



# OKLAHOMA

# STATUTES

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

### ARTICLE LI.

## FIRE AND POLICE ARBITRATION

### Title 11, § 51-101 et seq

**Effective July 1, 1978**

Notice: Although we have made every effort to assure they are correct, they are not warranted as to accuracy. In addition to the official published volumes, Oklahoma statutes may be accessed at several state websites, which include [www.oscn.net](http://www.oscn.net) and [www.lsb.state.ok.us](http://www.lsb.state.ok.us)

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**§ 51-101. Public Policy of fire and police arbitration law**

- A.** The protection of the public health, safety and welfare demands that the permanent members of any paid fire department or police department in any municipality not be accorded the right to strike or engage in any work stoppage or slowdown. This necessary prohibition does not, however, require the denial to such employees of other well-recognized rights of labor such as the right to organize, to be represented by a collective bargaining representative of their choice and the right to bargain collectively concerning wages, hours and other terms and conditions of employment; and such employees shall also have the right to refrain from any and all such activities.
- B.** It is declared to be the public policy of this state to accord to the permanent members of any paid fire department or police department in any municipality all of the rights of labor, other than the right to strike or to engage in any work stoppage or slowdown. Nothing in this article shall constitute a grant of the right to strike to fire fighters or police officers of any municipality and such strikes are hereby prohibited. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law, any person holding such a position who, by concerted action with others and without the lawful approval of his superior, willfully absents himself from his position or abstains in whole or in part from the full, faithful and proper performance of his duties for the purpose of inducing, influencing or coercing a change in the conditions or compensation, or the rights, privileges or obligations of employment shall be deemed to be on strike but the person, upon request, shall be entitled to a determination as to whether he did violate the provisions of this article. The request shall be filed in writing with the officer or body having the power to remove or discipline such employee within ten (10) days after regular compensation of such employee has ceased or other discipline has been imposed. In the event of such request, the officer or body shall within ten (10) days after the receipt of such request commence a proceeding for the determination of whether the provisions of this article have been violated by the public employee, in accordance with the law and regulations appropriate to a proceeding to remove the public employee. The proceedings shall be undertaken without unnecessary delay. The decision of the proceeding shall be made within ten (10) days following the conclusion of said hearing. If the employee involved is held to have violated this article and his employment terminated or other discipline imposed, he shall have the right of review to the district court having jurisdiction of the parties, within thirty (30) days from such decision, for determination whether such decision is supported by competent, material and substantial evidence on the whole record. To provide for the exercise of these rights, a method of arbitration of disputes is hereby established.
- C.** It is declared to be the public policy of the State of Oklahoma that no person shall be discharged from or denied employment as a member of any paid fire department or police department in any municipality of this state by reason of membership or nonmembership in, or the payment or nonpayment of any dues, fees or other charges to, an organization of such members for collective bargaining purposes as herein contemplated.
- D.** The establishment of this method of arbitration shall not, however, in any way whatever, be deemed to be a recognition by the state of compulsory arbitration as a superior method of settling labor disputes between employees who possess the right to strike and their employers, but rather shall be deemed to be a recognition solely of the necessity to provide some alternative procedure for settling disputes where employees must, as a matter of public policy, be denied the usual right to strike.

**§ 51-102. Definitions**

As used in this article, unless the context requires a different interpretation:

1. "Fire fighters and police officers" shall mean the permanent paid members of any fire department or police department in any municipality within the State of Oklahoma but shall not include the chief of police and an administrative assistant and the chief of the fire department and an administrative assistant. The administrative assistant shall be that person so designated by the chief of the police department. "Police officers" as used herein shall be those persons as defined in Section 50-101 of this title.
2. "Corporate authorities" means the proper officials, singly or collectively, within any municipality whose duty or duties it is to establish the wages, salaries, rates of pay, hours, working conditions and other terms and conditions of employment of fire fighters or police officers, whether they be the mayor, city manager, town manager, town administrator, city council, town council, director of personnel, personnel board or commission, or by whatever other name the same may be designated, or any combination thereof. It is not the intent of this paragraph that the above-named officials shall in any way be exclusive or limiting.
3. "Strike" shall mean the concerted failure to report for duty, the willful absence from one's position, unauthorized holidays, sickness unsubstantiated by a physician's statement, the stoppage of work, or the abstinence in whole or in part from the full, faithful and proper performance of the duties of employment, for the purpose of inducing,

influencing or coercing a change in the conditions, compensation, rights, privileges or obligations of employment. Nothing contained in this article shall be construed to limit, impair or affect the right of any public employee to the expression or communication of a view, grievance, complaint or opinion on any matter related to the conditions or compensation of public employment or their betterment, so long as the same does not interfere with the full, faithful and proper performance of the duties of employment.

4. "Bargaining agent" shall mean any lawful association, fraternal organization, labor organization, federation or council having as one of its purposes the improvement of wages, hours and other conditions of employment among employees of fire and police departments.
5. "Collective bargaining" shall mean the performance of the mutual obligation of the municipal employer or his designated representatives and the representative of the employees to meet at reasonable times, including meetings appropriately related to the budget-making process; to confer in good faith with respect to wages, hours and other conditions of employment, or the negotiation of an agreement, or any question arising thereunder; and to execute a written contract incorporating any agreement reached if requested by either party. Such obligation shall not, however, compel either party to agree to a proposal or require the making of a concession.
6. "Unfair labor practices" for the purpose of this article shall be deemed to include but not be limited to the following acts and conduct:

6a. Action by corporate authorities:

- (1) interfering with, restraining, intimidating or coercing employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed them by this article;
- (2) dominating or interfering with the formation, existence or administration of any employee organization or bargaining agent;
- (3) interfering in any manner whatsoever with the process of selection by fire fighters or police officers of their respective bargaining agents or attempting to influence, coerce or intimidate individuals in such selection;
- (4) discharging or otherwise disciplining or discriminating against a police officer or fire fighter because he has signed or filed any affidavit, petition or complaint or has given any information or testimony under this article or because of his election to be represented by the bargaining agent;
- (5) refusing to bargain collectively or discuss grievances in good faith with the designated bargaining agent with respect to any issue coming within the purview of this article; or
- (6) instituting or attempting to institute a lockout.

6b. Action by bargaining agent:

- (1) interfering with, restraining, intimidating or coercing employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed them by this article;
- (2) interfering with or attempting to coerce the corporate authorities in the selection of their representatives for the purposes of collective bargaining or the adjustment of grievances; or
- (3) refusing to bargain collectively or discuss grievances in good faith with the proper corporate authorities with respect to any issue coming within the purview of this article.

7. "Board" shall mean the Public Employees Relations Board.

#### **§ 51-103. Collective bargaining rights--Petition--Hearing--Elections**

- A. Firefighters and police officers in any municipality shall have the separate right to bargain collectively with their municipality and to be represented by a bargaining agent in such collective bargaining with respect to wages, salaries, hours, rates of pay, grievances, working conditions and all other terms and conditions of employment.
- B. Whenever, conformable to regulations that may be prescribed by the Public Employees Relations Board, herein created, a petition is filed by:
  1. A labor organization alleging that thirty percent (30%) of the firefighters or police officers in a municipality:
    - a. wish to be represented for collective bargaining by an exclusive employee representative, or
    - b. assert that the designated exclusive employee representative is no longer the representative of the majority of employees in the unit; or
  2. The employer alleging that one or more labor organizations has presented to it a claim to be recognized as the exclusive employee representative in an appropriate unit; the Board shall investigate the facts alleged therein and if it has reasonable cause to believe that a question of representation exists, it shall provide for an appropriate

hearing upon due notice. If the Board finds upon the record of such hearing that such a question of representation exists, it shall direct an election by secret ballot and shall certify the results thereof. The Board may also certify a labor organization as an exclusive employee representative if it determines that a free and untrammelled election cannot be conducted because of the employer's unfair labor practices.

- C. Only those labor organizations which have been designated by more than ten percent (10%) of the employees in the unit found to be appropriate shall be placed on the ballot. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the waiving of hearing by stipulation for the purpose of a consent election, in conformity with the rules and regulations of the Board.
- D. In order to assure to firefighters and police officers of any municipality the fullest freedom in exercising the rights guaranteed by this article, the Board shall decide in each case before it in which the issue is raised the unit appropriate for the purposes of collective bargaining, and shall consider such factors as community of interest, wages, hours and other working conditions of the employees involved, the history of collective bargaining, and the desires of the employees.
- E. An election shall not be directed in any bargaining unit or in any subdivision thereof within which, in the preceding twelve-month period, a valid election has been held. The Board shall determine who is eligible to vote in the election and shall establish rules governing the election. In any election where none of the choices on the ballot receives a majority, but a majority of all votes cast are for representation by some labor organization, a run-off election shall be conducted. A labor organization which receives the majority of the votes cast in an election shall be certified by the Board as the exclusive employee representative.

#### **§ 51-104. Public Employees Relations Board**

- A. There is hereby re-created, to continue until July 1, 2008, in accordance with the provisions of the Oklahoma Sunset Law, Section 3901 et seq. of Title 74, the Public Employees Relations Board, which shall be composed of three (3) members appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be designated as Chairman. The Chairman shall be appointed for a term of five (5) years, commencing from July 1, 1972. The other members shall be appointed for terms of one (1) and three (3) years, respectively, from July 1, 1972, but their successors shall be appointed for terms of five (5) years. Two members of the Board shall constitute a quorum. Any individual chosen to fill a vacancy on the Board shall be appointed only for the unexpired term. The Chairman and members of the Board shall not receive a salary but shall receive compensation in lieu of expenses in the amount of Fifty Dollars (\$50.00) per day for any meeting or the conduct of official duties, whether acting singly or collectively.
- B. To accomplish the objectives and to perform the duties prescribed by this article, the Board may subpoena witnesses, issue subpoenas to require the production of books, papers, records, and documents which may be needed as evidence of any matter under inquiry, and administer oaths and affirmations. In cases of neglect or refusal to obey a subpoena issued to any person, the district court of the county in which the investigations or the public hearings are taking place, upon application by the Board, may issue an order requiring such person to appear before the Board and produce evidence about the matter under investigation. A failure to obey such order may be punished by the court as a contempt.
- C. Any subpoena, notice of hearing, or other process or notice of the Board issued under the provisions of this article may be served personally, by registered mail, or by leaving a copy at the principal office of the person required to be served. A return made and verified by the individual making such service and setting forth the manner of such service is proof of service, and a returned post office receipt, when registered or certified mail is used, is proof of service.
- D. The Board shall adopt, promulgate, amend, or rescind such rules as it deems necessary to carry out the provisions of this article. Public hearings shall be held by the Board on any proposed rule of general applicability designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe policy, procedure or practice requirements under the provisions of this article and on any proposed change to such existing rule. Reasonable notice shall be given prior to such hearings, which shall include the time, place, and nature of such hearing and the terms or substance of the proposed rule or the changes to such rule.

#### **§ 51-104a. Compensation of Employees—Processing of Claims**

The Office of Public Affairs, in cooperation with the Chairman of the Public Employees Relations Board, is authorized to appoint and fix the duties and compensation of employees necessary to perform the responsibilities imposed upon the Public Employees Relations Board by law. The Office of Public Affairs is authorized to initiate or accept and process

claims for personal services, consulting services, supplies, equipment, and other operating expenditures essential to the accomplishment of the duties imposed upon the Public Employees Relations Board by law.

**§ 51-104b. Prevention of Unfair Labor Practice**

- A. The Public Employees Relations Board is empowered, as hereinafter provided, to prevent any person, including bargaining agent and corporate authorities, from engaging in any unfair labor practice as defined herein.
- B. Whenever it is charged that any person has engaged in or is engaging in any such unfair labor practice, the Board shall have the power to issue and cause to be served upon such person a complaint stating the charges in that respect, and containing a notice of hearing before the Board, at a place therein fixed, not less than five (5) days after the serving of said complaint. The person so complained of shall have the right to file an answer and to appear and give testimony at the time and place fixed in the complaint. In the discretion of the Board, any other person may be allowed to intervene in such proceeding.
- C. If upon the preponderance of the testimony taken the Board shall be of the opinion that the person named in the complaint has engaged in or is engaging in any such unfair labor practice, then the Board shall state its findings of fact and shall issue and cause to be served on such person an order requiring such person to cease and desist from such unfair labor practice. Such order may further require such person to make reports from time to time showing the extent to which it has complied with the order. If upon the preponderance of the testimony taken the Board shall not be of the opinion that the person served in the complaint has engaged in or is engaging in any such unfair labor practice, then the Board shall state its findings of fact and shall issue an order dismissing the complaint.
- D. The Board, or any interested party, shall have the power to petition the district court, wherein the unfair labor practice in question occurred, for the enforcement of such order and for appropriate temporary relief of restraining order.

**§ 51-105. Meet and confer—Agreements**

It shall be the obligation of the municipality, acting through its corporate authorities, to meet at reasonable times and confer in good faith with the representatives of the fire fighters or police officers within ten (10) days after receipt of written notice from said bargaining agent requesting a meeting for collective bargaining purposes. The obligation shall include the duty to cause any collective bargaining agreement resulting from negotiations to be reduced to a written agreement, the term of which shall not exceed one (1) year; provided, any such agreement shall continue from year to year and be automatically extended for one-year terms unless written notice of request for bargaining is given by either the municipal authorities or the bargaining agent of the fire fighters or police officers at least thirty (30) days before the anniversary date of such negotiated agreement. Within ten (10) days of receipt of such notice by the other party, a conference shall be scheduled for the purposes of collective bargaining, and until a new agreement is reached, the currently existing written agreement shall not expire and shall continue in full force and effect.

**§ 51-106. Arbitration**

In the event that the bargaining agent and the corporate authorities are unable, within thirty (30) days from and including the date of the first meeting, to reach an agreement on a contract, any and all unresolved issues shall be submitted to arbitration, upon request of either party.

**§ 51-107. Arbitrators—Selection**

Within five (5) days from the date of the request for arbitration referred to in Section 51-106 of this title, the bargaining agent and the corporate authorities shall each select and name one arbitrator and shall immediately thereafter notify each other in writing of the name and address of the person so selected. The two arbitrators so selected and named shall, within five (5) days from and after the expiration of the five-day period hereinabove mentioned, agree upon and select a third arbitrator. If, on the expiration of the period allowed therefor, the arbitrators are unable to agree upon the selection of a third arbitrator, the bargaining agent and the corporate authorities shall request the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to provide a list of five arbitrators. Within five (5) days after receipt of the list of arbitrators from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the two arbitrators already selected shall alternately strike the name of one arbitrator from the list of five until one name remains, with the employer making the first strike from said list. The third arbitrator, whether selected as a result of an agreement between the two arbitrators previously selected or selected from the list provided by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, shall act as chairman of the arbitration board.

**§ 51-108. Hearing procedures—Special municipal elections—Effective date of agreements**

- A.**
1. The arbitration board acting through its chair shall call a hearing to be held within ten (10) days after the date of the appointment of the chair and shall, acting through its chair, give at least seven (7) days' notice in writing to each of the other two arbitrators, the bargaining agent and the corporate authorities of the time and place of such hearing.
  2. At least seven (7) days before the date of the hearing the corporate authorities and the bargaining agent shall submit to each other and to the arbitration board members a written arbitration statement listing all contract terms which the parties have resolved and all contract issues which are unresolved. Each arbitration statement shall also include a final offer on each unresolved issue. The terms and offers contained in the arbitration statements shall be known collectively as each party's last best offer.
  3. The hearing shall be informal and the rules of evidence prevailing in judicial proceedings shall not be binding. Any and all documentary evidence and other data deemed relevant by the arbitrators may be received in evidence. The arbitrators shall have the power to administer oaths and to require by subpoena the attendance and testimony of witnesses, the production of books, records, and other evidence relative or pertinent to the issues presented to them for determination. A hearing shall be concluded within twenty (20) days from the time of commencement.
  4. Within seven (7) days after the conclusion of the hearing, a majority of the arbitration board members shall select one of the two last best offers as the contract of the parties. The criteria to be used by the board in determining which offer to select shall be limited to paragraphs 1 through 5 of Section 51-109 of this title. The arbitration board may not modify, add to or delete from the last best offer of either party. Written notice of the selection decision shall be mailed or delivered to the bargaining agent and the corporate authorities.
- B.** If the city's last best offer is not selected by the arbitration board, that party may submit the offers which the parties submitted to the arbitration board to the voters of the municipality for their selection by requesting a special election for that purpose. The request for an election must be filed with the clerk of the municipality within ten (10) days of the date of the written decision of the arbitration board. Written notice of the filing of the request shall be given to the bargaining agent. If a request for an election is not filed in a timely manner, the board's selection decision shall be final, and the last best offer it selected shall constitute the agreement of the parties.
- C.** Upon receiving a request for an election pursuant to the provisions of this section, the clerk shall notify the mayor and governing body of the request. Within ten (10) days of such notification the municipal authorities shall call for a special election. The election shall be governed by the state laws on special municipal elections. Only residents of the municipality shall be eligible to vote in said election. The ballot shall inform the voters that they must choose either the last best offer of the bargaining agent or the last best offer of the corporate authorities. Within twenty (20) days of the date of the decision to call for the election, the municipal authorities and the bargaining agent shall agree on a ballot. If no agreement is reached within that time, each party shall present a proposed ballot to the arbitration board. The parties shall present their ballot to the board no later than seven (7) days after the aforementioned twenty-day period. The board shall consider the proposed ballots and shall select one or the other within seven (7) days of the date of receipt of the parties' proposed ballots. The last best offer receiving a majority of the votes shall become the agreement of the parties.
- D.** Concerning issues relating to money, such ballot shall clearly state the total dollar amount of the offer from the corporate authority and the total dollar amount of the offer from the bargaining agent. Such ballot shall also disclose the percentage of increase or decrease both offers have over or under the last contract of the two parties.
- E.** Agreements which are reached as a result of selection by the arbitration board or by election shall be effective on the first day of the fiscal year involved regardless of the date of the final selection.

**§ 51-109. Factors to be considered**

The arbitrators shall conduct the hearings and render their decision upon the basis of a prompt, peaceful and just settlement of all submitted disputes between the firefighters or police officers and the corporate authorities. The factors, among others, to be given weight by the arbitrators in arriving at a decision shall include:

1. Comparison of wage rates, insurance, retirement, other fringe benefits or hourly conditions of employment of the fire department or police department in question with prevailing wage rates or hourly conditions of employment of skilled employees of the building trades and industry in the local operating area involved;
2. Comparison of wage rates, insurance, retirement, other fringe benefits or hourly conditions of employment of the fire department or police department in question with wage rates or hourly conditions of employment maintained for the same or similar work of employees exhibiting like or similar skills under the same or similar working conditions in the local operating area involved;

3. Comparison of wage rates, insurance, retirement, other fringe benefits or hourly conditions of employment of the fire department or police department in question with wage rates or hourly conditions of employment of fire departments or police departments in cities, towns or other political subdivisions of comparable size and economic status both within and without the State of Oklahoma;
4. Interest and welfare of the public and revenues available to the municipality; or
5. Comparison of peculiarities of employment in regard to other trades or professions, including specifically:
  - a. hazards of employment,
  - b. physical qualifications,
  - c. educational qualifications,
  - d. mental qualifications, and
  - e. job training and skills.

**§ 51-110. Fees and Expenses**

Fees and necessary expenses of the arbitrator selected by the bargaining agent and the arbitrator selected by the corporate authorities shall be borne by the bargaining agent and the corporate authorities respectively. The reasonable fees and necessary expenses of the third arbitrator shall be borne equally by the bargaining agent and corporate authorities.

**§ 51-111. Agreements—Contents**

Any agreement actually negotiated between the bargaining agent and the corporate authorities either before or within thirty (30) days after arbitration shall constitute the collective bargaining contract governing fire fighters or police officers in the municipality for the period stated therein; provided that such period shall not exceed one (1) year. Any collective bargaining agreement negotiated under the terms and provisions of this article shall specifically provide that the fire fighters or police officers who are subject to its terms shall have no right to engage in any work stoppage, slowdown or strike, the consideration for such provision being the right to a resolution of disputed questions. All rules, regulations, fiscal procedures, working conditions, departmental practices and manner of conducting the operation and administration of fire departments and police departments currently in effect on the effective date of any negotiated agreement shall be deemed a part of said agreement unless and except as modified or changed by the specific terms of such agreement. Every such agreement shall contain a clause establishing arbitration procedures for the immediate and speedy resolution and determination of any dispute which may arise involving the interpretation or application of any of the provisions of such agreement or the actions of any of the parties thereunder. In the absence of such negotiated procedure such dispute may be submitted to arbitration in accordance with the provisions of Sections 51-107 through 51-110 of this title, except that the arbitration board shall be convened within ten (10) days after demand therefore by the bargaining agent upon the corporate authority or authorities. In such case the arbitration board's determination shall be final.

**§ 51-112. Matters requiring appropriation of moneys—Notice**

The district court for the district in which a dispute arose or in which a majority of the affected employees reside may review an award of the arbitrator or an award of an arbitrator in a grievance arbitration, when the arbitrator was without or exceeded his or her jurisdiction; the order is not supported by competent, material and substantial evidence on the whole record; or the order was procured by fraud, collusion or other similar and unlawful means. The pendency of a proceeding for review shall not automatically stay the order of the arbitrator.

**§ 51-113. Penalties**

It shall be unlawful for any collective bargaining representative or member of a paid fire department or police department to strike or engage in any work stoppage; and it shall further be unlawful for any official, executive, administrator, manager, or member of a governing body exercising the authority to fix and determine the salaries, hours of work, and employment conditions of any paid fire or police department of a municipality in this state to fail to bargain in good faith in accordance with the provisions of this article. Any person or persons guilty of violating the provisions of this article shall be fined not less than Ten Dollars (\$10.00) nor more than One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) for such offense, and each day during which such violation occurs or continues shall constitute a separate offense, and any such conviction shall be grounds for immediate dismissal from public employment, for any persons so employed.