



Virginia Educators United Collective Bargaining Fact Sheet

Right now, Virginia's public sector workers have an opportunity to secure basic labor rights for themselves and their communities. Key members of the General Assembly have advanced legislation that would repeal Virginia's ban on public sector collective bargaining, a harmful and unnecessary burden placed on first responders, healthcare workers, educators, and others who work for the public good. Collective bargaining is a standard labor practice that allows unions to represent workers and negotiate the terms of employee contracts with their employers. Unfortunately, Virginia is one of only a few states in the country that refuses to grant public sector workers this right.

Currently, there is a considerable amount of misinformation floating around the Commonwealth regarding legislation that would repeal the ban on public sector collective bargaining. This factsheet will help correct any misinformation and lay out why collective bargaining is a win for all Virginians, not just its public sector workers.

Here are some common myths surrounding collective bargaining:

1. **“Collective bargaining will bankrupt localities and the state.”**

FALSE

Collective bargaining is centered on collaboration and compromise. Negotiated contracts are limited by the fiscal realities of each locality as well as the state. Giving workers the right to bargain for their contracts doesn't give them the right to print money or write the budgets.

2. **“Collective bargaining can't happen because VA is a “Right to Work” state.”**

FALSE

Collective bargaining and “right to work” are two independent and very different laws. “Right to Work” is a law that prohibits unions from collecting dues from non-members, an issue completely unrelated to negotiating contracts. Collective bargaining doesn't legally compel anyone to join a union or pay dues of any kind. Further, Virginia's “Right to Work” status cannot change in the public sector because of the US Supreme Court's 2018 *Janus* ruling. Current legislation aimed at repealing “Right to Work” in VA only targets private-sector workers.

3. **“Workers will go on strike if permitted to collectively bargain”**

FALSE

The right to strike and the right to collective bargaining are two completely different laws. The collective bargaining legislation in the General Assembly for the 2020 session does not give public sector workers the right to strike. The right for Virginia's public sector employees to strike is still prohibited by law. Most states that allow collective bargaining do not allow public sector employees to strike and yet those workers still benefit from collective bargaining agreements.

Virginia Educators United affirms that collective bargaining is a win, especially for our public schools. For school boards, educators, and most importantly, for students, collective bargaining is the positive change that can transform our schools for the better!

Benefits to employers (school boards)

- Allows school boards as well as the Commonwealth of Virginia to attract highly qualified candidates through the added benefit of collective bargaining. This will greatly improve recruitment and retention.
- Allows employers to gain a more specific and detailed understanding of the intricacies and challenges of the educator profession
- Improves working conditions and thus improves student learning conditions
- Allows employers to walk away from the negotiation table with a clearer picture of day-to-day operations and the financial realities within their school districts
- Allows employers to maintain high morale by being able to offer working condition benefits instead of compensation benefits in situations where the budget is tight
- Cuts down on employee grievances and workplace conflicts and improves employee-employer relations
- Allows employers to walk away with the confidence and reassurance that they collaborated on a contract that is satisfactory to their workers

Benefits to education workers

- Returns respect and dignity to the education profession by restoring worker agency and voice. Collective bargaining brings all workers (not just teachers) into the decision-making process, a realm they have been mostly excluded from.
- Brings democracy to the workplace
- In a profession dominated by women, collective bargaining is a women's rights issue. Since women have been historically exploited and expected to simply "do what they are told" without asking any questions, collective bargaining will help empower women in the workplace.
- Collective bargaining helps protect workers from burnout, exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and other forms of abuse.
- Collective bargaining helps create a working environment custom-tailored to a certain district. This affords communities the latitude to implement best practices that accommodate and respect a district's unique cultural characteristics in order to best serve staff, students, and community. Thus, collective bargaining can help protect against racial, religious, gender, or class-based discrimination.
- Collective bargaining gives employees a more specific idea of what duties they are responsible for and what benefits they are entitled to, removing ambiguity and improving worker efficiency.



Restoring collective bargaining rights is a win for all public sector employees. Can you imagine first responders having the opportunity to negotiate contracts that better protect them from the hazards of their profession? Can you imagine healthcare workers being able to bargain for contracts that create better working conditions for themselves, allowing them to focus solely on the quality of care they provide their patients? We won't have to imagine these things any longer if we return collective bargaining to Virginia's public sector workers.

For more information related to collective bargaining information:

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