



# IBEW® The right choice!

## Union Authorizations...The Facts

**What is a union authorization?** - An authorization is a card or petition signed by an employee indicating his or her desire to form a union at their place of employment. The authorization states that the employee “authorizes a local union of the IBEW to represent them in collective bargaining”. This means that the employee has indicated his or her desire to be represented by the union.

**Why is an authorization necessary?** - The National Labor Relations Act, the federal labor law that defines employees’ rights to form a union, requires that a majority of employees sign authorizations to prove they want a union before the IBEW can ask for recognition from the Employer.<sup>1</sup>

**How does an authorization work?** -

1. Employees sign IBEW authorization petitions or cards.
2. When a majority of authorizations have been secured, the IBEW will ask the Employer to recognize your union.
3. If the Employer should refuse such recognition, the card may be then taken to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) where the IBEW will file a petition for a secret-ballot election.
4. The NLRB then sets a date when you vote -- by secret ballot-- to be represented by the IBEW.
5. The NLRB then issues a certification – which legally compels the employer to bargain with the IBEW - and soon thereafter, contract negotiations begin with the Employer for the changes the employees through their union want to make.

**What else will the authorization be used for?** - Nothing else. The only reason for the card is to determine sufficient interest from the employees in seeking collective bargaining with the employer. The IBEW’s policy is that employees should vote, in an election sanctioned by a neutral party, whether they want IBEW representation. Once employees determine that they want the opportunity to vote in

an election, the cards are forwarded to the third party to support the employee’s petition.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: The National Labor Relations Act as amended

**Will my employer see my authorization?** - As long as the IBEW has possession of the cards, the employer will not see the authorizations. If the employer agrees to a card-check, a neutral third party will compare the authorizations to a listing of employees provided by the employer. If the authorizations are not in the possession of the IBEW, however, the IBEW cannot guarantee who sees or doesn't see the authorizations.

**If I don't believe in joining the IBEW, should I sign an authorization?** - The IBEW doesn't want anyone to sign an authorization unless they truly want to form a union. The decision to sign an authorization is the employee's choice and the employee's choice alone. No one should or will be forced to sign an authorization.

**Can signing an authorization force a union on the employer?** - No. Under Federal law, once the employees decide to seek recognition of their union, the Union must "demand" (legally request) recognition by the employer before the NLRB will intervene on the employees' behalf. (Why should the government expend taxpayer's dollars to conduct an election if the employer will voluntarily recognize the employees' wishes to form a union?) The employer can, and usually does, refuse such voluntary recognition. In some cases, the employer and employees agree to a card-check provision, wherein a neutral third party selected by the IBEW and the employer validates majority support for a union by employees, and the employer then bargains with the IBEW.

The NLRB petition clearly asks if the Union has asked the employer to voluntarily recognize the union. The NLRB rules and procedures are designed to uphold employee free choice in forming a union. If a majority of employees are opposed to forming a union, no union will be formed, according to the NLRB.

**The company says I cannot get my card back once I give it to the union. Is this true?** The IBEW's policy is that any employee who wants to get their authorization revoked prior to an NLRB petition being filed or a card-check procedure can get their authorization back without question. Once the authorizations are submitted to the NLRB with the Petition, or a neutral third party in card-check procedures, the NLRB or neutral party has possession of the cards. The IBEW then has no control over the cards.

**Signing an IBEW Authorization card is the  
first step to a brighter future!**

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