

## **Statement by Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis on Bureau of Labor Statistics report on Union Members in 2009**

**WASHINGTON** — Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis issued the following statement regarding the Bureau of Labor Statistics report released today on Union Members in 2009:

"Today, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that, in 2009, the unionization rate of employed wage and salary workers was 12.3 percent, in essence unchanged from the 12.4 percent rate in 2008. Among private sector employees, the rate dropped to 7.2 percent from 7.6 percent in 2008.

"The data also show the median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary union members were \$908 per week, compared to \$710 for workers not represented by unions. Union members earn 28 percent more than their non-union counterparts.

"When coupled with data showing that union members have access to better health care, retirement and leave benefits, these numbers make it clear that union jobs are good jobs.

"As workers across the country have seen their real and nominal wages decline as a result of the recession, these numbers show a need for Congress to pass legislation to level the playing field to enable more American workers to access the benefits of union membership. **This report makes clear why the administration supports the Employee Free Choice Act.**"

### **Illinois Union Membership Rose in 2009**

Union membership rose by 1 percent in Illinois in 2009, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Tuesday.

Since 1989, when comparable state data became available, Illinois has had union membership rates above the U.S. average, the report stated.

Union members accounted for 17.5 percent of wage and salaried workers in Illinois in 2009, compared with 16.6 percent in 2008, the Labor Department said. At its peak in 1993, the union membership rate was 21.0 percent.

Nationally, the number of workers belonging to a union fell by 771,000 to 15.3 million in 2009, largely reflecting the overall drop in employment due to the recession, the Labor Department said. The percentage of workers belonging to a union was essentially unchanged, though, with 12.3 percent in 2009, compared with 12.4 percent in 2008.

In addition to Illinois's 951,000 wage and salaried workers who were union members in 2009, another 46,000 were represented by a union on their main job or covered by an employee association or contract while not being union members, the report said.

Nationwide, about 15.3 million wage and salaried workers were union members in 2009, and about 1.6 million were represented by a union though not union members.

Union membership rose over the year in 24 states including Illinois, decreased in 21 states, and was unchanged in five. New York had the highest rate of union membership at 25.2 percent, while North Carolina had the lowest at 3.1 percent.

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