

Unions Are Good for America

Unions are America's way of giving workers a voice on the job, in the economy and in the political process

■ **A greater share of the wealth workers create.** At a time when the gap between the wealthy and everyone else is growing, unions ensure that working Americans are fairly rewarded for their hard work. Union workers earn an average \$155 (or 33 percent) more each week than non-union workers earn.

■ **A remedy for discrimination in the workplace.** Unions help narrow the wage gap for women and people of color. Compared with the paychecks of their non-union counterparts, union women earn 38 percent more, African American union members earn 42 percent more and Latino union members earn 52 percent more.

■ **Health care, retirement and job security for working families.** Compared with only 74 percent of non-union workers, 85 percent of union members receive health coverage on the job. A full 87 percent of union members earn pension benefits and 79 percent are covered by guaranteed "defined-benefit" pension plans; by comparison, 78 percent of non-union workers earn pensions and only 44 percent are covered by the far superior defined-benefit plans. Union members have more secure jobs: six in 10 of them have been with the same employer for 10 years or more, compared to three in 10 non-union workers.

■ **Higher productivity and thriving businesses.** Studies have proven that, by allowing workers to have input on the job and lowering turnover rates, unions enhance efficiency and productivity in the workplace. For example, unions boost productivity 19 to 24 percent in manufacturing, 17 to 38 percent in construction and up to 16 percent in hospitals.

■ **Stronger communities.** The higher incomes of union members translate into more consumer purchases, healthier local economies, stronger tax bases, better schools and infrastructures and higher living standards for the entire community.

■ **Laws and policies that work for working families.** Historically, unions have fought for protections such as the 40-hour work week, Social Security, equal opportunity and child labor laws. Unions helped win passage of the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act allowing workers to take time off to care for their families. In 1996, unions increased the minimum wage, protected job safety laws, and prevented deep cuts in Medicare, education and pensions.

■ **Enforcement of job safety, civil rights and other laws.** As well as bargaining for safe workplaces, family-friendly policies and anti-discrimination provisions, unions provide a mechanism for enforcing rules and regulations designed to protect workers on the job.