



Campaign to Organize Graduate Students
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The State of the Union - It's Time to ORGANIZE!
A Statement from the Membership of UE Local 896 - COGS
December 10, 2016

As representatives of the interests of the graduate student community, we must publicly condemn the vitriol we have seen during and after the election cycle. We stand with our brothers and sisters who are Black, Latino, Muslim, LGBTQ, Disabled, or members of any other marginalized group. The violence and hatred we have seen directed at these individuals both around the country, [in Iowa City](#), and [on our campus](#) is absolutely unacceptable. COGS affirms the value of each of its members and remains committed to ensuring all of our members feel at home in our community. And we endorse the movement to make the University of Iowa a sanctuary campus. Our international students are our brothers and sisters and must feel safe and at home on our campus.

To protect our comrades, we must organize to fight against hate and injustice. We must continue to fight together, as one, for and with our friends and neighbors. And our efforts must not stop there. The very existence of our union, and with it the security and protections it provides, is in peril. Reporters at the [Des Moines Register](#) asked Terry Branstad on November 13 if Iowans should expect legislation aimed at altering our collective bargaining rights. He responded at that time that it was too early to tell. Just eight days later, however, Branstad affirmed his intent to [remove health insurance](#) as a mandatory topic of bargaining. If this happens, then the Iowa Board of Regents could take away our health insurance and leave us with no legal recourse. There is no question that such action would harm the graduate student community COGS represents.

The threat to collective bargaining and vital parts of the COGS contract, including health insurance, is not an empty threat. In recent negotiations, unionized state workers were offered a meager 1% salary increase and [no insurance proposal whatsoever](#). In the mere three weeks since Republicans took control of the Iowa Senate, the attack on collective bargaining rights is already underway. With Iowa Republicans now controlling the governorship, the House, and the Senate, we face the possibility that our rights as a union could be so restricted as to leave us powerless to effectively represent ourselves. We may ultimately lose our union altogether. Just look at [what happened in Wisconsin](#).

The only way to prevent this disastrous outcome is to ORGANIZE. Our legal status gives us certain rights, but our POWER is in our MEMBERS. There are thousands of graduate students at the University of Iowa, and the University could not function without us. We are valuable. We deserve better.

So we must come together! Join us in power: join your voice with those of your fellow graduate students. We must remind the administrators and the Board of Regents that the University works because WE DO.