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## The Undemocratic Nature of Government Unions

*The Pennsylvania [Public Employee Relations Act](#) (PERA) entrenches compulsory unionism among public sector workers. It stacks the deck in favor of powerful union executives, limiting state workers and teachers from having a voice in their current union, seeking new union representation, or leaving their union.*

### Union Election Requirements

- Once the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board certifies a union as the exclusive representative of a collective bargaining unit—a grant of monopoly bargaining power—workers are rarely afforded another chance to vote. To remove a union, employees must file a petition for [decertification](#), which requires 30 percent support of the bargaining unit. Only then can employees cast votes to break ties from their union. Otherwise, the union retains its monopoly—barring another decertification effort, which could take years to materialize.
- The petition for decertification can only be filed within a 30-day window, at the end of a union contract.

### The Consequences of an Undemocratic Process

- The process required to revoke a union's exclusive representation privilege has created a permanent union class that does not represent current employees.
- An overwhelming percentage of teachers have never voted for their union. Pennsylvania Department of Education data (from the 2013-2014 school year) reveals more than 99 percent of classroom teachers accepted a job after their union's last election.
  - Roughly three-quarters of school districts do not employ a **single teacher** who could have voted in a union certification election.
  - Of the 20 Pennsylvania school districts (see chart below) with the largest teacher workforce, only 8 employ at least 1 teacher who could have voted for their union.
- At the state level, trends are similar. Of five state unions analyzed—UFCW 1776, AFSCME 13, PSCOA, SEIU 668, and ISSU—only the corrections officers' union (PSCOA) includes a significant portion of members (33 percent) who were eligible to vote in their union's certification election back in 2001.
  - Of state workers in the other four unions, more than 99 percent (in each union) were hired after their union's last certification election.

Largest Pennsylvania School Districts by Teacher Workforce			
School district	Total no. of teachers	Current teachers employed at election date	Percent of current teachers employed at election date
Philadelphia	8,086	0	0%
Pittsburgh	1,868	2	0.11%
Central Bucks	1,157	1	0.09%
Allentown City	961	0	0%
Reading	952	0	0%
Bethlehem Area	894	2	0.22%
North Penn	838	0	0%
Downingtown Area	815	1	0.12%
West Chester	801	1	0.12%
Erie City	780	0	0%
Council Rock	779	0	0%
Lancaster	774	0	0%
Upper Darby	774	0	0%
Pennsbury	750	4	0.53%
Central Dauphin	732	0	0%
Pocono Mountain	694	0	0%
Scranton	685	5	0.73%
Lower Merion	634	0	0%
Hazleton Area	632	1	0.16%
North Allegheny	552	0	0%
Totals	24,158	17	0.07%
Sources: Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board, school districts and Pennsylvania Department of Education			

## **Recommendations**

- **Right to Re-Elect:** The decertification process is cumbersome and undemocratic. A better option for public employees is mandatory recertification every four years. This reform guarantees employees a vote on their union—either for re-election, a new union, or to represent themselves—giving them a greater voice in their workplace.
- **Local-Only Union:** Periodic elections should include a local-only union option, which would give public employees more control over the direction of their union, instead of being forced to finance the political agendas of state and national unions.

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