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Cato Study: Unions Violate Freedom

Posted in: **Contracts**, **Corruption**, **Economy**, **Government**, **Pensions**, **Political Contributions**, **Public Employees Unions**, **Taxes**, **Unions Revealed**, **Warner Todd Huston**, **teachers unions**

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The Cato Institute has issued its latest Tax and Budget bulletin, this one centered on public-sector unions. The essence of the report is that public employee unions violate freedom, make government more expensive and inefficient, and the incestuous relationship between unions and politicians takes away power from the voters.

While labor unions do play a diminishing role in the private sector, the study points out that they play are playing an increasingly larger role in government these days through their "vigorous lobbying efforts." I'd add that they are also playing a larger role due to the personal greed of our politicians who are the happy recipients of large amounts of the campaign donations that unions typically provide, as well.

And it's all bad for government finds Cato. "Collective bargaining is a misguided labor policy," the report says, "because it violates civil liberties and gives unions excessive power to block needed reforms."

To fix this evil, Cato recommends that collective bargaining in the public sector be banned.

Some of you out there may say that banning collective bargaining for public employees is some-how unconstitutional. If so, then why is it that only 26 states allow public employee unions to bargain collectively? Further, why did this so-called right not exist prior to the late 1950s? The fact is, it is not unconstitutional to ban public employees from collective bargaining.

Cato answers a good question with its report. Why are public-sector unions an evil exceeding that of private-sector unions and why have government unions grown while private unions have fallen?

> *One reason is that public agencies tend to be static—once a union has organized a group of workers they tend to stay organized. By contrast, the private sector is dynamic, with businesses going bankrupt and new businesses arising all the time. Since all new businesses start out nonunion, greater organizing efforts are needed to sustain private-sector unions.*
>
> *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*

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sales and fewer union jobs.

In other words, as bad as private-sector unions are for productivity, at the very least the market can have a negative effect upon them, an effect that often leads to correcting union over reach. On the other hand, there are no market forces that can temper public employees unions and these entities will continue to rape the taxpayer ad-infinitum, without end. There is no end to the evils of public employees unions once they get their meat hooks on your tax dollars! Unless, that is, they are outlawed. And that needs to be the goal.

The Cato report goes on to show how unions increase costs and reduce efficiency and gives us the case study of Virginia and North Carolina both of which have been successful in banning collective bargaining.

This useful report wraps up this way:

> *To put citizens and taxpayers back in control of their governments, collective bargaining and forced union dues should be outlawed in the public sector. Public employees should be free to join worker associations, but they should not be given a special legal status and handed extra power to block desperately needed fiscal reforms.*

The Cato study is a good primer on why public employees unions are antithetical to good government.

Download a .pdf copy of this report.

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