



Protection from Us?

September 2, 2025

On Labor Day, *National Review* [pointed out](#) that less than 10 percent of all U.S. workers currently belong to unions.

This percentage has been declining for decades. Even during the Biden administration, when the president and his puppeteers did their best to pump up unions, the percentage declined.

In the private sector, only 5.9 percent of workers are union members.

This is great news because unions are typically bad news. By using government-sanctioned force to compel membership and extract wage rates above the market rate, collective bargaining reduces the number of workers who can be employed in a

company or industry—thereby distributing wealth from the many to the fewer—and makes firms less efficient.

Only long-run increases in economic productivity enable wage rates to be permanently and generally increased in real terms.

Now, a union devoting itself only to helping workers cope with problems in the workplace — problems like an abusive supervisor or gratuitously dangerous working conditions — would be fine. But unions as we know them don't confine themselves to such support and often don't even offer it. Union bosses prefer to secure above-market wages perhaps because they can then siphon off some of those “rents” (as [economists put it](#)).

Meanwhile, unionism is still going strong among public employees. Although government workers constitute only about 15 percent of U.S. workers, these workers “make up about half of the population of union members,” *National Review* reports.

Who are these government workers protecting themselves from?

Well, from you and me, basically.

We might pay them less and we might fire them more often—if we could.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.