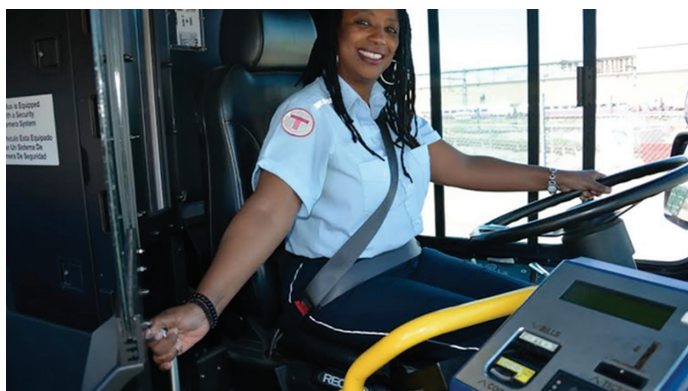




Building Worker Power

As the proportion of wealth controlled by just a few families in the United States has soared over the past three decades, working people are feeling the pinch.¹ A 2025 Gallop poll found that 68% of Americans say that they approve of labor unions, perhaps in part due to this growing inequality.² People have good reason to support the labor movement: studies show that union workers earn 12% more than their non-union peers and that unions help narrow gender and race wage gaps.³ Union members make a positive fiscal impact on state budgets because they earn more income, pay more taxes, and are much less likely to rely on government health care or other benefits.⁴

Whether they are bus drivers, social workers, or firefighters, public-sector workers are the backbone of effective government service, and they deserve the economic security that a union job provides. However, over the past 20 years, we have seen many states chip away at public



sector workers’ collective bargaining rights. By banning dues deduction and removing subjects from the bargaining table at public-sector properties, states are attacking ATU members’ rights to bargain. That is why ATU supports the expansion of full collective bargaining rights for all public sector workers and protecting those rights where they already exist. Public-sector workers also deserve the right to strike, to make sure that employers bargain in good faith. Finally, state legislatures should strengthen communication between unions and their members by requiring public employers to provide up-to-date member lists and contact information. States must ensure that people who work in public service have all the labor rights that private-sector workers enjoy.

In the private sector, ATU supports the repeal of misleadingly named “right-to-work” laws, which are designed to diminish union power in the workplace. These policies erode job quality and have not been shown to increase job growth. In fact, workers in “right-to-work” states are paid 3.2% less than similar workers in other states, roughly a

1 Chuck Collins and Omar Ocampo, “Billionaire Wealth Concentration Is Even Worse than You Imagine,” *Inequality.org*, Sept. 30, 2025, <https://inequality.org/article/billionaire-wealth-concentration-is-even-worse-than-you-imagine/>.

2 Megan Brennan, “Labor Union Approval Relatively Steady at 68% in U.S.,” *Gallup News*, Aug. 28, 2025, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/694472/labor-union-approval-relatively-steady.aspx>.

3 Celine McNicholas, Margaret Poydock, Heidi Shierholz, and Hilary Wething, *Unions Aren’t Just Good for Workers—They Also Benefit Communities and Democracy* (Economic Policy Institute, Aug. 20, 2025), <https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-arent-just-good-for-workers-they-also-benefit-communities-and-democracy/>.

4 Celine McNicholas, Margaret Poydock, Heidi Shierholz, and Hilary Wething, *Unions Aren’t Just Good for Workers—They Also Benefit Communities and Democracy* (Economic Policy Institute, Aug. 20, 2025), <https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-arent-just-good-for-workers-they-also-benefit-communities-and-democracy/>.



\$1,670 decrease in yearly salary.⁵ State governments must do their part and step up to create conditions which ensure that workers' voices are heard, as Michigan recently has.⁶ Additionally, states should create a state tax deduction or credit for payment of union dues by all union members.

Transit workers should have a strong voice in the governance of the systems they operate because ATU members have on-the-ground knowledge of what transit systems need to run well. ATU locals in several states, including Louisiana, Washington, New York, and New Jersey, have successfully lobbied to pass legislation that ensures that transit workers are represented on transit agency boards. Having dedicated seats for labor ensures that workers' experiences are taken into account by the bodies that decide on transit policy. ATU members move America, and they deserve a strong voice in agency boardrooms and at the bargaining table.



ATU SUPPORTS:

1. Protecting and expanding collective bargaining rights for all public-sector workers;
2. Protecting and expanding the right to strike for all public-sector workers;
3. Guaranteeing that public employers regularly provide complete employee contact information to the labor union that represents their employees;
4. Repealing so called "right-to-work" laws which increase income inequality and reduce job quality;
5. Creating a state tax deduction or credit for payment of union dues; and
6. Reserving seats for members of the union that represents transit workers on transit agency boards.

⁵ Jennifer Sherer and Elise Gould, "Data show anti-union 'right-to-work' laws damage state economies," Working Economics Blog, Economic Policy Institute, Feb. 13, 2024, <https://www.epi.org/blog/data-show-anti-union-right-to-work-laws-damage-state-economies-as-michigans-repeal-takes-effect-new-hampshire-should-continue-to-reject-right-to-work-legislation/>.

⁶ "Michigan becomes 1st state in decades to repeal 'right-to-work' laws," *PBS News*, Mar 24, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/michigan-becomes-1st-state-in-decades-to-repeal-right-to-work-law>.