



Opinion



BELTWAY CONFIDENTIAL

[\[Print\]](#) [\[Email\]](#)

[Share](#)



Public sector unions and state debt go hand in hand

By: [David Freddoso](#)

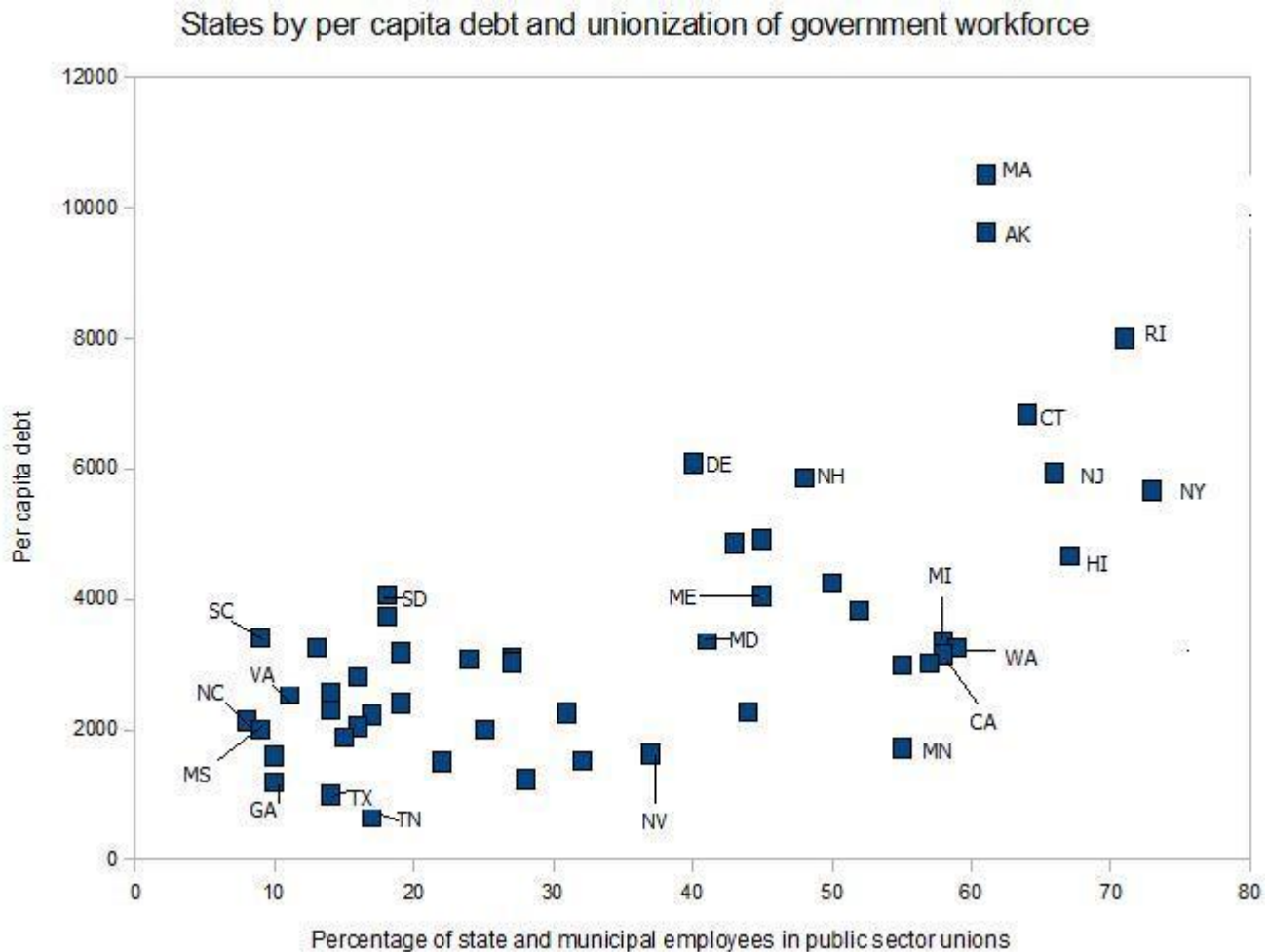
Online Opinion Editor

04/04/10 9:00 AM EDT

There are hundreds of reasons why states accrue debt. In some cases, it has to do with special programs they pursue. (See RomneyCare.) In others, it has to do with their method of taxation.

But the states with the highest per-capita debt all have something in common: Robust public-sector unions that have, over the years, cut sweetheart deals with politicians -- usually, but not always, Democrats.

In the graph below, each blue square represents a state (some are labeled), plotted by its per-capita debt and the percentage of state and municipal workers in public sector unions.



The data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, [the Tax Foundation](#), and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, whose labor numbers are charted in [this paper](#) from the CATO Institute. The numbers for unionization run from 2006 through 2009, and the numbers for debt are 2007, before the current crisis. If anything, this presents a rosier picture for most states than the current one.

A rigorous study would control for dozens of factors, but this chart demonstrates the correlation between state unionism and debt.

As you can see in the graph, the states coalesce into three main groups:

- Among states whose government workers are less than 40 percent unionized, median per capita state debt is \$2,238.
- Among states with between 40 and 60 percent of their government workers in public sector unions, the average debt is \$3,609.
- Among states with more than 60 percent of the government workforce unionized, the average (median) per capita debt is \$6,380.

As you keep an eye on the fiscal collapse of California, and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's (R) efforts to rein in the unions' power next year, bear in mind that this is quickly becoming the biggest fiscal issue in America today.

Do public sector unions really protect workers from exploitation, or do they merely bankrupt the

treasuries of states nationwide? And more immediately, will the states that made poor fiscal choices get a second bailout from the federal taxpayer after the 2009 stimulus package?

More from David Freddoso

- [Charlie and the April 30 filing deadline](#)
- [Public sector unions and state debt go hand in hand](#)
- [Say it: 'Permanent TARP bailout.' Now repeat.](#)
- [Prime Numbers: Health Insurance Edition](#)
- [Obama defends ObamaCare in Maine](#)

Follow The Examiner



[Morning Must Reads -- Obama needs Stevens to stay a little longer](#)

Wall Street Journal -- Court Challenge: Replacing Stevens The Obama administration wants Justice J.P. Stevens to retire, but it would be a big help if he could hang on until...

—[Chris Stirewalt](#)

[Charlie and the April 30 filing deadline](#)

From Stu Rothenberg in Roll Call: In less than a month, we will know whether Florida Gov. Charlie Crist is absolutely committed to running for the Senate this year as a...

—[David Freddoso](#)

[Donovan McNabb? You have got to be kidding me](#)

With the Redskins giving up second and fourth round draft choices to get Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb, it looks like owner Dan Snyder is back in the driver's...

—[Mark Tapscott](#)

[What the tea partiers believe](#)

In my Wednesday Examiner column I took a sympathetic look at the tea party movement and the tendency of tea partiers to emphasize the teachings of the American Founders. Since...

—[Michael Barone](#)

[More Beltway Confidential posts...](#)



Today's Featured Writers



[Star Parker](#)

[On the government plantation forever?](#)



[James Carafano](#)

[Foreign thinking missing in foreign policy](#)



[Gregory Kane](#)

[Banning prayer in schools hurts public morality](#)



[Hugh Hewitt](#)

[The president's popularity plunge](#)



[Mark Hemingway](#)

[Obama and the bosses: Taking care of the unions](#)



[Chris Stirewalt](#)

[Morning Must Reads -- Obama needs Stevens to stay a little longer](#)

To view this site, you need to have Flash Player 8.0 or later installed. Click [here](#) to get the latest Flash player.

MOST POPULAR STORIES

[Rush Limbaugh, Chris Matthews and the 'regime' question](#)

[Glenn Harlan Reynolds: Progressives can't get past the Knowledge Problem](#)

[Too dumb to mock: Dem. Rep. wonders if additional Navy personnel will make Guam 'tip over and capsize'](#)

[Steve Chapman: Big brother is on your tail](#)

[Limbaugh responds to Obama: 'Never in my life have I seen a regime like this'](#)

[What the tea partiers believe](#)

[Under Obama, a diminished sense of opportunity](#)

[Hugh Hewitt: The president's popularity plunge](#)

[Shirley and Devine: Trust us, Karl Rove is no conservative, neither was W](#)

[Defensive much? Obama gives rambling, incoherent 17 minute response to concern about being 'overtaxed'](#)

WeeklyStandard.com

[The End of an Era](#)

[A/V Monday](#)

[At Last, Some Job Creation](#)

[Happy Hour Links](#)

[Haiku Contest, Ctd.](#)

.submission { display: none; } .submission { display: none; }

Reader Comments

All comments on this page are subject to our Terms of Use and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Examiner or its staff. Comment box is limited to 200 words. Warning: If you comment, the Disqus platform default is set to email you when other reply to it. If you do not want to receive these replies to your comment, please uncheck the box.

[blog comments powered by Disqus](#)

Local

[Pepco April Fooled by environmental group](#)

Pepco was pranked Thursday by an environmental group... [Full story](#)

Sports

[NCAA Tournament: 2010 Final Four](#)

2010 Men's basketball Final Four Where » Lucas... [Full story](#)

Economy



[Apple's iPad bet requires 'leap of faith' from buyers](#)

Apple Inc., looking to succeed where rivals like... [Full story](#)



[RSS](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Intern](#) | [Video](#) | [Maps](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Rack Locations](#) | [Advertise](#)

Find this article at:

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/blogs/beltway-confidential/Public-sector-unions-and-state-debt-go-hand-in-hand->

89852362.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.