



**Jewish Community
Relations Council**

MILWAUKEE
JEWISH FEDERATION

Position on Collective Bargaining

Oct. 4, 2012 – Approved by Social Justice/Domestic Policy Task Force

Oct. 10, 2012 – Approved by JCRC Steering Committee

Nov. 14, 2012 – Approved by JCRC Board

The Jewish community has played a central role in the labor movement through such activities as forming Jewish trade unions in the 1800s and working to ensure workers' rights after the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire. The Jewish community is composed of workers, employees and employers, and holds at its core a collective memory of our experience in slavery and our responsibility to seek justice for ourselves, for the stranger and for the powerless. Recognizing the fundamental differences between public sector and private sector unions, we acknowledge that collective bargaining, the process of negotiating the terms of employment between an employer and a group of workers, is a central function of organized labor. According to the Talmud, the ability to stop working is equivalent to freedom; it is the difference between being free and being a slave. But, as with all inviolate rights, there are accompanying responsibilities.

It is the position of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation that:

- Throughout history, public and private sector unions have served an important role in safeguarding the rights of workers.
- Collective bargaining — when used appropriately — can serve as one avenue to improving the relationship between employees and employers, and can promote fairness and democracy in the workplace.
- Collective bargaining rights in the public and private sector are inextricably related, so that weakening the rights in one has a negative effect on the other.
- Fiscal problems are complicated. Focusing on unions and eliminating or diminishing public employee bargaining rights will not solve the complicated fiscal problems of governments. While collective bargaining does not guarantee outcomes, the absence of public unions does not ensure a stable and balanced budget.
- Unions have a responsibility to be good stewards of members' funds and to operate in the best interest of their members and the public.

Therefore, the JCRC urges governments and elected officials to ensure that laws and policy decisions do not negatively impact any particular individuals or groups, particularly those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, or disenfranchised.