

The Daily Progress

Opinion/Letter: Public worker unions not good for community

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I am writing in response to a letter published May 21 headlined “Public sector unions help workers, others” (The Daily Progress). Of course, as the author said, such unions help their members, but I disagree about the overall public good of public sector unions.

The basic problem is that such unions use their political arms to elect officials who will favor their positions, which generally are increasing salaries and benefit perks. This creates a situation in which elected officials disburse general tax revenues and benefits to a select group of citizens. Other citizens are taxed to provide these benefits.

I was a public sector employee for 32 years. During that time, I had civil service protection, many paid holidays, generous sick and disability leave, and a pension plan.

I believe public sector employees already have many benefits that those working in the private sector lack. I am against adding union demands and campaign funding for sympathetic politicians to the list of current public sector advantages.

From the Cato Institute: “Another factor is that many government services are legal monopolies, such as police and fire. The result is that consumers don’t have the option of abandoning unionized public services if they become too inefficient, as they can with unionized services in the private sector.

“Finally, public-sector unions push for higher pay and higher government spending with little restraint. They don’t care if the cost of government services goes up, because the burden is borne by someone else. By contrast, private-sector unions are aware that higher costs for employers may result in lost sales and fewer union jobs.”

During this COVID year, a greater proportion of private schools reopened for in-person learning than did public schools, due partly to public teachers unions’ reluctance to reopen. Again according to CATO: “A survey conducted by the journal Education Next in November and December 2020 found that while 60 percent of private school students were receiving in-person instruction, only 24 percent of traditional public-school students were.”

It is unfortunate that Virginia’s progressive General Assembly has permitted unionizing of public sector workers. It will lead to spiraling costs and demands, in my opinion. Do we really want to see strikes by public sector workers who aren’t having their demands met?