COPE: Tips, FAQs & How to Respond

Tips for Collecting COPE

1. **Attitude & Approach**
   - Be confident.
   - Don’t assume someone can’t afford COPE – the people who make the least, give the most.
   - Know your stuff, if you don’t know what COPE is – how will you educate a member about it.

2. **Members Issues & Politics**
   - Ask the member what they care about and tie that back to politics. If they don’t know what COPE is about they are not going to care or want to sign up. Make it personal to them!

3. **Silence**
   - After you ask, hand the COPE card and pen to the member and wait. Collect the card on the spot.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: **What is COPE?**
A: C.O.P.E. (the Committee on Political Education) also known as PAC, the Political Action Committee is SEIU-UHW’s Political Action Fund, perhaps the most important tool at the Union’s disposal to secure our jobs. The Political Action Fund supports funding of contracts, political campaigns, and legislative actions that impact UHW members.

Q: **Why do political contributions matter?**
A: 63% of hospital funding, 79% of funding for nursing homes and 100% of funding for homecare services comes from public money (taxes). Elected officials at the local, state and federal levels decide how that money is distributed and those decisions affect everything from bargaining rights, to job security, working conditions, wages and benefits. A strong political fund is our vehicle to ensure we have the power to elect pro-worker leaders at every level of government.

Q: **Are there more reasons to give?**
A: UHW is taking on critical issues in the healthcare system. Politics is expensive. If we are going to pass legislation that repairs the broken healthcare system and that restructures and stabilizes homecare now and into the future, we need a strong voice in politics—and our political action fund ensures that voice.

Q: **I already pay dues, why should I give to COPE too?**
A: Federal law prohibits direct candidate contributions from our union treasury, and requires that a separate fund be established for that purpose. A recent change in the law (Citizens United vs. FEC) allows union dues to be used for member and voter mobilization, but the reality is we need our union dues to help negotiate contracts and improve staffing, working conditions, patient care standards, and wages and benefits on the job for members. Corporations already outspend unions by 10 to 1. Building our political participation and funding increases our political strength.

Q: **Who can make political contributions?**
A: Federal law permits contributions from active and retired SEIU-UHW members, their immediate family members, and other employees of SEIU-UHW facilities, such as management. Contributors must be citizens or legal residents of the United States.
Q: Where does the money go?
A: The Political Action Fund is used for elections, lobbying, member mobilization campaigns, voter outreach and public advocacy campaigns. Our outreach efforts involve mailings, television and radio ads, phone banks, door-to-door canvassing, and member-to-member activities. Right now, we are working to elect politicians that share our vision for healthcare in California. We’re working with the Governor and legislature to reduce the incidence of chronic diseases like asthma, high blood pressure and heart disease that plague our families and communities—and drive up the costs of healthcare. All of this work helps to improve the care we can provide on the job, and improves our ability to ensure good jobs with good benefits for members.

How to Respond to Member Reactions

M: I don’t have the money.
R: Your money comes from this hospital and the money they have to pay us comes from tax payer dollars. Every year, politicians make decisions about how that money is spent and whether or not this hospital has the funding they need. We can contribute to our political fund now to ensure that politicians are elected who support our vision for healthcare, and we can fight against layoffs and take-aways at the bargaining table later. (Note: Tie it to their issue; Relate it to their vice - $10/month means giving up 2 cups of Starbucks coffee a month)

M: I work hard for my money; I want to use it for what I want.
R: (Use response above.) This is about giving up a little money now, to protect all our money and our benefits into the future.

M: I don’t have time to talk.
R: Ok. Let me ask you, do you think there’s a healthcare crisis in CA? What are examples of that you see? (Sometimes people will engage and you’ll find yourself in the middle of the conversation you wanted to have. If they truly don’t have time, you’ll have peaked their interest and they may come back later.)

M: Why do I have to do this?
R: You don’t have to – you could do nothing. And, we will continue to see cuts to healthcare funding from the state and federal government, cuts that mean less money for our patients and less money at the bargaining table for our wages and benefits. Or you can stand with your co-workers to elect leaders who share our vision for healthcare and will work with us to protect our patients and our members. Don’t you think $10/paycheck is worth investing in our future?

M: I’m not political.
R: Do you care about protecting your wages and benefits? Do you care about protecting your patients? The people we elect to office make decisions every day that affect us and our patients, like how much funding this hospital gets. This is about standing with your co-workers to protect healthcare.

M: I don’t vote.
R: Why not? What do you think needs to change in the healthcare system/in this hospital? Not voting is giving up the power you have as a citizen and a tax payer to fight for changes you want to see. Do you think this hospital needs more money for contracts/or patients? Voting is our voice as citizens and tax payers to the elected leaders who make decisions that affect us every day. (Tie it back to their issue)

M: Every time I vote they don’t do anything for me.
R: We just got a contract that protects our healthcare and retirement benefits! Politicians make decisions about how our hospital is funded every year – that money is money we have (or don’t have) for raises, benefits, pension, staffing, etc.