

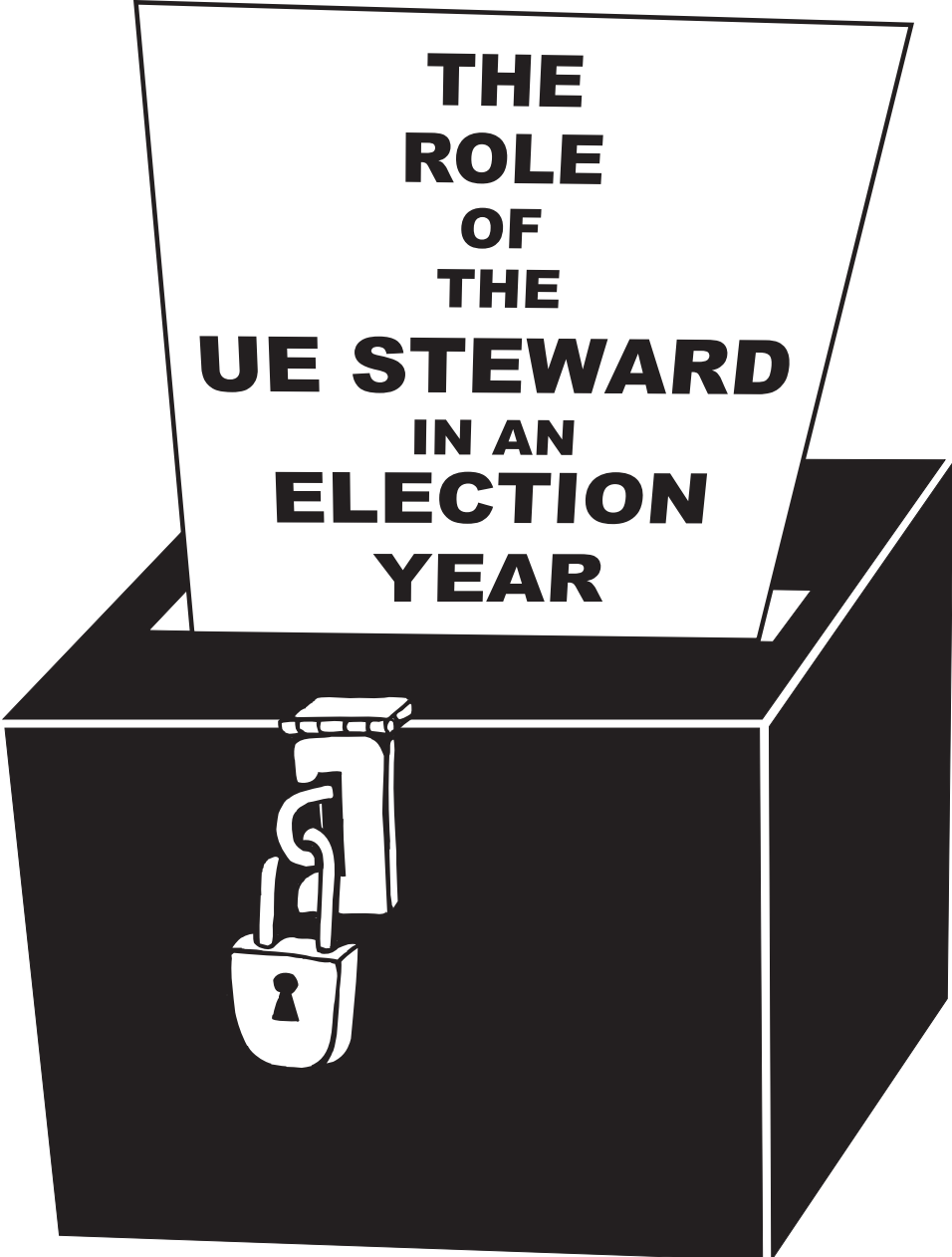
*“There is a difference between political action and playing politics. When we fought the politicians and we won what legislation we did, UE didn’t play politics; we engaged in political action. We didn’t rub bellies with the politicians. There was plenty of air between us. You could see light. Today, try to find some air and light between the bellies of labor leaders and the bellies of politicians. No go. You won’t find it. They are playing politics.”*

*—UE Leader James Matles, addressing the 1975 UE National Convention.*

There is a major difference between member-driven political action based on sound UE principles, and “playing politics” with lawmakers and candidates. With critical national and state elections coming up on November 5 every UE steward and leader must take some time to become familiar with our union program, as well as the nuts and bolts of the electoral system. While for some people political discussions can be controversial and stressful, as unionists we have to participate in the political process to protect what we have worked so hard to negotiate at the bargaining table. These days, union political action is a necessity, not a choice.

### **Our Political Action Program: UE Policy**

Our union decides – with full rank-and-file input and with discussion and voting at our convention – what positions we will take on political issues and what we will do about them. The 78th UE National Convention in September 2023 debated and adopted 21 resolutions dealing with a range of political issues that impact working people and our union. These resolutions are compiled on UE’s website, [ueunion.org](http://ueunion.org), under the tab “UE Policy.” Take some time to read the current UE Policy, and pay special attention to the Report of the Policy Action Committee, which included the main “action items” set as the union’s priorities by convention delegates. The Policy Action Report guides our union to focus on the most critical political action tasks that confront us.



## **THE ROLE OF THE UE STEWARD IN AN ELECTION YEAR**

### **The Need for Political Action**

The remarkable working-class upsurge that rose in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic shows no signs of abating. We are seeing this in both fights in the shop, and on the new organizing front. However, this upsurge is not yet reflected in our nation’s politics, which continue to be de-

fined by increasingly sharp rhetorical divisions between the two corporate parties, neither of which is interested in uniting the working class.

Militancy in the labor movement has received some assistance from Biden’s pro-worker appointments to the National Labor Relations

*(continued on back)*

(continued from front)

Board, who have been working to undo policies put in place by the Trump Board, and ruling in favor of workers in many disputes. On the other hand, Trump's appointments to the Supreme Court resulted in the *Janus* decision to weaken unions in the public sector. His success in filling the federal courts with anti-worker judges promises more such anti-worker decisions in the future.

In addition to electing a President, the 2024 elections are going to determine which party controls the U.S. Congress, 50 state legislatures, and the governors of 11 states, including Indiana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Vermont and West Virginia.

In order to create more favorable conditions to win on issues of concern to working people, it is critical that UE members get involved in the political process. UE's resolution on Independent Rank And File Political Action points out: "It is essential that working people defeat the anti-worker and anti-democratic Republican Party in 2024, even as we are clear-eyed about the shortcomings of the Democrats and the need to build an independent party of working people."

### **UE Independent Political Action**

UE's approach to elections is different from that of many other unions. Unlike most unions, whose candidate endorsements are chosen by their top leadership, UE's rank-and-file members decide which candidates to endorse, if any. We look at where the candidates stand on the issues of great

est concern to workers, and we share that information with members so they can make a sensible decision for themselves. We look at their stated positions on the issues, their voting records, and their backgrounds.

UE does not give money to candidates, from either party. The national union has no political action fund for making campaign donations. (A few UE locals have small political action funds, raised from member donations, and make contributions to endorsed candidates.) UE focuses our energy on voter registration, education, voter turnout — and in mobilizing members on the issues we're concerned about. We do that before, during and after elections.

Some unions support Democrats almost automatically and give them money regardless of the individual politician's record. UE is independent of both major parties, and candidates need to earn our support.

### **First Things First – Voter Registration**

The Independent Rank and File Political Action Resolution adopted by our convention delegates last year encouraged locals to "undertake workplace campaigns to register members and their families to vote, and to encourage participation in all elections, from the local to the national level." Getting your fellow workers to fill out voter registration forms may not sound like the most exciting thing you'll ever do, but it is extremely important if we want to have an impact on Election Day. Here are some steps to take:

1. Visit the website [eac.gov](http://eac.gov), sponsored by the United States Election Assistance Commission. Here you will find everything you need to know about registering your co-workers, family and friends to vote. Each state has different rules and forms, so find your state and download the voter registration form. Read how voter registration works in your state, and make sure you know what the deadlines are.
2. Find out who in your department or workplace is registered to vote, and who is not.
3. Develop a plan to approach those who aren't registered, have a conversation with each of them about why it's important for them to get registered to vote and let them know you have the form to sign them up.
4. Be aware that you have the right to conduct voter registration at the workplace, particularly in break areas, lunch rooms, and other non-work areas.
5. If allowed in your state, have people return the completed forms to you, so you can make sure they get mailed or delivered to the proper state or county election offices in time.

Here are some other good resources for political action:

- UE website: [ueunion.org](http://ueunion.org)
- Center for Responsive Politics: [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org)
- Center for Public Integrity: [publicintegrity.org](http://publicintegrity.org)
- Project Vote Smart: [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org)
- Federal Election Commission: [fec.gov](http://fec.gov)

