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***IFO Women’s Caucus***

***Why Organize a Women’s Caucus?***

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Decades ago, unions and other organizations limited the participation of women or organized them into separate unions. Such restrictions are not the case today. So why create separate forms of outreach for women now? The fact remains that genuine, systemic equality for women at the workplace, in their unions, and within the labor movement is still unrealized.

**What can a women’s caucus do?**

A Women’s caucus can take on many projects such as:

* Encouraging more women to become active in the union or organization.
* Moving the union or organization to address certain issues such as pay equity, childcare, maternal leave, sexual harassment, and unequal access to promotions.
* Increasing the number of women in leadership positions.
* Sponsoring or encouraging skills-training for women members, such as public speaking, running a meeting, running for office, or basic unions.
* Setting up a mentoring program for potential new female leadership.

**Why have a women’s caucus?**

Research shows that women need independent space to identify and create their own culture where they can speak out about concerns and identify strategies to engage with and change the dominant culture. Mobilizing and organizing women to champion their interests—and ultimately, the advancement of their union or organization—is an effective means to hasten change.

**Benefits for the Union**

* More women get involved in organizational activities – more members to do the work of the union
* Greater unity and power in bargaining
* Enhanced effectiveness in political action

**Benefits for the Members**

Develop a greater voice for women in decision-making. Participation empowers women.
Increase the voice of women as a recognized constituency within the union or organization. Increase the number of women at all levels of union leadership and decision-making.
Issues such as pay equity and family leave become a union or organizational priority.

From *A Guide to Organizing Women’s Committees: Everything You Need to Know to Make a Difference!* by Jane LaTour, with Lois Gray and Maria Figueroa, published by the Worker Institute at the Cornell University ILR School and the Berger-Marks Foundation. http://www.bergermarks.org/download/Workshop\_for\_Womens\_Committee\_Guide.pdf