

Union Myths v. Facts

Myth:

Dues are expensive - 2.4% of wages - and not worth what you get in return.

Myth:

Typically employees do not receive pay raises until a contract is ratified.

Myth:

Unionized workers do not receive substantial pay raises in their first contract.

Fact:

Dues will be set at 2.5 times the average hourly rate of you and your coworkers' wages. The exact amount will depend on your union's bylaws, which you as a union member will get to approve. Per the IAM constitution, no dues will be paid until a contract is ratified by the membership. Dues pay for bargaining, contract enforcement, education, legal services, and other things that allow your union to function. **In addition to giving you a seat at the table, your first contract should far exceed the cost of dues in increased pay and benefits.**

Fact:

Employees can still get raises and promotions before a contract is ratified. With a union, employees have a say in workplace decisions and the union is completely empowered to explicitly authorize management to make changes that are agreeable to the union, such as raises and promotions. **In fact, IAM sent a letter to management in late Nov. 2021 stating support for pay raises for VSES employees.**

Fact:

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **union members earned on average 19% higher wages than non-union employees** in 2020. With a union contract, raises are guaranteed for the term of the contract. Additionally, it's not unusual for workers to see significant wage gains in their first union contract when salary floors are established. For example, the first (and only) veterinary contract included raises in base pay for EVERY worker, along with increased and expanded differentials. Furthermore, in a recently ratified contract, IAM members at Spirit airlines raised wages by 30% on average.

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Myth:

Collective bargaining is a gamble, you don't know what kind of contract you are going to get. Pay and benefits could be less than you had before.

Myth:

Because of the expense of the union your hospital could be closed or sold.

Fact:

Your employer is required by law to bargain in good faith. That means demonstrating a sincere effort to compromise on proposals put forth by you and your negotiating committee. It would be illegal for them to cut your wages or benefits in retaliation for voting for the union. Additionally, **YOU vote on the union contract, and you are not going to vote for lower pay and less benefits than you previously had.**

Fact:

Your employer can choose to close or sell your hospital regardless of whether a union is present. The reality is union members are more satisfied and hence more productive at work. This reduces costly turnover and makes workplaces safer. Not to mention—a union contract has mechanisms in place that can improve your job security. These may include provisions that limit the employer's right to subcontract or outsource work. Most importantly with a union contract you are no longer an “at-will” employee. As it stands, your employer can fire you, discipline you, or change your terms of employment without any justification. With a union contract, you'll have a form of due process the company must follow in order to fire or discipline you. Union representatives will be there to assist you during this process.

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Myth:

Veterinary professionals unions must be ineffective because only five veterinary hospitals have ever voted to unionize.

Fact:

Corporate practices combined with weak labor law led to the decline of union membership beginning in the 1970s. As union density declined, so did Americans' knowledge about their legal right to join together in union. Currently, large swaths of workers are unorganized, but this is beginning to change in many sectors and industries, including tech, digital journalism, and at nonprofits, as workers become aware of the improvements they can make in their workplace with a union. The NVPU has been on the forefront of this new wave of organizing, helping veterinary workers organize since 2017. The more clinic and hospital staff that join together in union, the more power workers will have in the veterinary industry to raise standards. **VSES Employees for Change is leading the way to help the veterinary industry become a better industry.**

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