

Science Museum of Minnesota Workers: One Step Closer to a Union Contract

Actions speak louder than words. The pandemic and the great resignation changed the labor conversation, especially with fewer workers in the work force. Our low and highly skilled workers stand ready to fight for their rights; however, what has not changed is management's response to unionization efforts. Each step is a hard-fought and hard-won and completely worth it.

The Science Museum of Minnesota is made up of approximately 200 workers in various locations such as the museum, IDEAL Center, Kitty Anderson Youth Science Center (KAYSC), St. Croix Watershed Research Station, Mississippi River Visitor Center. In response to the SMM workers efforts in December to file a [petition](#) to unionize with the National Labor Relations Board, SMM management "their best and hired [an anti-union busting](#) law firm to run an aggressive anti-union campaign and exclude employees from the St. Croix Watershed Research Station, the "business office," and some employees at KAYSC." Management also rejected repeated requests for a mail-ballot option for all employees. What does this say about their [values](#) of inclusion and collaboration? Not to mention the value of an educator.

SMM workers hold positions such as experience designer, experience facilitator, professional development specialist, mid-level giving specialist, track manager, evaluation and research associate, design team instructor, engagement specialist, STEM education instructor, marketing & PR specialist, program coordinator, exhibit developer and more. These workers are educators with experience and education that deserve to be valued and respected. This fact cannot be overstated enough. In fact, this fact is understated enough as it is. These workers are on the frontline of **science** and **education** and impact "[1 million people](#) from around the world every year through trips to our museum, school visits, online experiences, traveling exhibitions, and Omnitheater films." SMM workers unionized [to improve their workplace on issues](#) such as having a voice in the workplace, income equality, job security, a safe work environment, inclusion, communication, and collaboration.

AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl released the following statement in January after the votes were counted in the union election initiated by workers at the Science Museum of Minnesota:

"Workers at the Science Museum of Minnesota have voted overwhelmingly to join together in a union with the AFSCME Council 5 family, calling for dignity and respect for the work they do," said Executive Director Julie Bleyhl. "In spite of a significant anti-union pressure campaign by Science Museum of Minnesota management, these workers spoke decisively that they seek a voice in the workplace, fair play for a day's work, dignified paid leave policies, and more. These workers will have the full support of our union as they continue their momentum and fight for dignity and respect as they negotiate a first contract with the Science Museum of Minnesota that lifts everyone up."

"The weeks leading up to the election involved a lot of reflection and important conversations with employees," according to a [statement](#) by Science Museum management. "We look forward to continuing those conversations and moving forward together as an organization that values collaboration, equity and learning."

Our message to management? Actions will speak louder than words.