

Southeast Working-Class Task Force Aug/Sept 2017 Newsletter #1

How today's unions help working people Giving workers the power to improve their jobs and unrig the economy

A new report by the Economic Policy Institute provides data on union coverage, activities, and impacts. This report helps explain how unions fit into the economy today; how they affect workers, communities, occupations and industries, and the country at large; and why collective bargaining is essential for a fair and prosperous economy and a vibrant democracy. It also describes how decades of anti-union campaigns and policies have made it much harder for working people to use their collective voice to sustain their standard of living.

Here are examples of the points of the report:

- “Collective bargaining” is how working people gain a voice at work and the power to shape their working lives
- Union workers are diverse, just like America
- Unions represent workers of all levels of education
- Union workers hail from a variety of sectors, but the biggest share work in education or health services
- Unions are most widespread in public administration and transportation industries
- Unions are thriving in diverse workplaces—including ‘new economy’ workplaces
- Unions strengthen democracy by giving workers a voice in policy debates
- Unions reduce inequality and are essential for low- and middle-wage workers’ ability to obtain a fair share of economic growth
- Unions raise wages for both union and nonunion workers
- Unions help raise wages for women and lessen racial wage gaps
- Unions improve the health and safety practices of workplaces
- Unions support strong families with better benefits and due process
- Unions are good for workers’ retirement security
- Unions create a path to sharing knowledge and solving problems
- Workers still want unions but are being thwarted by aggressive campaigns and lobbying that have eroded private sector union membership
- Employers often fight unionizing efforts with aggression and intimidation, using legal and illegal tactics
- Corporate lobbyists push laws—misleadingly called ‘right-to-work’ laws—that seek to defund private-sector unions
- Corporate lobbies and allied lawmakers are dismantling the rights of public-sector union workers Attacks on public sector collective bargaining are playing out in the courts

Conclusion: Unions are essential to a fair economy and a vibrant democracy.

See the full report at <http://www.epi.org/publication/how-todays-unions-help-working-people-giving-workers-the-power-to-improve-their-jobs-and-unrig-the-economy/>

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The task force meets the 3rd Wed. of the month at 6:30 on the 2nd floor at 901 Shelby St.