

Unions Can Make Promises, But They Can't Guarantee Changes

The Teamsters may say they will get you better pay and benefits, **but can they guarantee that?**

In fact, **a union can't guarantee anything in the negotiations process**, including whether it will advocate for something important to you. Negotiations aren't predictable and may take months or years.

Corewell Health would bargain in good faith with the union. You might think that it automatically means higher pay and better benefits, **but that's not what the law says.**

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is the federal government agency that oversees labor law. Here's what it has ruled in legal cases about collective bargaining:

HOW COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WORKS

A union may say...	The NLRB ruled...	What it means...
Team members will receive better pay and benefits with the union.	"... collective bargaining is potentially hazardous for employees and as a result of such negotiations employees might possibly wind up with less benefits after unionization than before." Source: Coach and Equipment Sales, 228 NLRB. No. 51	<i>Team members covered by a union contract could end up with less, the same, or more than they have now.</i>
With a union, team members always gain from collective bargaining.	"If the union tells you that what you have now is guaranteed, it is not telling you the truth. The truth is you can lose wages and benefits in collective bargaining." Source: Ludwig Motor Corp. and IPEU, 222 NLRB	<i>There are no guarantees in collective bargaining.</i>
Corewell Health would have to agree to our demands in negotiations.	"... there is no requirement in the [National Labor Relations] Act that an employer accede to all union demands or, after bargaining, retain all current benefits." Source: Oxford Pickles, Division of John E. Cain Co., 190 NLRB. No. 24	<i>A union cannot force an employer to agree to its demands.</i>

During contract negotiations, the employer must maintain the "status quo," meaning it cannot make unilateral changes to wages, benefits or other terms and conditions of work.

Q&A ABOUT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Q What happens if the union wins the election?

A If the union is certified as the winner of the election, both Corewell Health and the union would have an obligation to bargain in “good faith” in an effort to reach a contract.

Q Does bargaining in “good faith” mean the parties will be forced to agree?

A No – both sides would have to hear each other out and try to reach an agreement, but neither side can be forced to agree to anything.

Q How long do contract negotiations take?

A It depends. Negotiations, especially for a first contract, could take months or years. According to Bloomberg Law, a first contract in the healthcare field takes an average of 528 days to negotiate.* Every negotiation is unique, so it’s impossible to predict what would happen.

*Combs, R. “ANALYSIS: How Long Does It Take Unions to Reach First Contracts?” Bloomberg Law, 2021

Q If Corewell Health and the Teamsters reached a contract agreement, would I be guaranteed improvements to pay, benefits and working conditions?

A Pay, benefits and working conditions would all be negotiated between Corewell Health and the union, and it’s impossible to predict how a contract would look. You might get more under a Teamsters-negotiated contract or you might end up with less. There are no guarantees.

Q Who bargains the contract?

A Typically, both management and the union select bargaining teams or committees to negotiate a contract. Management might select attorneys, HR representatives and subject-matter experts. You may ask union organizers about their process, such as who would be part of the union’s committee and how the union selects people.

The choice is yours.

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