



Philadelphia Musicians' Union, Local 77-274 AFM

1420 Locust Street, Suite 300 Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 985 - 4777 • www.philamusicians.org

Building Power Through Relationships: *The Importance of Local Politics & The Central Labor Council*

Presented By: Jarred Antonacci
Secretary-Treasurer, Local 77-274 AFM

Political action is not separate from union work—it is one of the ways workers exercise collective power to improve their lives, workplaces, and communities

Curated and presented for the joint Eastern & Southern Conference of Locals
Ottawa, Ontario CA | June 18, 2026



Philadelphia Musicians' Union, Local 77-274 AFM

1420 Locust Street, Suite 300 Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 985 - 4777 • www.philamusicians.org

Why Local Unions Must Engage with:

- City Council Representatives
- State and Local Elected Officials
- Central Labor Councils

Protecting Workers. Advancing Policy. Building Union Strength.

Why Political Relationships Matter

Labor unions do not operate in isolation.

Many issues affecting union members are determined by:

- City ordinances
- State laws
- Public budgets
- Regulatory agencies
- Public appointments

Strong relationships help unions:

- Protect jobs
- Expand opportunities
- Secure funding
- Influence policy
- Respond to workplace threats

Key Principle: If workers are not at the table, decisions are made without them.

The Role of Local Government

City and county governments impact workers every day through:

- Procurement policies
- Arts and cultural funding
- Public events
- Economic development initiatives
- Licensing and permitting
- Labor standards enforcement



Philadelphia Musicians' Union, Local 77-274 AFM

1420 Locust Street, Suite 300 Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 985 - 4777 • www.philamusicians.org

Examples:

- Prevailing wage laws
- Local hiring requirements
- Workforce development programs
- Public performance opportunities for musicians

Local officials can become valuable allies when they understand union priorities.

Working with City Council: *Why Relationships with City Council Matter*

City Council members can:

- Introduce legislation
- Hold hearings
- Advocate for workers
- Influence city budgets
- Connect unions with departments and agencies

Effective unions:

- Meet regularly with council members
- Attend public meetings
- Provide expertise on workforce issues
- Offer practical solutions

Relationship-building should occur year-round—not only during crises.

Benefits of Strong Municipal Relationships

When unions maintain strong relationships with city officials, they can:

- ✓ Secure funding for programs
- ✓ Create work opportunities
- ✓ Improve labor standards
- ✓ Gain access to decision-makers
- ✓ Protect members from harmful policies
- ✓ Increase public visibility



Philadelphia Musicians' Union, Local 77-274 AFM

1420 Locust Street, Suite 300 Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 985 - 4777 • www.philamusicians.org

Example:

A city partnership can create performance opportunities while ensuring fair pay, pension contributions, and professional labor standards.

State and Local Elected Officials

State legislators influence:

- Labor law
- Unemployment benefits
- Workers' compensation
- Public pensions
- Collective bargaining rights
- Arts and cultural funding
- Tax policy

Relationships with elected officials help unions:

- Educate lawmakers
 - Advocate for legislation
 - Defend workers' rights
 - Build bipartisan support when appropriate
-

Labor's Voice in Public Policy

Public officials hear from:

- Employers
- Industry groups
- Lobbyists
- Developers

They must also hear from workers.

Union members provide:

- Real workplace experience
- Economic expertise
- Community perspective

The labor movement's strength comes from organizing workers to speak collectively.



Philadelphia Musicians' Union, Local 77-274 AFM

1420 Locust Street, Suite 300 Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 985 - 4777 • www.philamusicians.org

What Is a Central Labor Council?

A Central Labor Council (CLC) is a regional federation of unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

The CLC:

- Coordinates labor activity
- Supports organizing campaigns
- Mobilizes political action
- Provides labor education
- Builds solidarity among unions

A local union's participation increases its influence throughout the labor movement.

Benefits of Active Participation in the CLC

Political Strength

- Coordinated endorsements
- Labor candidate interviews
- Legislative advocacy

Solidarity

- Strike support
- Picket line assistance
- Community campaigns

Networking

- Relationships with other unions
- Shared resources
- Strategic partnerships

Visibility

- Greater public influence
 - Stronger labor presence
-



Philadelphia Musicians' Union, Local 77-274 AFM

1420 Locust Street, Suite 300 Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 985 - 4777 • www.philamusicians.org

Building a Labor Coalition

Successful unions understand that:

Relationships create power.

A strong network includes:

- Members
- Other unions
- Community organizations
- City officials
- State legislators
- Labor councils

Together these relationships help workers:

- Win contracts
- Protect jobs
- Expand opportunities
- Influence public policy

Best Practices for Union Leaders

Do:

- Meet elected officials regularly
- Invite officials to union events
- Attend council and legislative meetings
- Participate in labor council activities
- Build relationships before problems arise
- Share worker success stories

Don't:

- Engage only during elections
 - Contact officials only during crises
 - Work in isolation
 - Assume officials understand labor issues
-



Philadelphia Musicians' Union, Local 77-274 AFM

1420 Locust Street, Suite 300 Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 985 - 4777 • www.philamusicians.org

For Discussion

Questions for Participants

1. How has local government affected our members?
 2. Which city departments influence our work?
 3. Who are our key elected allies?
 4. How active is our union within the Central Labor Council?
 5. What relationships should we strengthen over the next year?
-

Strong Relationships Build Strong Unions

Engagement with:

- City Council
- State and Local Officials
- Central Labor Councils

helps unions:

- ✓ Protect members
- ✓ Advance worker-friendly policy
- ✓ Create opportunities
- ✓ Strengthen solidarity
- ✓ Increase labor's influence

Workers are strongest when they organize not only in the workplace, but throughout their communities and government institutions.