

SOUTH CAROLINA

OVERALL RANK: 49TH¹
TIER 5 (WEAKEST)

STRONGER WEAKER

OVERALL					49
1. RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP					51
2. INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS			35		
3. SCOPE OF BARGAINING				43	
4. STATE POLICIES			38		
5. PERCEIVED INFLUENCE					47

AREA 1: RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP 51ST

South Carolina’s teacher association claims fewer resources and a smaller membership base than unions in any other state. Collective bargaining between local districts and teacher associations is prohibited in the Palmetto State, and only 26.9 percent of its teachers—the lowest rate in the nation—belong to the state association. The state-level NEA affiliate brings in the smallest annual revenue in the country, just \$52 per South Carolina teacher. Teachers see scant spending on education. Only 15.5 percent of state expenditures are directed to K-12 education (only nine states allocate less). Total dollars for education (a combination of local, state, and federal funds) are low as well: \$10,237 per pupil, per year, with 52.9 percent of those dollars going toward teacher salaries and benefits (both 35th).

AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS² 35TH

Given the low revenue and membership of South Carolina’s teacher association, it comes as no surprise that its involvement in state politics over the past decade has been limited. Donations from the association accounted for just 0.16 percent of the total received by candidates for state office (unions in few states contribute less), and those donations equaled only 1.32 percent of the donations from the ten highest-giving sectors in the state (46th). The association did, however, contribute 1.2 percent of the total funds received by state political parties, the 22nd-largest proportion across states. Boosting the state’s ranking in political involvement is the fact that 16.4 percent of South Carolina delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions identified as teacher union members, 17th in the nation.³

*AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING
TIED FOR 43RD*

South Carolina is one of only five states that prohibit collective bargaining, and employee associations may not automatically collect agency fees from non-members. Teacher strikes are neither authorized nor prohibited by state law.

*AREA 4: STATE POLICIES
38TH*

State policies in South Carolina are generally not aligned with traditional union interests. Bonuses based on performance must be available to all teachers. The state's charter law does not limit the number of schools allowed to operate; provides for two viable authorizing entities; and allows automatic exemptions for charters from many state and district laws, regulations, and personnel policies. The union does, however, benefit from two favorable policies regarding teacher job security: Student achievement need not factor into teacher evaluations, and tenure is conferred virtually automatically after two years (the national norm is three). The ratio of employer to employee pension contributions and the dismissal rate due to poor teacher performance rank in the middle of the pack.

*AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE
47TH*

Stakeholders in South Carolina perceive teacher association strength to be very limited. Survey respondents rank its influence on education policy below that of numerous other entities, such as the state school board association, charter school association, business roundtable/chamber of commerce, and education advocacy organizations; stakeholders in just two

other states ranked their teacher unions as less influential. Respondents also note that policies proposed by the governor and enacted during the latest legislative session were mostly not in line with teacher association priorities. Further, they observe that in a time of budgetary constraint, the association conceded from the outset that some reductions for pay and benefits were inevitable.

*OVERALL
49TH*

With few resources, limited involvement in state politics, and no legal authority, South Carolina's teacher association carries a relatively weak reputation and faces many unfavorable policies at the state level.

State Superintendent Mick Zais has been a very unpopular guy with the South Carolina Education Association (SCEA). In 2011, he refused to apply for \$50 million in Race to the Top funds, calling it a “losing game. . . offering pieces of silver in exchange for more strings attached by Washington.”⁴ For the same reason, later that year he did not seek \$144 million in federal “stimulus” money, making South Carolina the only state not to do so. SCEA president Jackie Hicks lamented “I think it’s sad that today we’re not keeping our children first in public education.” According to the SCEA, the funding could have provided salaries for 2,880 teachers and reduced class size as a result.⁵ Two SCEA briefs entitled “Superintendent of Education Mick Zais: Dead-Beat Dad” and “Superintendent is Derelict in His Duty” fanned the anti-Zais flames.⁶

The superintendent has instead focused on reforms to increase choice and offer schools regulatory relief. Zais’s chief legislative priority for 2012 has been charter schools, which he describes as “a tremendous step [on] the way to providing a personalized and customized education for every student.”⁷ In May 2012, the state passed a bill that more than doubles the number of charter schools.⁸ The law also requires district schools to host charter students for extracurricular activities when those activities are not provided by the charters themselves, and allows universities to sponsor their own schools. While the SCEA says that it does not object to charters overall, it stands firm that charter funding should not diminish funds for traditional district schools. The SCEA did block a voucher bill before the close of the 2012 legislative session, and worked doggedly to secure state funds to give teachers a 2 percent pay raise after four years of freezes and cuts.^{9,10} But it could not diminish the momentum of Zais and other charter-school supporters.¹¹ The SCEA might not be pleased with its state superintendent, but school-choice advocates give him a gold star.

SOUTH CAROLINA RANKINGS BY AREA AND INDICATOR

OVERALL RANK: 49TH			
Area and Rank ^a	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status ^b
AREA 1: RESOURCES & MEMBERSHIP 51	Membership	By rank, what percentage of public-school teachers in the state are union members?	51st
	Revenue	By rank, what is the total yearly revenue (per teacher in the state) of the state-level NEA and/ or AFT affiliate(s)?	51st
	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?	41st
		By rank, what is the total annual per-pupil expenditure (of funds from federal, state, and local sources) in the state?	35th
		By rank, what percentage of total annual per-pupil expenditures is directed to teacher salaries and benefits?	35th
AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS 35	Contributions to candidates and political parties	By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state candidates was donated by teacher unions?	47th
		By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state-level political parties was donated by teacher unions?	22nd
	Industry influence	By rank, what percent of the contributions to state candidates from the ten highest-giving sectors was donated by teacher unions?	46th
	Status of delegates	By rank, what percentage of the state's delegates to the Democratic and Republican conventions were members of teacher unions?	17th
AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING 43	Legal scope of bargaining	What is the legal status of collective bargaining?	Prohibited
		By rank, how broad is the scope of collective bargaining?	47th*
	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?	Prohibited
	Right to strike	What is the legal status of teacher strikes?	Neither prohibited nor permitted
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 38	Performance pay	Does the state support performance pay for teachers?	Available to all teachers
	Retirement	By rank, what is the employer- versus employee-contribution rate to the teacher pension system?	30th
	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?	Not required
	Terms of employment	How long before a teacher earns tenure?	Two 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?	Optional; Weighted at district discretion
		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?	20th
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 38 (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 options but must be pre-approved
	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?	Partially; All schools receive automatic exemptions for some teachers
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	Partially; Some automatic exemptions for all schools

AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE^c 47	Relative influence of teacher unions	How do you rank the influence of teacher unions on education policy compared with other influential entities?	Fifth-most influential or below
	Influence over campaigns	On a scale from always to never, how often do Democratic candidates need teacher-union support to get elected?	Sometimes/Often
		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?	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?	Generally concede
	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?	Neutral
		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/Mostly not 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?	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?	Sometimes compromise, sometimes do not need to 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, South Carolina has the 51st-highest percentage of teachers who are union members. Otherwise, we report a status: In South Carolina, collective bargaining is prohibited, and teacher strikes are neither prohibited nor 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 scores for South Carolina are shown in the table, *South Carolina 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, South Carolina is ranked 51st 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 Mick Zais, "Race to Top' Is A Losing Game," *Post and Courier*, June 1, 2011, <http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20110601/ARCHIVES/306019940>.

⁵ Adam Pinsker, "Educators Rally For More Funding," MidlandsConnect.com, August 15, 2011, <http://www.midlandsconnect.com/news/story.aspx?id=651622#.T9GbZuYua4>.

⁶ Jackie Hicks, "Superintendent Of Education Mick Zais: Dead-Beat Dad," South Carolina Education Association, August 10, 2011, http://www.thescea.org/assets/document/Superintendent_of_Education_Mick_Zais.pdf.

⁷ Staff and wire report, "Governor Nikki Haley Signs Charter Bill Into Law," *Post and Courier*, May 15, 2012, <http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20120515/PC16/120519503/1177>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Associated Press, "SC Senate Overrides Budget Veto Of \$10 Million To Help Districts Increase Teacher Salaries," July 18, 2012, <http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/aa2e446856434adba2f60bcd8ad4b16a/SC-XGR--Veto-Session-Education>.

¹⁰ "2012 Legislative Session Updates," South Carolina Education Association, accessed July 2, 2012, <http://www.thescea.org/home/1524.htm>.

¹¹ Ibid.