

## Fuzzy Math May Be Basis For Labor Secretary's Claim That Union Workers Earn More, Analysis Asserts

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“Join the union, and you’ll make more money!”

It’s a common refrain for unions trying to sell employees on the virtues of union representation. And now, **Labor Secretary Thomas Perez** has joined the chorus, authoring a blog post entitled, “Stronger Together: Your Voice in the Workplace Matters,” in which he claims that workers represented by unions earn \$200 more weekly than non-union workers. He wrote:

“According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median weekly earnings for union members last year were \$200 a week more than for non-union workers. That’s not pocket change — \$200 a week is the difference between paying the bills and worrying about whether the lights will go out.”

However, Diana Furchtgott-Roth of *MarketWatch* in her September 2, 2015 article, “Opinion: Workers don’t do better in unions,” disputes Secretary Perez’s claim. In brief, she notes the following

- Fact: 40% of all union workers are government employees. Perez’s data does not separate public and private sector workers. This is significant because “union members are more concentrated in higher-paying” public sector jobs, .
- Fact: Union workers tend to be older, and thus earn more money as a result of their seniority
- Fact: More union workers are located in the Northeast where wages are higher to account for the higher cost of living. A worker in Georgia earns less than one in New York, but the cost of living is less there.

- Fact: With the exception of government workers, jobs in unionized industries are shrinking. Employment in the construction industry, for example, which has a higher percentage of unionized workers, has declined by 13% in the past ten years.
- Fact: In the professional and business services industry, where there is job growth, union workers earn less—an average of \$113/week less.

That union workers earn more than their non-union counterparts may be the “conventional wisdom” in some parts, but it may be a misconception – one that unions don’t hesitate to perpetuate. Organizations whose employees are presented with a union claim that union representation inevitably will increase their “bottom line” may find this analysis helpful in debunking that myth.

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