



American Labor

Scouts BSA · Careers

Name

Started

Completed

Workers built America, and how they are treated affects every family. This badge explores what workers care about, how unions and companies work together or disagree, and how jobs are changing in a global economy. It helps you think about the kind of work life you want someday.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/american-labor/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

- ☐ **1** Learn about working people and job-related issues, then list at least 8 concerns of American workers with a short description or example of each (e.g., safety, hours, wages, job security, discrimination, automation, layoffs, outsourcing, benefits)

Tip: Ask a few adults what matters most to them at work, like pay, safety, or time with family. Look for patterns in their answers.

Example: Major concerns could include fair pay, safe workplaces, health insurance, steady hours, time off for family, and jobs being replaced by machines. For each, give a real example, like a warehouse worker worried about lifting injuries.

- ☐ **2** With approval and permission from your counselor and a parent or guardian, visit a local union, central labor council, or employee organization (or attend its meeting, or contact it online), then do 2a–2c

Tip: Ask a family member or neighbor if they belong to a union or worker group. With a parent, arrange a visit or meeting to learn how it runs.

- ☐ **2a** Learn what the organization does

- ☐ **2b** Show them your list of concerns from requirement 1 and ask which issues matter most to them and why

- ☐ **2c** Draw a diagram of how the organization is set up, from local to national level if it applies

- ☐ **3** Tell your counselor what a labor union is, what it does, and how it serves members, showing you understand these terms: labor, management, collective bargaining, negotiation, union shop, open shop, grievance procedure, mediation, arbitration, strike, lockout, work stoppage

Tip: Make a simple list of services a union provides, then ask a union member which ones matter most to them.

- ☐ **4** Explain the adversarial model of labor-management relations and how it compares with a cooperative bargaining approach

Tip: Think of a sports team: sometimes players and owners argue, sometimes they work as partners. Compare that to workplaces you learn about.

Example: Compare two kinds of relationships: in one, a company and union negotiate hard and a strike follows; in another, workers and managers meet monthly to solve safety problems together. Explain what each side gains and risks.

5 Labor history project: Choose 1 of 4

Tips for this section: A timeline on poster board or a short slideshow is a good way to show key events. The library can help you find books on labor history.

Example for this section: Build a timeline with eight to ten events, like the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, the first Labor Day, and the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938. Add one sentence on why each one still matters.

- ☐ **5a** Make a time line of key events in American labor movement history from the 1770s to today

- ☐ **5b** Make an exhibit, scrapbook, or computer presentation (like a slide show) showing three major labor movement achievements and how they affect American workers

- ☐ **5c** With approval and permission from your counselor and a parent or guardian, watch a movie about organized labor in the U.S., then talk it over with your counselor and share what it taught you

- ☐ **5d** With counselor approval, read a biography of someone who contributed to the American labor movement and explain what their contribution was

- ☐ **6** Explain what globalization means, discuss with your counselor some of its effects on U.S. workers, and explain how the global workforce fits into the U.S. economic system

Tip: Check labels on your clothes and electronics to see where they were made. Talk about how that connects to jobs here.

Example: Follow one product, like a pair of sneakers, from design to factory to store. Show which jobs happen here and which happen overseas, then discuss one way that helps and one way it hurts American workers.

- ☐ **7** Pick a labor issue that concerns many American workers (from the news or from this badge); argue it to your counselor or in writing first from management's side, then from labor's, and sum up the basic rights and duties of employers, union members, and nonunion employees

Tip: Pick an issue in the news and write down how a worker, a manager, and a customer might each see it.

Example: Pick a current issue, like raising the minimum wage or self-checkout machines, and write a short paragraph from each viewpoint: a worker, a business owner, a customer, and an elected official.

- ☐ **8** Discuss with your counselor the different goals of a business's owners, stockholders, customers, employees, employee representatives, community, and public officials; explain why they reach agreements and compromises and how those affect each group

Tip: Imagine a pizza shop and list what the owner, an investor, a customer, and a cook each want. Notice where those goals clash or line up.

Example: Use a bakery chain: owners want growth, stockholders want returns, customers want low prices and fresh bread, and employees want fair pay and good hours. Show where those goals line up and where they pull apart.

- ☐ **9** Learn about labor relations careers; pick one that interests you and discuss with your counselor its main duties and the qualifications, education, and training it needs

Tip: Look up jobs like mediator, labor lawyer, or human resources specialist, and ask someone in the field about their work.