

How to Fight Privatization?

The best time to fight privatization is long before it happens.

Although circumstances will vary, contracting-out often proceeds from an idea to a proposal to reality in predictable stages:

Employees can prevent privatization by taking these five positive steps, starting right now:

1. **Build** your union's capacity to fight privatization.
2. **Watch out** for the warning signs.
3. **Set conditions** and standards that "raise the bar" for private companies that provide public services.
4. **Make sure** taxpayers are satisfied with the services they are receiving.
5. **Educate** decision makers, the media and the community about the problems of privatization.

In fact, our real job is education. And LVCEA members are the ones who must do it. There are plenty of advocates for privatization working overtime to get their point of view out.

1. Build Our Associations Capacity

Our Association is gearing up to fight back against privatization, even before such proposals emerge.

Preparing for battle begins by educating the LVCEA members. LVCEA members need to know that privatization and contracting-out are nationwide trends, and that they need to get informed and involved.

Effective ways to fight against privatization:

- Collective bargaining should build barriers to privatization.
- Public relations should promote public services.
- Community outreach should foster alliances with others who share our concern about defending and improving public services.
- Political and legislative action should promote policies that discourage privatization.
- Organizing efforts should reach out to workers who provide similar services in the public, private and non-profit sectors so that private companies cannot compete on the basis of low wages and benefits.

2. Warning Signs to watch for:

No matter how many barriers you attempt to enacted against privatization, you still need to watch for early-warning signs to alert you against threats in your Department or Division. For example:

- Watch out when public officials talk about the need to cut budgets or "restructure" government. Often this is intended to pave the way for privatization.
- A hostile labor-management relationship or bargaining climate may be a sign that privatization is waiting in the wings.
- Whenever new services are introduced or existing services are cut or restructured, public officials may open the door to private contractors.
- Outside consultants hired to review existing services and make recommendations for their future could be the first step to privatization.
- Complaints by public officials or top management about the high cost or poor quality of services can signal their intent to contract-out.
- Vendors visiting worksites or hobnobbing with public officials may be laying the groundwork to push privatization.
- If workers who leave are replaced with temporary workers, this may mean that the work will eventually be privatized.

3. Raise the Bar for Private Companies That Provide Public Services

Enacting Legislative Protections

WORDS TO USE

Do say "Public Services"

Do say "Public Service Employees"

or "Public Service Workers"

Do say "Services"

Do say "Corporate Greed"

Do say "Local people will be replaced with big corporations from outside (*name of city*)" outside (*name of city*)"

Do discuss fairness, access and accountability **AND** the impact on citizens and the community. Discuss cooperation, quality service and professionalism.

WORDS TO LOSE

Don't say "Government Services"

Don't say "Government Employees"

Don't say "Programs"

Don't say "Corporate Profits"

Don't say "Contracts will go to big corporations from

outside (*name of city*)"

Don't talk about "Employee or Union Rights."