

# Make an informed decision.

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Union as a Business



**The union person said that in this union, the members decide how the dues are spent and how much the dues will be.**

**Answer: NOT THE WHOLE TRUTH.** Check this union's constitution and bylaws. Typically union members don't have any direct control over how their dues are spent. All financial decisions are usually made by executive staff and officers, many of whom are appointed, not elected. When members do have any say, it's generally only through a delegate or executive board.

Rules on dues are usually written into a union's constitution or a local's bylaws. There are usually rules about minimums, special assessments, dues increases and paying dues on time. Members rarely determine their own dues and most often do not vote directly on dues increases or assessments.



**The union representative told me this union was gaining members not losing them. Doesn't that mean this is a union people want to join?**

**Answer: Get all the facts.** Most unions have been losing members for years. Of the rest, there are a number of reasons a union could appear to be gaining members. A union may take over smaller unions or merge several failing locals together into one. The union may be getting new members but in industries that have nothing to do with yours. Or the union may count members using a different method that might make it seem to be growing when it's not. The bottom line is that union membership has been falling in the US for decades.

Certainly if a union is losing members that is not a good sign; it might mean the union is forced to make decisions to balance the books, not best serve the members, or it could mean the union will soon need to raise dues.



**The organizer told us we are the union. If we don't like how this union is run we'll just fix it!**

**Answer: Good luck with that.** Union staff members, like the business rep who will handle your grievances and negotiate your contract, do not answer to members, they answer to union executives. As union members you will not have your own keys to the union hall, or free access to the union's back offices, or the power to hire and fire union staff. You won't even have the power to sign your own union contract. You may think you will be able to just fix a bad union – know in advance that deck is likely stacked against you.



**The union must be good for us or management wouldn't be fighting so hard for us not to have a union.**

**Answer:** Unions often don't live up to the promises they make to employees, which is reason enough to oppose them. But unions also saddle companies with an inefficient process for dealing with the rapid pace of change in today's economic environment. Unions thrive on conflict and often disrupt the team atmosphere in a company. They do nothing to make a company more competitive and can often make a company less competitive. Companies don't oppose unions because they fear they will help employees. Companies oppose unions because fear the union is likely to hurt BOTH the company AND employees.



**The union organizer warned us you'd say a lot of bad things about the union. Why should we believe you?**

**Answer:** Don't blindly believe either side. GET THE FACTS FOR YOURSELF. Read. Talk. Challenge both sides. Make an informed decision because you trust yourself to make up your own mind.