



The Equality Principle: Meeting with Management

As an SEIU Local 1000 steward, when you are conducting official union business, the law (The Dill's Act) presumes that you are equal to management. This *equality principle* is never more important than during a meeting with management, especially when members are present.

A handy rule of thumb is to ask yourself, “would this supervisor treat another management person this way?” If the answer is NO, then representatives of the Union should not expect to be treated in this manner. Here are some helpful hints:

- **Scheduling the meeting:** If the time is inconvenient, object and suggest another time.
- **Location:** Always suggest a neutral place such as a conference room.
- **Physical surroundings:** Sitting in a low chair while the supervisor is behind his / her desk puts the Union in a weaker, subservient position. Stand up, pull the chair closer, or insist on moving to a different space.
- **Staying on topic:** A little chit-chat at the beginning of the meeting is okay, but it can be used by management to distract the Union from the subject at hand. If you need to, constantly remind the supervisor what the meeting is for.
- **Interruptions:** One interruption may be acceptable, but more than one is not necessary and is probably being used to put the Union *in its place*. The supervisor would most likely have all calls held when meeting with another manager or her / his boss. The same should be done for meetings with the Union. If this happens, suggest another meeting time that may be more convenient – and a neutral meeting space with no interruptions.
- **Pacing:** Remember, this is *not* management's meeting – it belongs just as much to the Union. According to the *equality principle*, the union also has the right to control the timing and the pace. The Union is allowed to ask questions, make information requests and use forceful language if necessary.