

LOUISIANA

OVERALL RANK: 42ND¹
TIER 5 (WEAKEST)

STRONGER WEAKER

OVERALL					42
1. RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP					40
2. INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS					44
3. SCOPE OF BARGAINING			24		
4. STATE POLICIES				33	
5. PERCEIVED INFLUENCE					44

AREA 1: RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP TIED FOR 40TH

Louisiana’s state teacher unions contend with limited resources and low membership; teachers there do not see particularly high (or low) spending on K-12 education. Collective bargaining is permitted but not required, and only 57.8 percent of teachers in the Pelican State belong to unions (the 38th-largest unionization rate among 51 jurisdictions). The NEA and AFT state-level affiliates bring in a mere \$144 annually per Louisiana teacher (45th). Louisiana directs 18.1 percent of state expenditures toward K-12 education (30th), and overall per-pupil expenditures are \$12,253 each year (18th), with just 52.8 percent of those dollars spent on teacher salaries and benefits (37th).

AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS² TIED FOR 44TH

Louisiana’s teacher unions are less involved in politics than unions in nearly every other state. In the past decade, just 0.18 percent of the donations to candidates for state office came from them (45th). Union contributions made up 1.75 percent of the money from the ten highest-giving sectors in the state (43rd). The unions gave relatively more to state political parties, giving 1.1 percent of the total donations (24th). But just 8.3 percent of Louisiana delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions identified as teacher union members (39th).³

AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING
24TH

Louisiana law does not explicitly address collective bargaining in public education, implicitly permitting it (and opening all twenty-one provisions examined in our metric to bargaining). The state allows its public employees, teachers included, to strike, although it prevents unions from automatically collecting agency fees from non-members.

AREA 4: STATE POLICIES
33RD

While a few of Louisiana's state policies align with traditional teacher union interests, many do not. The state requires that student achievement be the main criterion in teacher evaluations, and teachers are automatically eligible for dismissal if they receive unsatisfactory evaluations. At the time we calculated our metric, the state mandated seniority-based layoffs and did not consider student learning in tenure decisions, positions it reversed in April 2012. Louisiana is also known for its charter-friendly environment (see sidebar): The state does not cap the number of charter schools and automatically exempts them from many state laws and district regulations (but charters must apply for exemptions to teacher certification requirements).

AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE
44TH

Stakeholder responses reflected teacher unions that are weaker in Louisiana than in nearly every other state. Respondents rank the governor (Bobby Jindal), the charter school association, the state school board, and the state school board association as more influential than the teacher unions

when it comes to education policy. They report that the unions are not effective in warding off education proposals with which they disagree, and that state education leaders rarely align with union positions. Further, they note that policies proposed by the governor in the latest legislative session were not at all in line with teacher union priorities, and that the session's outcomes were mostly not in line with their priorities.⁴ Finally, they report that teacher unions more often than not turn to compromise to see some of their preferred policies enacted.

OVERALL
42ND

State teacher unions are weaker in Louisiana than unions in other states on nearly every metric that we examined. They have thin internal resources. They see a low investment in K-12 education by the state and operate in a largely unfavorable policy environment. They have a weak reputation among stakeholders, perhaps belying a union that sees futility in donating heavily to politics in a state famous for its union-opposed reforms.

To many observers across the land, education in Louisiana is inextricably linked with choice. In 2003, the state legislature created the Recovery School District, paving the way for rapid charter school growth.⁵ Louisiana charters are automatically exempt from nearly every state education policy, and in 2010 the legislature passed Governor Bobby Jindal's Red Tape Reduction Act, which allowed traditional districts to ask for waivers from the laws as well. (The Louisiana Federation of Teachers tried, but failed, to stop the Act in the state supreme court.)⁶ The state also recently enacted bills supporting home schooling, permitting (and paying for) students to take courses online if they are dissatisfied with what is offered at their local school, expanding the number of charter school authorizers, and creating a "parent trigger" mechanism.^{7,8}

But no choice policy has received as much attention as Louisiana's voucher programs. In 2008, the state offered vouchers for private school tuition to students in the Recovery School District, and also allowed individuals to claim private school tuition as a tax deduction (a rarity among the states). Two years later, lawmakers extended the voucher program to include special education students across the state, and in 2012 they enacted tax rebates for donors to school tuition organizations, which in turn provide private school scholarships.⁹ But when in 2012 the legislature passed Jindal's proposal to expand the voucher program to students statewide, and not just those in low-income families, the already-infuriated unions had had enough. The Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE) and the Louisiana Federation of Teachers (LFT) sued, calling the program an unconstitutional use of taxpayer money to fund private institutions. LFT President Steve Monaghan accused Jindal of using the voucher program as a vehicle to further everyone's interests except the students': "If this administration cared as much about children as it does about satisfying corporate donors and national political ambitions, it would concentrate on improving all our schools for all our children."¹⁰ Jindal responded forcefully: "The coalition of the status quo have fought reform every step of the way, so it is no surprise they are making this last ditch effort to convince the courts to overrule the vote of the people and the Legislature. Holding up these reforms in court will only deny parents and students the opportunity to escape failing schools. Our kids do not get a second chance to grow up."¹¹

In August 2012, the Louisiana Supreme Court denied an injunction to suspend the voucher program while awaiting a trial on its constitutionality, scheduled for October 2012 (post-press time for us, unfortunately). The LFT expressed disappointment and vowed it would keep fighting the law (and that it would rally to change the "sham" accountability standards for private schools in the meantime).¹² The LAE went further, threatening to sue any private school that accepted state voucher money. An angry Jindal declared that "union leaders are stooping to new lows and trying to strong-arm schools to keep our kids from getting a quality education."¹³ As yet, however, the state is going forward with the program and the LAE's threat remains empty. Louisiana's motto is "Union, Justice, and Confidence." The unions are confident they'll get justice; but so is Jindal.

LOUISIANA RANKINGS BY AREA AND INDICATOR

OVERALL RANK: 42ND			
Area and Rank ^a	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status ^b
AREA 1: RESOURCES & MEMBERSHIP 40*	Membership	By rank, what percentage of public-school teachers in the state are union members?	38th
	Revenue	By rank, what is the total yearly revenue (per teacher in the state) of the state-level NEA and/ or AFT affiliate(s)?	45th
	Spending on education	By rank, what percentage of state expenditures (of state general funds, state restricted funds, state bonds, and federal "pass-through" funds) is directed to K-12 education?	30th
		By rank, what is the total annual per-pupil expenditure (of funds from federal, state, and local sources) in the state?	18th
		By rank, what percentage of total annual per-pupil expenditures is directed to teacher salaries and benefits?	37th
AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS 44*	Contributions to candidates and political parties	By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state candidates was donated by teacher unions?	45th
		By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state-level political parties was donated by teacher unions?	24th
	Industry influence	By rank, what percent of the contributions to state candidates from the ten highest-giving sectors was donated by teacher unions?	43rd
	Status of delegates	By rank, what percentage of the state's delegates to the Democratic and Republican conventions were members of teacher unions?	39th
AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING 24	Legal scope of bargaining	What is the legal status of collective bargaining?	Neither required nor prohibited
		By rank, how broad is the scope of collective bargaining?	33rd*
	Automatic revenue streams	What is the unions' legal right to automatically collect agency fees from non-members and/or collect member dues via automatic payroll deductions?	Agency fees prohibited
	Right to strike	What is the legal status of teacher strikes?	Permitted
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 33	Performance pay	Does the state support performance pay for teachers?	State supports/ encourages
	Retirement	By rank, what is the employer- versus employee-contribution rate to the teacher pension system?	1st
	Evaluations	What is the maximum potential consequence for veteran teachers who receive unsatisfactory evaluation(s)?	Eligible for dismissal
		Is classroom effectiveness included in teacher evaluations? If so, how is it weighted?	Required; Preponderant criterion
	Terms of employment ^c	How long before a teacher earns tenure?	Three years
		Is student/teacher performance considered in tenure decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Not included
		Is seniority considered in teacher layoff decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Required; Considered among other factors
		Is teacher performance included in teacher layoff decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Not required
Class size	By rank, what percentage of the teaching workforce was dismissed due to poor performance?	46th	
	Is class size restricted for grades 1-3? If so, is the restriction higher or lower than the national average (20)?	Yes; Higher	

Area and Rank	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 33 (cont.)	Charter school structural limitations	Is there a cap (limit) placed on the number of charter schools that can operate in the state (or other jurisdiction) and/or on the number of students who can attend charter schools?	No state cap
		Does the state allow a variety of charter schools: start-ups, conversions, and virtual schools?	Yes
		How many charter authorizing options exist? How active are those authorizers?	Two or more w/limited activity
	Charter school exemptions	Are all charter schools automatically exempt from state laws and state/district regulations (except those that safeguard students and fiscal accountability)? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	Yes
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from state teacher-certification requirements? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	No; Schools can apply for exemptions
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	Partially; Full automatic exemption for some schools

AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE^d 44	Relative influence of teacher unions	How do you rank the influence of teacher unions on education policy compared with other influential entities?	Fourth- or fifth-most influential
	Influence over campaigns	On a scale from always to never, how often do Democratic candidates need teacher-union support to get elected?	Often
		On a scale from always to never, how often do Republican candidates need teacher-union support to get elected?	Sometimes
	Influence over spending	To what extent, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, do you agree that even in times of cutbacks, teacher unions are effective in protecting dollars for education?	Neutral
		Given recent budgetary constraints, would you say that teacher unions generally make concessions to prevent reductions in pay and benefits or fight hard to prevent those reductions?	Sometimes concede, sometimes fight
	Influence over policy	To what extent, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, do you agree that teacher unions ward off proposals in your state with which they disagree?	Disagree
		On a scale from always to never, how often do existing state education policies reflect teacher-union priorities?	Rarely/Sometimes
		To what extent, from totally in line to not at all in line, were state education policies proposed by the governor during your state's latest legislative session in line with teacher-union priorities?	Not at all in line
		To what extent, from totally in line to not at all in line, were legislative outcomes of your state's latest legislative session in line with teacher-union priorities?	Mostly not in line/Somewhat in line
	Influence over key stakeholders	On a scale from always to never, how often have the priorities of state education leaders aligned with teacher-union positions in the past three years?	Rarely
		Would you say that teacher unions typically compromise with policymakers to ensure that their preferred policies are enacted, or typically need not make concessions?	Compromise

* Tied with another state

^a Area ranks are calculated using a weighted average of sub-indicators. For a more detailed description, see Appendix A.

^b Where possible, we report a state's rank as compared to other states on a given metric. For example, out of 51 states, Louisiana has the 38th-highest percentage of teachers who are union members. Otherwise, we report a status: In Louisiana, collective bargaining is neither required nor prohibited, and union agency fees are prohibited. For a more detailed description of our metrics and methodology, see Appendix A. To request the raw data for your state, send an email to uniondata@edexcellence.net.

^c See Area 4 above.

^d For all survey questions, stakeholders were asked specifically about teacher unions, candidates, policies, and leaders in their state. In addition, we asked about unions and policies in the "current legislative session," but because legislative calendars vary from state to state, responses refer to policies proposed and enacted within the 2010-11 window.

ENDNOTES

¹ A state's overall rank is calculated as follows: First, we score it on multiple sub-indicators (sub-indicator data and scores for Louisiana are shown in the table, *Louisiana Rankings by Area and Indicator*). Second, we take a weighted average of the sub-indicators in each of five areas. In each area, we use that average to place the states in rank order: For example, in Area 1: Resources and Membership, Louisiana is ranked 40th of 51 based on the weighted average of its sub-indicators. To generate the state's overall rank, we average the five area ranks together, then re-order the states. For a more detailed description of data sources and methodology, see Appendix A.

² Readers should note that these figures include only direct donations from unions and union-connected PACs, but not their spending on electioneering/advertising, mobilizing the union's own membership, lobbying, or advocacy. A recent *Wall Street Journal* report found that donations and lobbying activities account for a small share of union political spending compared with their expenditures on member mobilization and advocacy. Even the AFT agreed, making the argument that since its mission is organizing and activism, it will naturally spend significant amounts on these activities. Thus, the percentages we report here are extremely conservative representations of what unions actually spend on politics. For more information, see Appendix A, Area 2; Tom McGinty and Brody Mullins, "Political Spending by Unions Far Exceeds Direct Donations," *Wall Street Journal*, July 10, 2012; and Jeff Hauser, "Wall Street Journal Compares Union Political Spending to Corporate Donations," AFL-CIO, July 10, 2012.

³ At the time of publication, the 2000 conventions were the most recent for which such detailed data were available in forms that met rigorous standards. However, 2008 data provided by the Democratic National Convention were highly correlated with the reliable figures from 2000.

⁴ We asked stakeholders about unions and policies in the "current legislative session," but because legislative calendars vary from state to state, responses refer to policies proposed and enacted within the 2010-11 window.

⁵ "The Public Charter Schools Dashboard," National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2012, accessed August 29, 2012, <http://dashboard.publiccharters.org/dashboard/schools/page/overview/state/LA/year/2012>.

⁶ Joe Gyan Jr., "La. High Court: Red Tape Reduction Act Suit Premature," *Advocate*, July 5, 2012, <http://theadvocate.com/news/3260826-123/la-high-court-red-tape>.

⁷ "Louisiana Course Choice," Louisiana Department of Education, accessed August 29, 2012, <http://www.doe.state.la.us/coursechoice/>.

⁸ Sean Cavanagh, "La. School Choice Options Expand After Sweeping Education Overhaul," *Education Week*, April 13, 2012, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/04/13/28louisiana.h31.html>.

⁹ "School Choice In Louisiana," The Friedman Foundation, last updated August 27, 2012, <http://www.edchoice.org/School-Choice/State/LA.aspx>.

¹⁰ "Supreme Court Won't Enjoin Jindal's Voucher Scheme," Louisiana Federation of Teachers, August 16, 2012, <http://la.aft.org/index.cfm?action=article&articleID=fcb6bd0-f65d-498a-866e-e587b22c5a6f>.

¹¹ Kevin Mooney, "Louisiana Voucher Applications Roll Forward Despite Union Lawsuits," ThePelicanPost.com, July 2, 2012, <http://www.thepelicanpost.org/2012/07/02/louisiana-voucher-applications-roll-forward-despite-union-lawsuits/>.

¹² "Voucher Accountability A Sham, LFT Says," Louisiana Federation of Teachers, July 24, 2012, <http://la.aft.org/index.cfm?action=article&articleID=709b83c2-b450-4708-9b33-e06de028e0a6>.

¹³ "Louisiana Teachers Union Threatens To Sue Private Schools Over Voucher Program," FoxNews.com, August 6, 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/08/06/louisiana-teachers-union-threatens-schools-over-voucher-program/>.