

MINNESOTA

OVERALL RANK: 14TH¹
TIER 2 (STRONG)

STRONGER WEAKER

OVERALL		14			
1. RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP	3				
2. INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS				32	
3. SCOPE OF BARGAINING	2				
4. STATE POLICIES					46
5. PERCEIVED INFLUENCE			19		

AREA 1: RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP TIED FOR 3RD

Minnesota’s merged NEA-AFT affiliate and its members benefit from both substantial resources and relatively generous state spending on K-12 education. Indeed, 95.7 percent of teachers are unionized in the North Star State, the 9th-highest rate among all 51 jurisdictions. The state union brings in \$582 per teacher in the state (15th). Further, 23.3 percent of state expenditures go to K-12 education (13th), and Minnesota teachers see a substantial amount of the \$11,471 spent per pupil (24th) allocated to their salaries and benefits (59.3 percent; 3rd).

AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS² TIED FOR 32ND

Despite its financial resources, Minnesota’s teacher unions were less involved in the last decade of state politics than were their counterparts in most other states.³ Their donations to candidates for state office amounted to just 0.46 percent of the total (30th); these contributions constituted 2.5 percent of the donations to candidates from the ten highest-contributing sectors in the state (39th). A relatively higher proportion—2.2 percent—of total donations to state political parties came from Minnesota teacher unions (13th). The union voice at the Democratic and Republican national conventions was also quieter than in most other states, with 9.4 percent of Minnesota delegates identifying as teacher union members (34th).⁴

*AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING
2ND*

Minnesota is one of thirty-two states that require collective bargaining, and its laws give unions a wider scope of bargaining (and more organizational prerogatives) than in every other state save California. Minnesota requires seven items to be bargained (wages, hours, terms and conditions of employment, grievance procedures, fringe benefits, class size, and length of teacher planning periods) and permits another two (management rights and pension/retirement benefits). State law is silent on the remaining twelve items, implicitly including them in the scope of bargaining. Further, Minnesota allows its unions to collect agency fees from non-member teachers (a key source of union revenue) and is one of only twelve states where teachers explicitly possess the right to strike.

*AREA 4: STATE POLICIES
TIED FOR 46TH*

While Minnesota's state teacher union sees abundant resources and permissive bargaining laws, it also faces many state-level policies that do not align with traditional union interests. Minnesota permits performance pay and requires that student achievement significantly informs teacher evaluations (but not tenure decisions). Further, the state's charter laws—the oldest in the land—run decidedly counter to the union preference for limiting the expansion and autonomy of such schools. Minnesota does not cap the number of charters; permits new, conversion, and virtual schools; and provides multiple authorizing options. Charters are also automatically exempt from collective bargaining agreements, district regulations, and state laws, except for those related to teacher certification.

*AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE
19TH*

Despite the adverse policies, Minnesota stakeholders rate their union as more influential than do stakeholders in many other states. Along with the business roundtable/chamber of commerce, they place the union as the most influential entity in shaping education policy. They further note that it not only fought hard to prevent reductions in pay and benefits, but also that it is effective in protecting dollars for education. On the other hand, they report that state policies only *sometimes* reflect union interests and that outcomes of the latest legislative session were only somewhat in line with teacher union priorities.⁵ Perhaps this is because, as survey respondents indicate, the priorities of the current state education chief and board of education are only sometimes aligned with teacher union priorities.

*OVERALL
14TH*

Minnesota's teacher union is strong in terms of resources and membership, and the state has generous bargaining laws that favor unions. While its union has a reputation for strength, it does not have many present-day allies in state politics and the current policy environment is one of the most union-*unfriendly* in the nation (and with union rights under constant attack, may become even less friendly in the near future—see sidebar).

SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Minnesota is one of the only states in the Midwest where the governor is not mired in intense clashes with public unions. In 2012, Democrat Mark Dayton vetoed two GOP-sponsored measures that would have severely limited collective bargaining rights for teachers. In his veto letter of HF 1974, Dayton affirmed his position: “The Legislature is well aware that I have opposed, and will continue to oppose, unilateral changes to the collective bargaining process.”⁶ He also vetoed a 2012 bill requiring districts to base layoffs on teacher performance and not seniority, calling it another in a series of proposals that are “anti-public schools, anti-public school teachers, or anti-collective bargaining rights.”⁷ To circumvent the governor, House Republicans began discussion of a constitutional amendment to make Minnesota a right-to-work state—an amendment that the voters, not the governor, would decide. But against heavy lobbying from the state’s labor unions, the amendment never got off the ground (although the idea itself still has supporters in both the House and Senate).⁸

When it comes to the budget, however, Dayton takes less of a pro-union hard line. In an attempt to pave the way for later bipartisan compromise on the 2011 budget, he signed a Republican-backed (and union-opposed) bill that authorized alternative licensure options for nontraditional and mid-career teachers.⁹ But no such compromise resulted, and to break a budget deadlock and a twenty-day government shutdown, Dayton agreed to Republican demands and took tax increases for the wealthy and for corporations completely off the table (despite the contributions of Education Minnesota, the state’s NEA-AFT affiliate, which helped fund a \$1 million campaign in support of Dayton’s original plan).^{10,11} Without the revenue from tax increases, and to the immense frustration of education leaders, the state delayed already-overdue payments to school districts.¹² And it looks like lawmakers aren’t done with licensure yet either; in 2012 they enacted a bill that requires more stringent testing for new teachers. But for Education Minnesota, these defeats are small potatoes compared to the averted-for-now crisis of the elimination of teacher bargaining rights. For that, the NEA repaid Dayton in July 2012 by naming him “America’s Greatest Education Governor.”

MINNESOTA RANKINGS BY AREA AND INDICATOR

OVERALL RANK: 14TH

Area and Rank ^a	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status ^b
AREA 1: RESOURCES & MEMBERSHIP 3*	Membership	By rank, what percentage of public-school teachers in the state are union members?	9th
	Revenue	By rank, what is the total yearly revenue (per teacher in the state) of the state-level NEA and/or AFT affiliate(s)?	15th
	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?	13th
		By rank, what is the total annual per-pupil expenditure (of funds from federal, state, and local sources) in the state?	24th
		By rank, what percentage of total annual per-pupil expenditures is directed to teacher salaries and benefits?	3rd
AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS 32*	Contributions to candidates and political parties	By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state candidates was donated by teacher unions?	30th
		By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state-level political parties was donated by teacher unions?	13th
	Industry influence	By rank, what percent of the contributions to state candidates from the ten highest-giving sectors was donated by teacher unions?	39th
	Status of delegates	By rank, what percentage of the state's delegates to the Democratic and Republican conventions were members of teacher unions?	34th
AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING 2	Legal scope of bargaining	What is the legal status of collective bargaining?	Mandatory
		By rank, how broad is the scope of collective bargaining?	4th*
	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?	Permitted
	Right to strike	What is the legal status of teacher strikes?	Permitted
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 46*	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?	39th
	Evaluations	What is the maximum potential consequence for veteran teachers who receive unsatisfactory evaluation(s)?	Teacher improvement plan
		Is classroom effectiveness included in teacher evaluations? If so, how is it weighted?	Required; Significantly informs evaluation
	Terms of employment	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?	49th	
	Is class size restricted for grades 1-3? If so, is the restriction higher or lower than the national average (20)?	No restriction	

Area and Rank	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 46* (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 active/available options
	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 cannot apply for exemptions
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	Yes

AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE^c 19	Relative influence of teacher unions	How do you rank the influence of teacher unions on education policy compared with other influential entities?	Second- or third-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/Always
		On a scale from always to never, how often do Republican candidates need teacher-union support to get elected?	Rarely
	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?	Agree
		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?	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?	Agree
		On a scale from always to never, how often do existing state education policies reflect teacher-union priorities?	Sometimes/Often
		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?	Somewhat/Mostly 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?	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/Sometimes
		Would you say that teacher unions typically compromise with policymakers to ensure that their preferred policies are enacted, or typically need not make concessions?	Does not generally concede

* 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, Minnesota has the 9th-highest percentage of teachers who are union members. Otherwise, we report a status: Minnesota has mandatory collective bargaining, and union agency fees are permitted. 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 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 Minnesota are shown in the table, *Minnesota 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, Minnesota is ranked 3rd 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 While our overall metric reports the strength of state teacher unions, this area also captures contributions to state campaigns and parties from national unions and local union affiliates. Typically, the total contributions from each are much smaller than the donations from the state unions. But in Minnesota's case, local unions in Minneapolis and St. Paul together gave as much to state politics as did the state-level union.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Office of Governor Mark Dayton, press release, April 12, 2012, http://mn.gov/governor/images/Ch_245_HF1974_veto-attach.pdf.

⁷ Jon Collins, "Dayton Vetoes Bill That Would Weaken Teacher Seniority," Minnesota Public Radio, May 3, 2012, <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2012/05/03/teacher-seniority-bill-veto/>.

⁸ Tom Scheck, "House Forced To Deal With Right-To-Work Amendment," Minnesota Public Radio, April 27, 2012, http://minnesota.publicradio.org/collections/special/columns/polinaut/archive/2012/04/house_forced_to.shtml.

⁹ Tim Pugmire, "Dayton Signs Minn. Teacher License Bill Into Law," Minnesota Public Radio, March 7, 2011, <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2011/03/07/teacher-licensure/>.

¹⁰ "U.S. State Of Minnesota Ends Longest Government Shutdown," *People's Daily Online*, July 21, 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90852/7447021.html>. <http://www.startribune.com/opinion/otherviews/125667103.html?page=1&c=y>

¹¹ David Taintor, "Furloughed In Minnesota – The Story Of One State Worker," TPM.com, July 11, 2011, <http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/07/how-minnesotas-government-shutdown-is-affecting-one-laid-off-state-employee.php>.

¹² Tom Weber, "Budget Deal Draws Criticism From Education Officials," Minnesota Public Radio, July 14, 2011, <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2011/07/14/shutdown-budget-education-reaction/>.