UNION DUES:
An Investment for a Better Life!

There are a few things you can pretty much count on in this life: The sun will rise, the weather will change, you’ll be older tomorrow than you are today...and some union members will complain about having to pay dues.

Members in settings where decent pay and benefits have been the norm for many years -- state employees, teachers, higher education faculty -- may need to be reminded about the union difference.

Why Dues?

Some members don’t stop to consider how, without dues, there would be no resources for their union to negotiate new contracts or provide legal help to pursue arbitrations. Nor would there be anyone to take their side when they are unfairly disciplined and things got bad. Without investing dues to build a strong union, workers -- including professional employees -- are at the mercy of their employers.

Specific Benefits

- If workers don’t like paying dues, then presumably they’ve forgotten the very things that dues make possible:
  - job security;
  - regular pay raises;
  - paid vacations;
  - health insurance coverage;
  - just cause protections
  - and traditional defined benefit pensions

- Examine your contract, and the next time a member complains about "those damn union dues" be prepared to list some of the benefits that wouldn’t exist without them.
- Do they honestly believe their employer would be showering them with benefits if the union hadn’t negotiated them?

The Bottom Line

In the United States, in 2013, union members’ median weekly earnings were 27 percent higher than for non-union workers. In 2013, 88 percent of union members participated in a traditional defined benefit pension plan, while just 49 percent of non-union workers did. 84 percent of union members had paid sick leave, while only 62 percent of non-union workers did.

Another way to look at it would be like this: a single, union-negotiated raise of 50 cents an hour is worth more than $1,000 a year to the recipient. The reality is that the dollars and benefits gained by investing resources to support effective union representation far outweigh the cost of investing dues.