



COMMUNIQUE

SUNRISE MOVEMENT VOTES TO UNIONIZE WITH LOCAL 1180

By Marci Rosenblum
Local 1180 Communications Director

In an overwhelming show of support, more than 95% of workers at Sunrise Movement voted on Dec. 15, 2020, to form a union with CWA Local 1180, and management agreed to recognize the staff union.

In a virtual meeting with Sunrise Movement staff and management, U.S. Senator Ed Markey from Massachusetts verified the union vote by card count as Sunrise's third-party validator, announcing support from 79 out of 82 workers.

"As a youth-led grassroots organization dedicated to climate justice and bringing millions of living-wage jobs to the American workforce, forming a union was a clear step of action for us at Sunrise, and one that we believe embodies our movement's values and will guide its growth," said **Gabbi Pierce, Internal Communications Coordinator at Sunrise Movement and a new Local 1180 member.** "We know that workplaces are stronger when workers have a voice and are empowered through unionization. We are thankful for the recognition of our union by Sunrise management, which has supported our organizing efforts from the start. This is a huge step for our movement in our fight against climate change, and for nonprofit organizations everywhere that are increasingly advocating in support of worker rights."

Johnathon Williams, Southern Regional Organizer, agreed. "I wanted a union because it's not enough to dream about a future you want, you have to live it in every moment," he said. "That means if I want to see a future of dignified work where a national strike can bring bosses and corrupt politicians to their knees, then I need to be in a union, and to push all my other friends to unionize, too."

"On a personal level, I was tired of demanding agency and respect from my bosses. We're going to negotiate a contract where that's the baseline expectation," Williams said.

Sunrise Movement workers asked Senator Markey because of his progressive stance focusing on climate change and energy policy. He was chair of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming from 2007 to 2011, and he is the Senate author of the Green New Deal. On the Facebook Live count, Market said that the organizing efforts by Sunrise workers show unions are "essential in creating a foundation for a strong, equitable environment that

elevates the voices of all workers."

"I'm proud of these passionate young people who embody the true value of unions in the strongest traditions of the labor movement and are stepping out as advocates for workers' rights and good American jobs," he said. "Their dedication to empowering their team with strong support from management sets an important precedent for our country's workplaces."

Sunrise Movement workers saw organizing as an opportunity to strengthen their relationship with management while creating a more accessible environment for their growing team. Local 1180 was an ideal fit for them as the Union already represents a number of other nonprofits, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, National Domestic Workers Alliance, Open Society Foundations, Century Foundation, and StoryCorps.

"We're excited for Sunrise Movement staff to join Local 1180 and the thousands of nonprofit workers CWA represents across the country," said President Gloria Middleton. "Their decision to organize speaks to the real impact unions have on strengthening the workforce at its core and creating a more equitable environment for workers. We look forward to working with Sunrise to continue to promote good jobs and fair contracts for all hard-working Americans."

Sunrise Movement is one of the latest nonprofits to organize, with the industry largely non-union. While there are no official federal statistics on the number of unions in the nonprofit industry, recent census data shows that the percentage of union members in this space has remained relatively low at 1% to 3% in the past decade.

CWA Local 1180 Organizer Leslie Fine said there is a growing trend for workers at nonprofits and youth-led organizations to pursue organizing unions to ensure a voice, power, and protections on the job. ■

Show your support for Sunrise Movement workers by following them on Twitter
[@smvmtunion](https://twitter.com/smvmtunion)

Also follow their exciting work building a movement to stop climate change and create good jobs in the process
[@sunrisemvmt](https://twitter.com/sunrisemvmt)