

Legal Rights of Non-Citizens: Important Information Developed by GTFF's International GEs Caucus

What are my rights as an international GE to participate in union activities?

Short answer: International GEs have full legal rights as employees to participate in union activities, including strikes. Labor activities such as joining a union, attending union meetings, picketing, passing out leaflets, attending rallies and demonstrations, and participating in strikes, are all legally protected concerted activities for foreigners in the U.S. (including foreign students with visas) just as they are for U.S. nationals.



Will my union membership or union activity affect my student visa?

In nearly 40 years of graduate employee unionization in the United States, there is no reported instance of any international student having problems with the law or with their visa status as the result of their union activity. It is against the law for the university to retaliate against you for union activities. There is no known case of any international student being expelled from the university as a result of union activities, nor would such expulsion be legal.

Are there any special precautions I should take?

It is important that the activities you participate in are legal, peaceful, and non-disruptive. Should an activity become threatening or disruptive or if violence appears to be starting, you should leave the area. It is the case that arrests, criminal charges, criminal proceedings, and convictions could negatively affect your interactions with immigration officials, and if serious enough, your immigration status. International GEs should feel free to participate in rallies and protests, including a strike, but should also be aware that if law enforcement is called it is a good idea for non-citizens to safely remove themselves from the area.

What should I do if I experience retaliation for my union activity?

If you experience or suspect retaliation from UO faculty, administrators, or law enforcement as a result of your participation in union activities, contact the GTFF immediately. The GTFF and our parent union, the American Federation of Teachers, are committed to protecting the rights and interests of all GEs.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

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