



CONSENT CALENDAR
March 14, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Taplin (Author), Councilmember Rigel Robinson (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Resolution Supporting Unionization Efforts by Urban Ore workers

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution in support of workers at Urban Ore unionizing under representation by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Union 670.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

BACKGROUND

In 2023, workers at the Urban Ore retail store in Berkeley filed for a labor union representation election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), asking to be represented by IWW Union 670.¹ To date, Urban Ore management has not yet recognized the unionization effort. The NLRB recommends that workers obtain recognition from their employers to maintain the democratic spirit of union elections.

In the recovery following the COVID-19 recession, tight labor markets have led to a resurgence in labor organizing and union activity. The NLRB has reported that union representation petitions increased by 57% in the first half of Fiscal Year 2022. Workers at major corporations like Amazon and Starbucks have recently seen major victories in obtaining union representation. While the overall amount of unionized workers declined amid pandemic-related job losses in 2020 and 2021, the share of unionized workers in the workforce increased, in part because unionized jobs were more resilient.² Union representation has helped improve working conditions and provide more stable benefits³ while closing wage gaps for women and racial minorities in the workforce.⁴

¹ Kwok, I. (2023, Feb. 2). Workers at Urban Ore, Berkeley's last salvage store, announce union drive. *Berkeleyside*. Retrieved from <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2023/02/02/workers-at-urban-ore-berkeleys-last-salvage-store-announce-union-drive>

² Shierholz, H., et al. (2022). Latest data release on unionization is a wake-up call to lawmakers. *Economic Policy Institute*. Retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/publication/latest-data-release-on-unionization-is-a-wake-up-call-to-lawmakers/>

³ Zoorob, M. (2018). Does 'Right to Work' Imperil the Right to Health? The Effect of Labour Unions on Workplace Fatalities. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 75(10), 736–738, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1136/oemed-2017-104747>.

⁴ Farber, H.S., et al. (2021). Unions and Inequality Over the Twentieth Century: New Evidence from Survey Data. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136(3), 1325–1385, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjab012>.

Urban Ore Union

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ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

None.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Taplin Council District 2 510-981-7120

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING UNIONIZATION OF URBAN ORE WORKERS

WHEREAS, workers at Urban Ore in Berkeley filed a union representation petition with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in February, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 enables workers to petition for union representation by obtaining signatures of at least 30% of the potential bargaining unit; and

WHEREAS, union representation has been consistently shown in empirical studies to improve working conditions; access to healthcare and sick pay; and wage parity for women, Black and Latinx workers, and other disadvantaged groups; and

WHEREAS, workers in major corporations such as Amazon and Starbucks have recently won major victories in obtaining union representation; and

WHEREAS, the NLRB reports that union representation petitions increased by 22% in the first half of Fiscal Year 2022, representing major potential for a stronger labor movement in the United States;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that Urban Ore management is hereby urged to recognize the union representation petition by its employees seeking to unionize under the Industrial Workers of the World Union 670.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley supports the labor movement in the United States, and welcomes the significant wave of unionization efforts across the country.

