

Candidate Statement: Eric Hoyt

For: GEO Steering Committee Member At-Large:

I first got involved in labor activism as a freshman at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2007. I spent the next several years organizing with the Student Labor Action working overtime with a group of very dedicated and energized students to leverage our university's apparel contracts to defend workers rights in the garment factories that produced our Bucky Badger clothing sold in our campus bookstore and beyond. We also fought for and won, in solidarity with workers on our campus, a campus living and a policy to eliminate abuse of limited term employees. In 2011 our student group organized a campus walk-out and the start of the Capitol occupation.

In WI, I was given an education on the power even a small group of organized and dedicated activists can have when committed to grass-roots organizing. That's the positive vision that I think we need to bring to GEO, and that's why I'd like to continue one more year as an elected leader of the GEO membership.

I learned something during the 2011 protest: Even union locals that had amazing stewards and a progressive history had nonetheless been hampered by years of top-down leadership. Progressive and rank-and-file oriented stewards, when push came to shove, couldn't effectively organize a response to the anti-union legislation of Governor Walker because they didn't have current membership contact information. Unlike the teachers' union, which led a broad bottom-up fight against Walker's bill, many other unions no longer had the necessary infrastructure: phone-trees to mobilize quick action, member contact info, etc. GEO, despite important efforts to the contrary this past year, generally is in this position of being hollowed out, and I see as our immediate task building this infrastructure for our union for the next fight.