



ILLINOIS SEES SURGE IN UNION ORGANIZING AS UNIONS MAINTAIN BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

Last year, as the number of union members in the U.S. workforce grew for the first time since 2017, Illinois saw its largest number of new union organizing petitions since 2014 and organized more workers than at any time in the last decade.

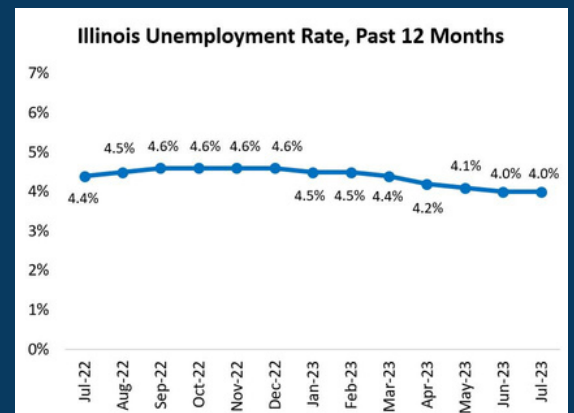
Researchers from ILEPI and the [Project for Middle Class Renewal \(PMCR\)](#) found that Illinois has the nation's 12th-highest unionization rate, with its workers far more likely to be union members than the nation as a whole, in our new study, *The State of the Unions 2023: A Profile of Unionization in Chicago, in Illinois, and in the United States*.

The data reveals a strong correlation between labor policies and both job quality and unionization rates. Unions boost worker earnings by 12% in Illinois, the 5th-highest impact in the nation. Effects are largest for middle-class workers, with unions increasing wages by 14% for the median Illinois worker.

Data continues to show that states that protect collective bargaining rights see better economic outcomes and more organizing. By passing the Workers' Rights Amendment to guarantee a constitutional right to bargain collectively, Illinois is well positioned for union membership growth over the next decade as the labor market stabilizes and expands.

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ILLINOIS ECONOMIC INDICATORS



Jobs added (rank), Jul-22 to Jul-23 = **89,700 jobs (9)**

State unemployment rate (rank), Jul-23 = **4.0% (46)**

Average private sector wage (rank), Jul-23 = **\$33.62 (15)**

Private sector wage growth from Jul-22 to Jul-23 (rank) = **+2.8% (42)**

Illinois Flash Index (as of Aug-23) = **102.9**

SO-CALLED “RIGHT-TO-WORK” LAWS ERODE JOB QUALITY

States that protect collective bargaining rights have higher average worker earnings, experience faster wage growth, and have added union members since 2013. A new report, *The Effects of Right to Work Regulations on Worker Earnings, Union Membership, and Labor Force Participation Across the United States*, found that among all workers, “right-to-work” laws reduced the union membership rate by 2 percentage points and decreased average earnings by 4% over the last decade. The proliferation of “right-to-work” laws is having a disproportionately corrosive effect on the job quality of people of color and college-educated workers, as well as for in-demand construction workers and PreK-12 teachers.

As public opinion surveys show approval of labor unions remaining at a [six-decade high](#), there has been a growing number of efforts to protect collective bargaining rights in the policy arena. This year, Michigan became the first state [in 58 years to repeal a “right-to-work” law](#). In addition, voters in Illinois [approved the Workers’ Rights Amendment](#) to the state’s constitution in November 2022, guaranteeing the fundamental right to unionize and bargain collectively.

ILEPI’S 2ND SPRINGFIELD FUNDRAISER & FREE SEMINAR

We’re hosting two events in Springfield in November!

First, please join us for our Springfield Fundraising Reception on Tuesday, November 7 from 6:00pm-8:00pm at the Wyndham Springfield City Centre.

Then, join us the next morning for a FREE seminar on infrastructure and jobs in Illinois. The seminar will take place on Wednesday, November 8 from 8:00am-9:30am at the Illinois AFL-CIO.

Visit www.illinoisepi.org/events for more details on both events. We appreciate your support!



UNION APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS REIGN SUPREME

Two new ILEPI studies find union apprenticeship programs are comparable to universities in [Michigan](#) and [Indiana](#). Union construction industry apprenticeship programs deliver more training hours, better diversity outcomes, and no student debt while delivering earnings for graduates that achieve near parity with comparable workers with four-year college degrees.

As the construction industry struggles with a historic labor shortage, union programs are vastly outperforming their nonunion peers in graduation rates of new apprentices. In addition, graduates of union construction programs in Michigan and Indiana earn about 48%-55% more per hour than those from employer-only programs.

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