

Union Membership Remains Low Despite Administration's Call on Workers to Join

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According to Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez, a recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) report is evidence “that belonging to a union makes a powerful difference in people’s lives, providing greater economic security and helping them punch their ticket to the middle class” but data indicates union membership remains low.

Although the January 23rd report shows union members earn more money than those not in a union, it also notes that factors unrelated to union membership may have a significant impact on the actual earnings of workers.

The report states, “[i]n addition to coverage by a collective bargaining agreement, this earnings difference reflects a variety of influences, includ[ing] variations in the distributions of union members and nonunion employees by occupation, industry, age, firm size or geographic region.”

The same report shows that the percentage of workers, both public and private, who were members of unions in 2014 was 11.1% – down 0.2% from 2013. Among public sector workers, 35.7% were members of unions, while only 6.6% of private sector workers were unionized. The private sector union membership rate reflects a 0.1% decline from 2013. Thus, the 2014 statistics show, at best, tepid support for union representation. The 2014 BLS data on the rate of union membership reflect nothing more than the status quo – a tiny fraction of American workers in the private sector, and a minority overall, have chosen to become members of a union.

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