

# Did You Know?

*What is a Union? Why should people join?*

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People who aren't in a union or don't know anyone in a trade or labor union are often unsure what labor unions do and why someone would join.

## WHAT IS A UNION?

Labor unions strive to improve the lives of all working families – to bring economic justice to the workplace and social justice to our nation.

It's all about making sure working families get what they collectively deserve. A labor union or trade union is an organized group of workers who unite to make decisions about conditions affecting their work.

- work hours,
- benefits – including retirement plans, health insurance, vacation and sick leave, tuition reimbursement, etc.,
- working conditions,
- workplace health and safety,
- ways to balance work and family,
- the best ways to get work completed, and
- other work-related issues.

*\* (Only DC government AFGE members are permitted to bargain over pay, wages and/or benefits)*

## WHO ARE UNION MEMBERS?

There are over 60 unions representing over 14 million workers throughout the country. No matter what work you do, there's a union that represents your work. Teachers and miners, firefighters and farm workers, bakers and engineers, pilots and public employees, doctors and nurses, patients and plumbers, bus drivers, office workers and computer professionals are all union members.

Another advantage of belonging to a union is that members earn 30% more than non-union workers. And if you're a union worker, you are also much more likely to have health and pension benefits.

In addition, unions give workers like you a strong collective voice that's heard in government. Unions represent workers in talks with lawmakers, and remind politicians that working families voted them into office.

## BENEFITS OF BELONGING TO A UNION

One of the big reasons workers join a union is to ensure fair treatment in the workplace. As a union member, people usually\* have a collective voice regarding:

Some of the benefits – like the weekend – that workers take for granted today were initially provided by unions.

- pay & wages,

Resources:

- UnionPlus.org. <http://www.unionplus.org/about/labor-unions/36-reasons-thank-union>. 7/25/2012

