

The Special Status of Union Stewards

THE EQUALITY PRINCIPLE

Under the Dill's Act (the state law that gives California State workers the right to have a union), stewards and other union representatives have a special legal status when they engage in union activity or otherwise act in their official capacity as a designated union representative.

During these periods, stewards are *not* bound by the traditional restrictions on employee conduct. When representing employees, stewards are considered to be equals with management. Conduct that could otherwise result in discipline must be tolerated.

The equality principle allows a steward to:

- ✓ **Engage in robust debate**
- ✓ **Raise your voice**
- ✓ **Gesture**
- ✓ **Use forceful expressions**
- ✓ **Threaten legal action**
- ✓ **Raise the possibility of on-the-job protests**

Aggressive advocacy is a judgment made by stewards on a case-by-case basis. Some meetings with management warrant an aggressive approach, and others do not. The goal is to get the problem resolved – not to make management your enemy. Remember, you will have an ongoing relationship with this person. But, on the other hand, SEIU Local 1000 members deserve action and deserve to have their problems addressed.

Remember that the equality principle only applies when a steward is acting in an official capacity. It does not apply when a steward is acting in an individual capacity on their own behalf. A steward is acting in an official capacity when talking to a worker about a problem, investigating a problem, or meeting with management about a problem.