

White House Launches Website Encouraging Workers To Protect Their Rights, Including Union Organizing Rights, By Filing Charges/Complaints Against Employers

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Today, the White House launched a new website, worker.gov, that makes it easier for employees to file charges and complaints against their employers. The new website promotes employee rights and the filing of claims, including a strong emphasis on union organizing rights. It is a collaboration between the Department of Labor, the National Labor Relations Board, the Department of Justice and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, with a stated goal of giving “workers the assistance they need in the way they need.” The site is set up to “operate[] as a portal that predicts worker’s needs” by funneling an employee through various scenarios based on a profile the user enters. At the end of each scenario the user is given the option of filing a charge or complaint. As stated by the White House with the launch of worker.gov: “The tool guides workers on a structured journey that provides them with opportunities to take action or find help if they have had wages stolen, been injured on the job, faced discrimination or have been retaliated against for joining others to seek better wages or conditions at work.” The website targets the following broad categories of rights: the right to be treated equally; the right to engage with others to improve wages and working conditions; the right to have a safe and healthy environment; and the right to be paid. Under each of these categories appear a series of questions and scenarios an employee can click through. For example, an area promoting union rights begins by stating: “You have the right to engage with others to improve wages and working conditions.” Underneath this statement the following scenarios are presented, each of which can be clicked on by the user:

- We complained about the tip policy and our boss threatened to fire us.
- I sent an email to my co-workers during break time about seeking a raise and my employer suspended me for unauthorized use of its computer system.
- I was fired for chatting about my supervisor with other coworkers on Facebook.
- I filed a charge with the NLRB and was demoted as a result.
- I am being prevented from engaging with others to improve my working conditions.

RELATED PRACTICE AREAS

Collective Bargaining
Labor and Employment
Labor Relations
National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)
Union Avoidance

- I can't get hired because the industry knows me as a union supporter.
- I am being retaliated against for supporting an effort to bring in a union to improve my work situation.
- We are afraid to talk to one another about our wages and working conditions because our employer has a handbook rule prohibiting release of confidential information.
- We formed a union and are trying to bargain with management, but they refuse to meet with us.
- I, on behalf of the nail techs, asked the nail salon owner to consider getting better ventilation to address the fumes from the polishes, gels and acetone, and I was fired.
- I brought complaints to our union steward and/or foreman about the crew not having adequate safety equipment and they retaliated.
- We were on strike and the employer fired and replaced us all.
- My boss threatened to fire us if we vote for the union.

When the user clicks on any of the scenarios, the following general statement comes up: You have the right to engage with others to improve wages and working conditions.

You have the right to exercise your rights related to forming, joining, or assisting a labor organization for collective bargaining purposes or working together without a union to improve terms and conditions of employment. You have a right to participate or not participate in any of these activities. You have a right to not be restrained or coerced by employers or labor organizations in exercising these rights.

The same page at the bottom then states: "File a charge or petition to protect your rights." Clicking on the "file a charge" button takes the user to a page telling him or her "what to expect" and provides a step by step tutorial regarding the filing of an unfair labor practice charge. Off to the side on the same page a "Worker Profile" is set out allowing the user to read a story how other employees successfully used the NLRB to get their jobs back and receive back pay awards. Finally, a button at the bottom of the page takes the user directly to the NLRB website page, [nlrb.gov](https://www.nlrb.gov), where a charge can be filed. Similar scenarios and invitations to file a charge or complaint with the Department of Labor, the Department of Justice or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission are presented in the other three rights categories: equality, safety and wage rights. What impact the site will have remains to be seen, but one thing is clear: through [worker.gov](https://www.worker.gov), the government is trying to make it easier for employees to file charges or complaints against employers.