

The Benefit of a Union Workplace

Sometimes we need to just break it down to numbers - the numerical benefits of a Unionized workplace vs. the cost of Union Dues. We will do our best to provide an overview using historical data from other labor organizations and what we see as an estimate of where things will go. Nothing is set in stone, but we've got to start somewhere!

Wages

Unions negotiate with employers to establish collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) that outline the terms and conditions of employment. These agreements often include provisions related to wages, benefits, overtime pay, pay scales, and other monetary considerations. By negotiating as a unified group, workers can have more influence and bargaining power, leading to improved wages. Studies have shown that union members tend to earn higher wages, on average, than their non-union counterparts in similar positions. This wage premium can be attributed to the collective bargaining power of the union, which can secure better compensation packages and more favorable pay structures.

Beyond better pay and better working conditions, Unions strive to establish minimum wage standards through negotiations. By setting wage floors in their collective bargaining agreements, unions ensure that all workers receive fair compensation for their labor, preventing the exploitation of workers and maintaining a level playing field. This also comes into play when addressing pay equity concerns. They advocate for equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender, race, or other protected characteristics. Unions work towards eliminating wage gaps and ensuring that workers are compensated fairly and without discrimination.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2018 that non-union workers in the same or similar occupation earned 80% of the weekly wages when compared to their Union counterparts (https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/union2_01192018.pdf).

The Economic Policy Institute also estimates that union workers earn 11.2% more than their non-union counterparts. Not only that, but when an area or profession is broadly unionized, there is "spillover" and this benefits non-union workers in a similar position by establishing a higher bar that is required to recruit the talent necessary for the positions ([Why unions are good for workers—especially in a crisis like COVID-19: 12 policies that would boost worker rights, safety, and wages | Economic Policy Institute](#)). This means that our efforts will benefit everyone in the profession, even if circumstances, personally held beliefs or other situations preclude them from joining a Union.

One last thing to mention – Unions also help lessen the wage gaps for women, people of color and other minorities who are amazing parts of our community and profession!

Worker Protection

A union plays a crucial role in protecting due process for its members within the workplace. Due process refers to the fair and equitable treatment of individuals when their rights, job security, or disciplinary actions are at stake. We don't plan to go to work and make an egregious error, but without the right to due process, we may never be able to defend ourselves.

Here's some examples of how a union safeguards due process:

- **Representation:** A union provides representation and support to its members during disciplinary actions, investigations, or grievance procedures. Union representatives, often referred to as stewards or advocates, ensure that workers have someone knowledgeable and experienced by their side when engaging with management or addressing concerns.
- **Protection from Unjust Treatment:** Unions protect their members from unjust treatment by advocating for fair policies, procedures, and workplace rules. They work to ensure that employees are not subject to arbitrary or discriminatory actions that violate their due process rights. Unions also assist in addressing issues related to workplace harassment, discrimination, and improper treatment.
- **Grievance Procedures:** Unions establish formal grievance procedures that outline the steps to address workplace disputes or violations of rights. These procedures typically involve a structured process where the union representative works closely with the affected member to investigate, document, and present their case. The union ensures that the due process is followed, and the member's rights are protected throughout the procedure. This can sometimes include processes like mediation or arbitration. These processes provide an additional layer of protection and impartiality to ensure due process.
- **Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs):** Unions negotiate CBAs with employers that contain provisions safeguarding due process rights. These agreements outline the disciplinary procedures, employee rights, job security, and other relevant aspects. By establishing clear guidelines and procedures, CBAs ensure that workers are treated fairly and consistently when facing disciplinary action or other employment-related matters.
- **Training and Education:** Unions often provide training and education to their members about their rights, responsibilities, and the due process procedures available to them. By empowering workers with knowledge and understanding, unions enable them to navigate workplace challenges effectively and assert their due process rights.

By actively participating in the negotiation of employment terms, representing workers during disputes, and advocating for fair treatment, unions serve as a vital safeguard for due process in the workplace. They help to create a more equitable and just working environment where employees' rights are respected and protected.

You may also hear people mention that a Union prevents you from talking to your manager, or puts a "middle-man" in between you and leadership. Lets examine that myth a bit more on this next page:

Read more about [Union Busting](#) & Anti-Union tactics [here](#)
Benefits

We all have benefits, but a significantly higher percentage of Union workers have benefits compared to non-Union workers ([Union workers more likely than nonunion workers to have healthcare benefits in 2019 : The Economics Daily: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). On top of that, those who are in Union positions within the same holding company as we are have significantly different benefits available to them. Examples include Medical and Dental coverage at a lower cost and a lower deductible, 100% match for deferred compensation vs. our 50%.

The key to these benefits is the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Union negotiations and the creation of a CBA allows workers to ask for better benefits at a lower cost; and in general the bargaining power of a Union supports that outcome!

Turnover

The Economic Policy Institute found that union workforces had lower rates of turnover (voluntary separation). In addition, they found that due to this lower attrition, employers had greater incentive to invest in employee training and education! The reduced turnover and economic savings achieved for the employer creates more opportunities to reinvest in the company and hopefully the workforce! ([How Unions Can Help Restore the Middle Class | Economic Policy Institute](#))

Union Dues

These are generally 1-2% of base annual salary, payable on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. Sometimes it is the equivalent of 2 hours of pay. Think of just the wage increase vs. cost of Dues! Union Dues are generally used for the following:

- Union representation
- Collective bargaining process
- Training for Business Agents and Job Stewards
- Dispatch services
- Legal protection for members
- Organizing costs
- Administration

But lets do a math exercise to see what bargaining and negotiation creates. If you make \$40/hour then your base pay for a 40 hour week (2,080 hours yearly) is \$83,200. Imagine a flat 10% bump in base wages to a new annual base pay of \$91,520 (an increase of \$8,320). The annual union dues, if we go with the usual of 1% would be \$35.20 per biweekly pay check (\$912.50 annually).

When looking at everything listed above, in addition to wages, don't you think that that amount is small potatoes compared to the benefits gained?