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A Look Inside New Government Union Contracts

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Government union leaders recently reached multi-year contract agreement with the Wolf Administration, including 18% compensation increases over four years. Even though taxpayers foot the bill, they are still waiting to know the cost they will bear.

What we do know is, due to the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Janus v. AFSCME* and a class action lawsuit from Pennsylvania workers, these contracts include several significant pro-worker freedoms.

Service employees gain the right to resign at any time.

The Services Employees' International Union (SEIU) Local 668, representing primarily social service employees, recently reached a tentative contract deal.

Because SEIU 668 members Megan James, William Lester, and Angela Pease, with representation from The Fairness Center, sued SEIU, this contract will include a deal between union and elected officials [to eliminate maintenance of membership provisions](#).

This means *all SEIU 668 members can resign at any time* instead of waiting for a brief 15-day window every few years, as is the current practice among public sector unions.

Fair share fees on non-union workers removed from contracts.

SEIU 668 also strikes out references to “fair share fees” on non-union workers—fees the Court ruled in *Janus* violated workers' constitutional rights. It's important to note that Pennsylvania still has a fair share fee law that must be removed via the [Employees' Rights Notification Act](#).

Similarly, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 13, the largest union representing commonwealth employees, and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) representing state liquor store workers, have fully ratified agreements that also strike out fair share fees.

This is crucial, considering the Pennsylvania State Education Association has been [actively negotiating fair share fees into new contracts](#).

The cost to taxpayers remains unknown.

Not until the Independent Fiscal Office, via Act 15 of 2016, issues a fiscal analysis will Pennsylvanian's know the true cost of these contracts over their 2019-2023 lifetime.

What we do know: employees will not pay any additional healthcare costs, a burden the state will increasingly pay, and they will receive, when calculating compounding effect, a *cumulative 18% salary increase over four years*, far **in excess** of industry standards.

Clearly, elected officials negotiating million-dollar increases with **their campaign donors** (Wolf has received \$5.9 million from AFSCME, SEIU, and UFCW unions) hurts taxpayers and government accountability. Look at the previous round of contract agreements: **nearly \$600 million** in additional spending over just three years.

Luckily, lawmakers are attempting to tackle this lack of transparency.

- **Senate Bill 339** (Sen. Pat Stefano) and **House Bill 250** (Rep. Matt Gabler) require all levels of government (including school districts) to publicize proposed collective bargaining agreements and their cost before they go into effect.
- **SB 448** (Sen. Ryan Aument) subjects contract negotiations to Pennsylvania's **Sunshine Act** and **SB 449** (Sen. Scott Martin) subjects collective bargaining to the Right to Know law.

A fair and well-functioning state government requires more transparency. In the meantime, some state workers have scored a victory by pressuring their union leaders for greater rights.