

WASHINGTON

OVERALL RANK: 10TH¹
TIER 1 (STRONGEST)

STRONGER WEAKER

OVERALL	10			
1. RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP	3			
2. INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS			32	
3. SCOPE OF BARGAINING	11			
4. STATE POLICIES		18		
5. PERCEIVED INFLUENCE	9			

AREA 1: RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP TIED FOR 3RD

Washington’s teacher unions benefit from high membership and substantial member-based revenue. Fully 98.0 percent of the Evergreen State’s teachers are union members, the 4th-highest rate of 51 jurisdictions. The NEA and AFT state-level affiliates bring in \$634 annually per Washington teacher (10th). About one-quarter (24.3 percent) of Washington’s expenditures are directed toward K-12 education (10th), despite the fact that overall K-12 spending is not particularly high—\$9,320 annually per student (from federal, state, and local sources; 42nd). In addition, 54.2 percent of total education dollars go toward teacher salaries and benefits (24th).

AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS² TIED FOR 32ND

Even with their ample financial resources, Washington’s teacher unions are not heavy donors to state politics. In the past decade, their donations amounted to only 0.49 percent of all contributions to candidates for state office (29th), and 5.0 percent of the donations to candidates contributed by the ten highest-giving sectors in the state (25th). Still, they contributed 2.0 percent of the total donations received by state political parties (15th). Union representation among Washington’s delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions was also thin at 4.3 percent (48th).³

*AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING
11TH*

Washington is one of twenty-one states that both require collective bargaining and allow unions to automatically collect agency fees, a key source of revenue, from non-members. State law does not address teachers' (or any public employees') right to strike. The law is, however, quite permissive when it comes to the scope of bargaining for teachers: Of twenty-one items examined in this analysis, Washington requires bargaining over four (wages, hours, terms and conditions of employment, and insurance benefits) and explicitly permits another (retirement benefits and pensions). Only management rights are excluded from bargaining, which means the remaining fifteen items are implicitly open to bargaining.

*AREA 4: STATE POLICIES
TIED FOR 18TH*

Washington's teacher employment policies tend to align with traditional union interests. The state does not support performance pay for teachers. Further, at the time we calculated our rankings, the state did not require student achievement data be part of teacher evaluations, nor did districts need to consider teacher performance when making layoffs. (By press time, however, the state enacted, but had not yet implemented, SB 5895, requiring that student data be used in teacher evaluations and allowing teacher performance to factor in layoff decisions). Still, not all employment policies are favorable to unions. For example, the state does not mandate class size restrictions and teachers are eligible for dismissal after unsatisfactory evaluations, as opposed to first being placed on an improvement plan. Nevertheless, Washington teachers

were dismissed due to poor performance at one of the lowest rates in the country. Washington does not have a charter school law.⁴

*AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE
9TH*

Stakeholders in Washington perceive their teacher unions to be quite strong (especially when compared with perceptions of union influence in other states). They rank the unions the most influential entity in shaping education policy (with education advocacy groups as a close second). Respondents agree that teacher unions are effective in warding off proposals with which they disagree and in protecting dollars for education. They note that policies proposed by the governor and enacted in the latest legislative session were mostly in line with teacher union priorities, *and* that the positions of state education leaders are often aligned with those of teacher unions.⁵

*OVERALL
10TH*

Washington's teacher unions benefit from a strong membership and resource base, a broad scope of bargaining, and favorable teacher employment policies. While they don't contribute large sums to political campaigns, stakeholders report that they are active (and typically successful) in shaping state policy. With such a strong reputation, the teacher unions may find that their dollars are better spent elsewhere—such as trying to influence voters (see sidebar).

FOURTH TIME'S THE CHARM?

School choice proponents in the Evergreen State are nothing if not persistent—and deep-pocketed. Voters rejected charter-school initiatives in 1996, 2000, and 2004, but choice advocates hope they've changed their mind: An initiative slated for the November 2012 ballot would allow up to forty charter schools to open in the next five years. Sponsors amassed about 350,000 signatures (100,000 more than necessary to be put on the ballot) and a whopping \$3.3 million war chest from Bill Gates and others.⁶ Lawmakers such as Eric Pettigrew, D-Seattle, agree that the bill is necessary: "This initiative will finally bring Washington into the 21st century in terms of educational opportunities for public school students."⁷

Voters aren't the only ones in Washington talking about charters. In 2004, the legislature passed ESSHB 2295, which permitted charters so long as they were under contract with local school districts, but opponents brought the measure to referendum where it was soundly rejected by popular vote.^{8,9} In 2012, lawmakers once again debated a charter measure but, concerned that these schools would hire nonunion teachers and divert funds from already-strapped district schools, they never actually voted on the issue.¹⁰ With the fate of charters back in the hands of voters this autumn, the Washington Education Association (WEA)—which refers to charters as a "failed concept"—is bent on again blocking the reform.¹¹ Citing the state's already "numerous innovative public schools" and pointing out that charters would "siphon already limited dollars from existing public schools" but can show no proven record of success, the WEA has the money and members to ensure that it will remain a major force in this heated, and expensive, ongoing battle.¹²

WASHINGTON RANKINGS BY AREA AND INDICATOR

OVERALL RANK: 10TH			
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?	4th
	Revenue	By rank, what is the total yearly revenue (per teacher in the state) of the state-level NEA and/or AFT affiliate(s)?	10th
	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?	10th*
		By rank, what is the total annual per-pupil expenditure (of funds from federal, state, and local sources) in the state?	42nd
		By rank, what percentage of total annual per-pupil expenditures is directed to teacher salaries and benefits?	24th
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?	29th
		By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state-level political parties was donated by teacher unions?	15th
	Industry influence	By rank, what percent of the contributions to state candidates from the ten highest-giving sectors was donated by teacher unions?	25th
	Status of delegates	By rank, what percentage of the state's delegates to the Democratic and Republican conventions were members of teacher unions?	48th
AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING 11	Legal scope of bargaining	What is the legal status of collective bargaining?	Mandatory
		By rank, how broad is the scope of collective bargaining?	20th*
	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?	Neither prohibited nor permitted
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 18*	Performance pay	Does the state support performance pay for teachers?	State does not support
	Retirement	By rank, what is the employer- versus employee-contribution rate to the teacher pension system?	22nd
	Evaluations ^c	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?	Not required
	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?	Optional; Weighted at district discretion
		Is teacher performance included in teacher layoff decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Not required
		By rank, what percentage of the teaching workforce was dismissed due to poor performance?	11th
Class size	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 18 (cont.)	Charter school structural limitations ^d	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?	N/A
		Does the state allow a variety of charter schools: start-ups, conversions, and virtual schools?	N/A
		How many charter authorizing options exist? How active are those authorizers?	N/A
	Charter school exemptions ^d	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?	N/A
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from state teacher-certification requirements? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	N/A
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	N/A

AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCED^e 9	Relative influence of teacher unions	How do you rank the influence of teacher unions on education policy compared with other influential entities?	Most- or second-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?	Rarely/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?	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?	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?	Mostly 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/Often
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, Washington has the 4th-highest percentage of teachers who are union members. Otherwise, we report a status: Washington 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 See explanation in Area 4 above.

^d Washington does not have a charter school law.

^e 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 Washington are shown in the table, *Washington 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, Washington 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 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 do not include data for sub-indicators pertaining to charters when calculating the ranking of states that do not have charter school laws. While some might argue that the lack of such a law is in itself evidence for union strength, we do not have sufficient data to link that absence to union activity. The nine states without charter laws are home to very different contexts—while teacher unions in some states may have played a significant role in keeping charter laws at bay, in others, they played little or none. However, in Washington, the state union can take substantial credit for the absence of a charter law (see sidebar).

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 Brian M. Rosenthal, "Latest Big Gift To Charter Schools Initiative: \$600,000 From Wal-Mart Heiress," *Seattle Times*, July 17, 2012, <http://blogs.seattletimes.com/politicsnorthwest/2012/07/17/latest-eye-popping-gift-to-charter-school-initiative-600k-from-wal-mart-heiress/>.

⁷ Schrader, Jordan, "Charter School Advocates Make Last-Minute Attempt To Reach 2012 Ballot," *News Tribune*, May 22, 2012, <http://blog.thenewstribune.com/politics/2012/05/22/charter-school-advocates-make-last-minute-attempt-to-reach-2012-ballot/>.

⁸ "General Election," Stevens County, Washington, January 25, 2006, <http://www.co.stevens.wa.us/auditor/election/election/Ballot%20Titles/2004/110204.htm>.

⁹ "R-55 Is Losing, But Hope Is Still Alive!" Washington Charter School Resource Center, November 3, 2004, <http://www.wacharterschools.org/learn/history-nov04r55.htm>.

¹⁰ Brian M. Rosenthal, "Well-Funded Charter School Initiative Has Nearly Enough Signatures To Make Ballot," *Seattle Times*, July 2, 2012, http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2018585780_charterschools03m.html.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Charter Schools Drain Money From Already Underfunded Public Schools," Washington Education Association, accessed August 16, 2012, http://www.washingtonea.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3343:charter-schools-drain-money-from-already-underfunded-public-schools&catid=180.