COPE: Sample COPE Rap

Introduction Question

Hi, how are you? Say, I need to talk with you about how state workers are under attack and what that could mean to your family and your pension.

Heart

Did you hear about the two pension initiatives that are circulating right now that would strip your pension in favor of a 401K?

OR

Have you heard about the Paycheck Deception initiative big business is trying to pass that will take away our voice in politics and put your pension at risk?

OR

Did you know your boss (Director of Agency) was appointed to their position by a politician who we helped elect?

THEN

We have to show those who attack us that we aren't afraid and will stand up to their bullying. One way we can do that is by becoming a member of COPE. COPE stands for Committee on Political Education, and it's a special fund that is used to defend ourselves against politicians who are trying to take away our pensions and silence our voice, just like they did to state workers in Wisconsin. The law puts restrictions on the use of union dues to defend ourselves against politicians who attack us. Our COPE fund allows us to participate in political action that is critical to ALL members. COPE is used to support politicians and issues we support and fight back against those we don't.

Head

Can you imagine what your life would be like right now if John Chiang hadn't been elected to be the State Controller? (Minimum wage) Or if Meg Whitman had been elected as Governor?(massive layoffs and the end of collective bargaining in CA) Politics is critical to ourselves and our families' lives as state workers. We have to build our own political movement to beat back attacks on our jobs and our pensions.

Ask

Being a member of COPE is just as critical to our Union as being a full member is. By giving at least $7 a month your money will add up with other member's money and it will make a real difference. Will you sign this card to give $7 a month right now? *Give card and pen.*

Silence

Stop talking. Use silence as a tool. It also gives them a chance to think about it and make a decision.

SAMPLE RESPONSES TO TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT COPE

When responding to difficult questions always respond with a short explanation and then go back to the core message points. Then *ask again*.

No.

Response:

We don't really know why they are saying no and we should wait for them to tell us before we walk away all dejected. Once they give a reason maybe there is something we can work with. Don't waste your time with someone who is adamant or hates the union. Move on to more fertile ground. On the average we have found that you have to ask four people just to get one yes. So don't take the "No's" personally, just think of them as moving you that much closer to your next yes. This really is a numbers game and the big secret is that you just have to ask enough people.

Why can't you just use my dues money? What do you do with all that money you get from me? Where are our dues going?

Response:

Your dues go to support contract negotiations and representation.

The law places a lot of restrictions on the use of dues money for all the political work needed to protect state workers and their families. We are asking you for an additional $7 a month for political action so that we can make our voices heard and win in November.

I started giving $5 last year when you came asking. Why are you back asking for $7 now?

Response:

It's great that you are a contributor, thank you for your leadership. Did you hear about the Citizens United decision that the Supreme Court recently made? Now, corporations can spend unlimited amounts of money anonymously on any political issue they want. We were already being outspent 14 to 1, now it is much worse. We can still beat them, because there are more of us that there are of them, but we need to increase the amount we are asking for to defend ourselves.

I already pay $2 a month into LPAC(money used for state political issues by negative dues deduction). Why should I give to COPE?

Response:

It's great that you already give. After our huge victory last year electing Jerry Brown and defeating Meg Whitman, we now need to focus on making sure big business doesn't silence our voice and destroy our pensions. Because it's so critical to win this fight, we're asking for everyone currently giving to increase their contribution. We're asking for COPE because the law places significant limitations on what LPAC money can be used for in politics. COPE money can be used for anything.

I don't think the union should be working on politics; the Union should stick to working on contracts and representation.

Response:

Politicians make decisions that affect our ability to organize and negotiate contracts all the time. Their actions also affect our ability to negotiate for wages, quality health care and for pensions. For example, remember when John Chiang refused to take us down to minimum wage last summer?

When everybody gives a little, and we put it together with other peoples contributions, then the union is strong enough to be a voice for working people on government decisions that affect our pensions, our health care, our right to organize and bargain for better wages, job security and working conditions. Can I get you to sign up?

I'm a Republican and the union is always giving money to Democrats. I don't want my money to be spent on people I don't support.

Response:

The Union supports issues and politicians who vote to support our issues, not political parties. The Union's job is to look at how our representatives are doing on issues that matter to working people. For example, the Union looks at where they stand on minimum wage, training opportunities, pensions for public employees, and quality health care before insurance company profits, only then are decisions made, with member input, about which politicians to support.

Can you support the efforts to build power for working people by contributing $7 a month?

How come the only time I see you folks is when you want to talk to me about money?

Response:

I know that it must feel that way sometimes. With a limited union staff that covers thousands of state worksites, we are very busy and don't always have enough time for doing what we'd really like to be doing - talking to all of you. I have had a chance to talk with many of your co-workers and I know that we all want a lot of the same things: we want to be able to support ourselves and our families, we want to be appreciated, and we want opportunities to get ahead. We can only get what we need if we work together. This fund is to help us all put a

few dollars together, so that together we can be strong and make a difference the issues that are important to all of us - issues like pensions we can count on, job security and respect.

Can I sign you up right now?

I was furloughed for over a year and a half, and haven't had a raise in years. I can't afford to donate!

Response:

I know the furloughs were tough. I talk to members all the time who lost their houses and cars, and still are really struggling to take care of their families. But I would suggest to you that you can't afford *not* to give. The reason we were able to elect Jerry Brown and defeat Meg Whitman, who wanted to cut 40,000 state worker jobs, is because members like you stepped up and put their money together, five and ten dollars at a time, and beat back Goliath. COPE is a way for us to make sure that in the upcoming election, big business interests who want to take away your pension and silence your voice are defeated. We need to make sure that in California, state service is seen as something to be proud of and respected, with good pay, secure retirement, and dignity. Can I get you to sign up right now? Here's a pen.