Online Member Engagement and Union Advocacy: Examples Across Pennsylvania

Social distancing is forcing unions to innovate. Unions and labor organizations are finding ways to use technology to engage members, to advocate, to carry out union business—and in many cases, participation is actually increasing with online initiatives.

If you would like more information on any of the initiatives below, or you have initiatives you would like to share, please email laborschool@psu.edu.

Tele-/Online Meetings: Conference calls or online meetings (like Zoom or GoToMeeting) at statewide-, regional-, facility-levels, or in small groups have been effective.

> *Engagement Tips for Virtual Meetings:*
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> - *Hold standing, weekly meetings so members have a predictable time to connect.*
> - *Some unions have successfully included translation services in their Zoom meetings.*
> - *Use the breakout room feature in Zoom for deeper participation.*
> - *Create private social media (like private Facebook groups). Participation requires approval and comment settings can be adjusted based on the goals of the communication.*
> - *Record critical information on a YouTube channel and text the link out for easy access.*

Virtual Lobbying: Invite members and elected officials to the same Zoom meeting so elected officials can hear directly from union members, staff, and leaders.

> *Engagement Tips for Virtual Lobbying:*
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> - *Have elected officials or policy makers join at a pre-set time after the meeting starts so you can prep with union members in advance and maximize time with elected officials.*
> - *Use zip code information to put registrants in breakout rooms with their elected official.*

Virtual Hiring Hall: In an effort to quickly help increase staff in grocery stores and help provide work for others who lost their jobs, UFCW 1776 created a virtual hiring hall using Microsoft Forms. The link was promoted via social media, text blasts, and emails to other unions and UFCW members' families to help spread the link and find potential applicants. After gathering the information for potential candidates through the form, union staff then took the information and worked directly with employers to connect them to potential candidates.

Texting: Mass texts have been used as a tool to share information from the labor organizations with members. Texts are great ways to send links to resources, video clips, or other information. There are services requiring members to "opt-in," as well as other text systems like Hustle that allow for sending the same message to individual cell phones to avoid the "opt-in" method.

Telephonic Membership Sign-Up: Given the inability to conduct in-person new membership orientations, some organizations are doing membership orientations virtually. Others are even doing membership sign-ups telephonically using recorded voice-authorization as confirmation of membership.

Social Media and Digital Campaigns: Unions and worker organizations have used social media hashtag campaigns, live streaming on social media, and YouTube to amplify stories and build public support for social justice.

Online Tools for Campaigns:

- *Collect Video Stories: Use social media or mass texting to create a link for members to upload their own video stories to personalize your campaign.*
- *Virtual Petitions: Organizations have used Google Forms, Action Network, Resist Bot, and other platforms to quickly create and gather electronic petitions.*
- *Telephone or Email Blasts: Members can flood voicemails or email inboxes of management as an online collective action to win safety or economic demands.*

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