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8 Labor Reforms to Protect Public Workers and Taxpayers

1. **Paycheck Protection** – State law permits government unions to use public payroll systems—financed by taxpayers—to collect their private, political money.

As a result, taxpayers are compelled to support political activities they may find objectionable. Paycheck protection would end this practice and protect taxpayers from subsidizing any union's political operations.

Paycheck protection legislation would also help public workers hold their unions accountable, while still protecting the right of unions to engage in political activities.

2. **Right to Re-elect** – Today, more than 99 percent of the commonwealth's school teachers are represented by a union they never voted for.

Current law allows public workers to petition for a union election during a 30-day window near the end of a collective bargaining agreement. But workers must demonstrate 30 percent support within the bargaining unit to hold an election.

To give union members more influence, the law should be amended to require an election before the expiration of each collective bargaining agreement or within four years—whichever comes first.

3. **Collective Bargaining Transparency** – Taxpayers are generally excluded from the collective bargaining process, which determines the cost of public employee compensation.

Unions and government officials negotiate contracts—worth millions or billions of dollars—only to publicly announce the terms of the contracts after an agreement is reached.

The public should have access to the cost and terms of a contract before ratification.

More transparency wouldn't just benefit taxpayers. Public workers also stand to benefit because they could review all contract terms before voting to ratify or reject.

4. **Financial Transparency** – Public workers deserve to know how their union dues are spent. Federal legislation requires private sector unions to file financial disclosure forms detailing union revenue and expenditures. However, public sector workers are not afforded this level of transparency.

To ensure all union members know how their dues are being used, lawmakers should pass legislation directing unions to share financial information with members. This could include dues and fair share fee charges, a summary of how union dues are spent, and information on the salary and benefits of union officers.

- 5. Ending Union Subsidies** – Numerous collective bargaining agreements grant teachers unions the privilege of [accessing taxpayer dollars](#) to fund the salary and benefits of their full-time employees.

Unions access these dollars through a practice known as “[release time](#),” whereby a public school employee takes a leave of absence to work for their union while remaining on the school district’s payroll. During this time, employees can accrue benefits and seniority just like a classroom teacher.

Taxpayer dollars dedicated for education should not be diverted to subsidize a private organization. Lawmakers can end this practice by [requiring unions, not taxpayers, to cover the costs of their operations](#).

- 6. Protecting Religious Objectors** – If a public worker objects to paying union dues for religious reasons, he or she is permitted to send their dues or fees to a non-religious charity.

In practice, [workers have little say over where their dues are donated](#). The law requires both the union and public worker to approve the charity. If the union does not agree with a worker’s selected charity, they can hold funds indefinitely.

To [improve the law](#), public workers should be able to devote their money to any non-religious charity of their choice, without having to obtain permission from their union.

- 7. Flexible Union Membership** – Public workers should be free to leave their union at any time. Currently, union members can only resign during a window (usually 15 days) near the end of a collective bargaining agreement (usually every four years). This is known as a “[maintenance of membership](#)” (MOM) requirement.

MOM provisions essentially trap workers in a union. The U.S. Supreme Court, in [Abood v. Detroit Board of Education](#), made it clear that forcing public employees to subsidize political activities is a violation of First Amendment rights.

Lawmakers should protect union workers from paying for political activities by enabling members to resign at any time.

- 8. Defending the Right of Privacy** – Some collective bargaining agreements authorize a public employer to give out employees’ Social Security numbers and home addresses.

To safeguard employee privacy and safety, the dissemination of this personal information [should not be subject to collective bargaining negotiations](#).