

Building Political Power



**Turn
up the
HEAT!**



A Union of Professionals
AFT COPE
Committee on Political Education

What is POWER?

- Power: there are different definitions
 - *“Political power grows from the barrel of a gun” ~Mao Zedong*
 - *“Power is the ability to achieve purpose. Whether it is good or bad depends on purpose.” ~Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*
 - *Power is the capacity to restructure actual situations*
- Union members/Organizer’s role
 - **the moment an organizer enters a community you live, dream... only one thing and that is to build the mass power base of what you call your army. Until you have developed that mass power base, you confront no major issues.... Until you have those means and power instruments, your 'tactics' are very different from power tactics. Therefore, every move revolves around one central point: how many recruits will this bring into the organization, whether by means of local organizations, churches, service groups, labor Unions, corner gangs, or as individuals**



Quick Power Analysis

“Power goes to two poles: those who’ve got money and those who’ve got people” Saul Alinsky

For your local union to understand how to have power, first you must understand four things:

1. **What is the issue and what is my scope?**
2. **Where is your power base and how do you engage it?**
3. **Who has power to make decisions that impact my members lives?**
4. **Who influences those that make those decisions?**



Analysis continued

- There are two types of authority
 - **Formal – given by title and organizational position**
 - **Informal – gained by persuasion and producing results**
- Power Analysis checklist (formal and informal)
 - ✓ **Political**
 - ✓ Who are the decision makers
 - ✓ At my school site/campus?
 - ✓ In my district?
 - ✓ In my community?
 - ✓ Who are the leaders who can move people
 - ✓ In my school site?
 - ✓ In my district?
 - ✓ In my community?



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Analysis continued..

- ✓ Who are the opinion shapers?
 - ✓ **Other labor organizations**
 - ✓ Other education unions in district/area
 - ✓ Central Labor Council
 - ✓ Other unions that interest in district/education field
 - ✓ **Mainstream Media**
 - ✓ Newspaper (ie columnists/op-eds)
 - ✓ Radio
 - ✓ Television
 - ✓ **Online media**
 - ✓ Are there influential local bloggers/experts on issue(s)?
 - ✓ Popular twitter feed/facebook page(s)?
 - ✓ **Community organizations**
 - ✓ Parent group(s)?
 - ✓ Ethnic organization(s)
 - ✓ Legal societies
 - ✓ Single issue organizations (ie healthcare for all)



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Why do we need to organize?



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What happens when we do?



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What are the threats/opportunities in CA?

- **Race to the Top**
- **Public school choice initiatives**
- **Parent Trigger initiatives**
- **Paycheck “deception” initiatives**
 - **Numerous attempts have been made by opponents of unions to restrict unions ability to use union funds for politics. (1998, 2005)**
- **Attacks on collective bargaining**
 - **Limits the unions focus on politics because union would concentrate on signing up members and running annual reauthorization elections**



How do we build our base?

- COPE is the Committee On Political Education
- COPE has 3 primary purposes
 1. **Educate and engage members in why politics matters to union members**
 2. **Raise voluntary dollars that can be used for political purposes (ie elections, community organizing, political fundraisers)**
 3. **Organizes local political priorities**
 1. Endorses candidates and local ballot measures
 2. Coordinates member volunteer work for election campaigns
 3. Organizes broad based election coalition
 4. **Allows local to participate in AFT P.I.P.E. program**



National POWER through AFT P.I.P.E.

Help elect education and labor friendly federal candidates

- **President**
- **U.S. Senate**
- **U.S. House of Representatives**

These elected officials in Washington D.C.

- **Decide how much money is in the federal budget for public education.**
- **Directly affect our classrooms by increased testing requirements and mandates.**



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COPE is the base of local union's political strategy



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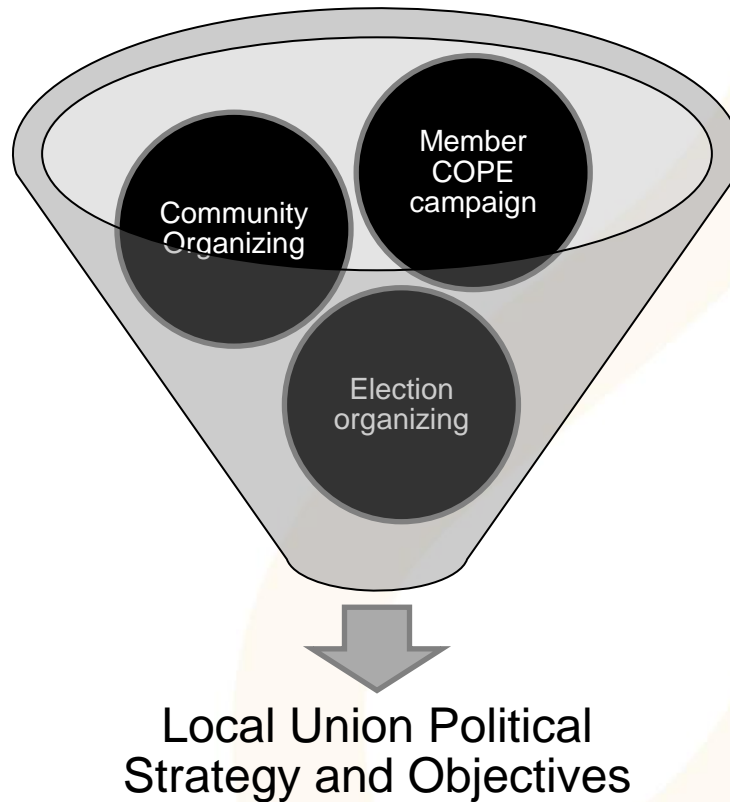
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Developing a COPE Campaign

- **A COPE program is the base of your political strategy**
- **COPE's purpose is to educate union members on why politics is vital to:**
 - **The development of the education profession**
 - **the strength and growth of the union**
- **COPE allows you to raise \$\$ and recruit volunteers**



Setting the Framework



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What is a COPE Campaign?

- **COPE campaigns are opportunities to engage your members about what issues are impacting them in the community and politically**
- **Campaign should agitate members around issues that connect politics/policy to their ability to have an impact on working conditions and student achievement.**
- **COPE also sets a base for your engagement in the community and the electoral process**
- **Helps develop new leadership in membership**



Establish a COPE Agenda

1. **Appoint or elect a PAC chair**
2. **COPE meet monthly**
3. **Establish Goals both Short-term and long-term**
 - A. Short-term goals:**
 - a) **Increase COPE payers by x%**
 - b) **Identify x% of members to volunteer**
 - B. Long-term goals:**
 - A. Build a long-term local education coalition
 - B. Have your local union be a community leader involved in a multi-issue community/labor coalition.



Mechanics of COPE

- **COPE Campaign mobilizes whole local union**
 - **Communications**
 - Newsletter
 - Email
 - Website
 - Letter from President/COPE Committee
 - **Internal Union structures**
 - E-Board
 - Site Rep Structure



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Suggest Timeline

Month 1

COPE mailer 1 goes out to all members

Announce COPE Drive at site rep meeting

Site meetings to talk about LU Political work and COPE

Phonebank previous COPE contributors



Month 2

COPE Mailer 2 goes out

Phonebank all non-COPE payers

Hold end of month all member political meeting to discuss COPE Drive LU strategy moving ahead.

Report out through all means of local communication results of campaign



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On-going COPE Checklist

- ✓ **Institutionalize the program.**
- ✓ **Communications about politics included in all union related communications material (newsletters, websites, membership drives, etc.)**
- ✓ **Appoint a COPE/PAC Chair and organize a PAC committee that meets continually through the year**
- ✓ **Fill all delegate slots at the Central Labor Councils and require that COPE/PAC chair be a delegate to CLC and fill as many slots to the CLC with COPE/PAC members**



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On-going COPE checklist...

- ✓ Participate in AFT A.C.E./P.I.P.E program
- ✓ Have a standing report on COPE/PAC progress to E-Board of local
 - ✓ % of members paying COPE
 - ✓ # of members id'd in volunteer pool
 - ✓ Lobby visit updates (local/state/federal)
 - ✓ Establish candidate questionnaire/endorsement process for local
- ✓ Establish an annual COPE Drive
- ✓ Have annual COPE dinner/awards



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Suggested for further reading..

- *“Rules for Radicals”* – Saul Alinsky
- *“Death by Thousand Cuts”* – Jarol Manheim
- *“Leadership Without Easy Answers”* – Ronald Heifetz



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