

# MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS

## What do union representation and collective bargaining mean?

### If a union is voted in at my store, what would it mean?

If a union is voted in, it would give the union:

1. the exclusive right and duty to speak for staff members, aka “exclusive representation”; and
2. the right to negotiate a contract through the process of “collective bargaining.”

Before deciding, it’s important you understand what these things mean (and don’t) under the law.

### What does exclusive representation mean? How would it impact my relationship with NSM/store leadership?

Exclusive representation means that New Seasons would have to deal directly with the union regarding staff wages, hours, or other working conditions. New Seasons would be legally prohibited from dealing directly with staff members on these topics.

Even staff who vote against the union in an election would not have the right to opt out of representation and deal directly with New Seasons leadership.

We believe this will interfere with our ability to quickly respond to issues that staff often raise through Speak Ups (e.g., bereavement pay), store working groups, or the Values Team.

### What is collective bargaining? How does it work?

Collective bargaining is the process by which an employer and union negotiate over wages, hours, and working conditions until they agree on a labor contract or face a stand-off or “impasse.”

There is (1) **no legal obligation for an employer to agree to any union proposal**, (2) **there is no time limit for negotiations**, and (3) during negotiations, **it’s usually “status quo” – meaning no changes – until a contract is reached**. A 2021 study found that the most common length of time for a newly unionized workforce and employer to negotiate a contract is 409 days.<sup>1</sup>

**All of this information can be verified by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) or on the agency’s website: <http://www.nlr.gov/>.**

#### Citations:

<sup>1</sup> <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/bloomberg-law-analysis/analysis-how-long-does-it-take-unions-to-reach-first-contracts>.

