

What Do You Get for the Union Dues You Pay?

A message from Christopher Clement

Friday, July 22, 2016



A union is a business. Like any business, it needs money to pay the bills. The union gets its money from one place — the paychecks of the employees it represents. This union charges union dues to employees who join the union as members. This union may negotiate that the labor contract include a provision requiring employees who do not join the union to pay what is called an agency service or “fair share” fee. Union dues identified on the NEA website for full-time employees are \$375 a year — every year — and the agency service fee is usually a few dollars less.



CHRISTOPHER CLEMENT

On the NEA website, the union lists some things members get for their union dues. Examples are “professional assistance in

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negotiations” and “individual assistance and advice when you need help.” Here are a few things you may not get for the union dues/agency service fee you may pay:

- A guaranteed collective bargaining agreement
- Wages or salaries higher than they otherwise would have been
- Fringe benefits that are any more generous than they are now
- Working conditions any different than they are now
- Assurance that your individual issues will be addressed to your satisfaction in any contract
- The right to choose the paid union representative who will speak for you in negotiations
- The right to not pay a union dues/agency service fee if dissatisfied with union representation
- A guarantee that your voice will be heard at the bargaining table

For the \$375 or so a year you may pay in union dues or an agency service (“fair share”) fee, you really receive an appointed union person to speak for you at the bargaining table. What he or she says is up to them; only a handful of employees might be there. That is a lot of money from your paycheck each year that you will not be able to spend on yourself, your family or invest in your retirement.

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