

UNION MEMBERSHIP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **If everyone is covered by the contract, why doesn't everyone have to belong to the union?**

The law for public sector in Minnesota (Public Employee Labor Relations Law also known as PELRA, Chapter 179.A) allows the Exclusive Representation (the Union) to assess a "fair share" fee. It allows for people to choose not to join but requires they pay a fee to cover the cost of bargaining and enforcing the contract but excludes the cost of benefits financed through the dues that are available only to members.

2. **How much is the fee?**

The fee cannot be more than 85% of the full amount of dues that is determined by the Local Union. The exact amount is calculated based on how the local union spends its money. If it spends 20% of its treasury on member only activities or services, it can only assess 80% of its dues to non-members. Check with an officer of your local union to determine the exact amount.

3. **Is Minnesota different from other states?**

When Congress passed a law giving collective bargaining rights to private sector employees (National Labor Relations Act of 1935), it allowed the states to determine what rights would be given to its public employees. Some states have passed legislation and others have granted rights through a governor's executive order. Some public employees have since lost their right to bargain when new governors were elected. Some states have a fair share fee and some do not while some public employees in this country still do not have the right to bargain contracts.

4. **I don't want to be involved in the union. Does it really make a difference if I sign a card?**

Yes!! It is in your self interest. First, all workers benefit, including non-union represented workers when we are able bargain better contracts. Union members make 29% more than non-union workers and are 35% more likely to have health benefits through their jobs. Second, it is good for the economy when we all do better.

5. **How do I know if I am a member or just a fee payer?**

Ask your local union steward. If you don't know who that is, contact a local union officer. If you don't know who that is, contact AFSCME Council 65 at 218-885-3242 and ask for a membership card.



WHY SHOULD I SIGN A MEMBERSHIP CARD?

(Public Sector)

Non-Member	Member	Explanation
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Benefits

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Contract Benefits

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Federal law and state law require that a union negotiate for all the people in the defined bargaining unit. That means that all members and non-members receive the benefits of the collective bargaining agreement.

Representation

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Also mandated by law, every worker in the bargaining unit receives representation if the employer violates the collective bargaining agreement.

Right to Participate in the Organization

Only members have a voice in decisions that are made by the local union. The membership is the highest decision making body and determines how dues money is spent and which issues will be bargained.

Special Programs

Members can participate in the AFSCME Advantage Plan. This is a members-only program that provides product discounts, home mortgage programs, insurance and scholarships.

Some Local Union Benefits

Some local unions hold events or transmit communications only to members. For example, a local union might sponsor a family picnic for members only or send its newsletter only to members. Practices vary by local union.

Leadership Opportunities

The Union is always looking for strong leadership. You can grow and learn by becoming active in the union and building the strength of the organization. Learn leadership skills in negotiations, representation, political action and governance.

Greater Power!

The most important reason to sign a card is that we increase our power. The Union's membership levels are a quantifiable measure of our power. When our membership is high, we get better contracts and we all benefit.