases to your media lists during this campaign any time there's an important update in the legislative process or your association takes actions (rallies, press conferences, committee hearings, etc.) regarding the bill.

6. Stay on message

- Your job when talking to the media is to make the case about why the bill(s) is harmful. Don't lose sight of that. If a reporter asks you a question not related to this bill, pivot the conversation back to why you're there in the first place. Avoid fire fighter "jargon" as best as possible. When you're talking to the media, you're talking to the public – keep your language simple, and don't assume everyone has the same level of understanding on the issue as you do.
- Keep it simple. Viewers of news typically only retain one or two key points from any interview. Go into any interview you do with one thing you want to make sure viewers remember – and make sure to reiterate it multiple times.
- Remember – you will never convince the bill sponsor that they are wrong – focus instead on the undecided people hearing the story or debate.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

Most Americans have positive views of fire fighters and their labor unions. Capitalize on this support to build opposition to the proposed legislation.

Below are some ways to engage the public:

1. Utilize social media

- This should include not just sharing your association's official posts, but putting social posts up on your own personal accounts as well.
- Use a unique hashtag to help grow your reach across social channels
 - Ex: #ProtectFFsRights #KeepCommunitiesSafe #FireFighterRights
 - You should also include tags like #CollectiveBargaining and #[State Abbreviation]leg (i.e., #caleg or #mtleg)
- Encourage spouses, friends, and family to share your state association content. The more people who see your content, the higher the chance you have of getting the public to engage with the message.
- Non-fire fighters are important too – any ally is a good ally when it comes to amplifying your message

2. Build relationships with allies

- Other labor organizations and community groups can be incredibly helpful during your fight.

- Regularly attend Central Labor Council meetings, coordinate with non-AFL-CIO affiliated unions (like the Teamsters or FOP), and build relationships with labor-friendly organizations and nonprofits.
- These organizations can all help to spread your message to audiences who normally would not hear them, and do so from a source they already trust.

3. Tabling

- Become a presence in your community and across the state by having conversations with voters where they are.
- Choose 3–5 of your biggest metro areas across the state. Have teams of 5–15 members in each area ready to set up tables, hand out flyers, and inform the public about what they're doing and why.
- Locations should include: Grocery stores, farmer's markets, sporting events, community events, event centers, etc. These give you a chance to talk to lots of people you'd normally not interact with.
- Make sure your logo is displayed and make clear that you are fire fighters. You want to convey to the people you encounter the risk posed to them should this bill become law.
- Share photos of your members on social media before, during, and after.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



OP-EDS

Op-Eds, or 'opposite the editorial' pieces, are a great opportunity to tell your story and let you reach people who would not normally see your content. As you engage in your campaign to stop anti-collective bargaining legislation, consider placing an Op-Ed in a local or statewide newspaper – and make sure to share it on your social media channels and in your communications to your membership.

If you can't get an op-ed placed, Letters to the Editor in your local newspaper are another good option to get a written argument across the eyes of a wide range of readers.

Below you can find a sample Op-Ed to help you get started.

REP. TEUSCHER'S ANTI-WORKER BILL IS A THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY

by Jack Tidrow, President, Professional Fire Fighters of Utah

First responders don't ask for much, but we do ask for a voice in our workplace – especially on issues that affect public safety. After all, we also call 911 when we need help.

Since 1975, Utah has recognized this right, giving fire fighters and members of other public unions a seat at the negotiating table. Collective bargaining, as the process is known, has been critical in protecting Utah's communities for generations.

Today, however, our safety and security face a dangerous and unnecessary challenge. It is not an exaggeration to say it's one of the biggest threats to Utah's safety in decades.

The solution? The Utah Senate must reject Rep. Jordan Teuscher's bill, the Public Sector Labor Union Amendments (H.B. 267).

Rep. Teuscher's short-sighted legislation would strip all fire fighters and police officers of their collective bargaining rights. He wants to remove those of us on the front lines from having a say in matters ranging from training and staffing levels to wellness, work

schedules and equipment.

Rep. Teuscher has presented his legislation in the name of "fiscal responsibility." There's nothing responsible about threatening the well-being of Utahns or attacking those who put their lives on the line to protect and serve their communities.

If H.B. 267 is enacted, the real-world consequences will be felt immediately – on everything from emergency calls to your children's education.

But let me stick to what I know best and what we in the fire service have seen happen in other states. First, there will be a mass exodus of fire fighters from Utah, as hundreds flee to neighboring states who recognize and value the risks we take each day. This will worsen Utah's already serious fire fighter shortage, and lead to slower emergency response times, more property damage, higher insurance costs, and delayed recoveries for affected communities.

Then, over time, understaffed departments will start to see the impact on those who choose to stay.

Staffing shortages put fire fighters under enormous pressure, as they are forced to work more shifts and more overtime to cover the personnel gaps. These extra shifts lead to increased injury rates on the job and higher burnout, driving more men and women out of the fire service at a time when Utah communities desperately need more fire fighters. And, in our wildfire-prone state, we need look no further than California to understand the importance of having properly trained fire fighters ready to respond at a moment's notice.

So, yes, this bill will end up costing Utah taxpayers significantly more in the long run.

That's not my theory. That's what has happened in other states when elected officials try to squeeze the people on the front lines. It never works, and Rep. Teuscher may not realize it, but he also is jeopardizing the safety and security of his own family, his neighbors' and every Utahn he has sworn to represent. *[Continued on next page]*

REP. TEUSCHER'S ANTI-WORKER BILL IS A THREAT

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CRISIS TOOLKIT



TO PUBLIC SAFETY, from pg. 15

Rep. Teuscher can keep saying he cares about fire fighters, police officers, teachers and other public employees. But his actions speak so much louder than his words. There's a reason H.B. 267 has bipartisan opposition. Republicans and Democrats know the legislation is misguided, irresponsible, and dangerous.

The first responsibility of any elected official is to ensure the safety and well-being of those they represent. Any Utah lawmaker who votes for H.B. 267 is making it clear that cheap political "wins" are more important than the safety of their constituents.

The Professional Fire Fighters of Utah stand with our brothers and sisters in police cars, classrooms, and other public unions. As such, we are asking all Utahns to stand with those who serve their communities and demand the state Senate reject H.B. 267.

Jack Tidrow is the President of the Professional Fire Fighters of Utah, the labor union for professional fire fighters and emergency medical workers in Utah.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- The IAFF can assist with drafting, reviewing, and placing Op-Eds for you and your association. Contact your DVP first.
- Make sure to include a short blurb about the author (typically the state president) at the end of the piece. The outlet will include these so readers know your authority to speak on the issue.
- Do not publish Op-Eds anywhere else once they've run, or before you send them to outlets to publish. Papers want these pieces to be exclusive to their sites, so make sure to share the link to their website when promoting the story.
- Op-Ed should follow this format: Introduction, problem, solution, explanation, conclusion.
- Check the outlet for guidelines on opinion pieces before submitting. There you'll find word count limits and other requirements they may have to have your piece considered.