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In What Ways Are Unions Good For America?

Throughout the history of business and industry, there has been a constant struggle in the workplace between the employers and those who are employed. History has shown that exploitation is a common threat and enemy for those in the working class. The response to this ever growing threat was the creation of the labor union, which in a specific definition can be defined as a legal entity consisting of employees or workers who have a common interest and act together to secure benefits and rights in the workplace ("Labor Union-Definition."). Unions are very helpful and beneficial organizations to the average working man; however, it is possible that some people are not familiar with the power held by the unions. There is an ever lingering question, which asks; in what ways are unions good for America? In short, unions are good for America because they protect the rights, livelihood and future of working class individuals who make up the not only the structure and the very essence of this great country in which we live. Through the use of contracts, negotiation and sheer power in numbers the union has and continues to ensure a more stable and secure future for those involved in its brotherhood. It shall be the sole purpose of this essay to analyze and discover how unions affect not only individuals themselves, but also discover how helping those individuals actually help an entire nation.

The first way unions are good for America can be shown through the way unions protect the rights of American workers. Matt Noyes and Rachel Szekely, two authors from *The Association for Union Democracy*, explain that every American worker is guaranteed certain rights established by federal, states and local law, and certain rights established through past company agreements. These rights may include such things as minimum wage, work hours, benefits, sick days, holidays, seniority and ect.

(Noyes). Basically, this means that in order to establish and oversee that these rights are being maintained and upheld; the union must act as a sort of lawyer who represents the American workers. Through engaging in negotiation and creating contracts the union gains workers their rights, while also accepting the trade off which ensures that the workers will actually do their jobs, and in short earn the rights given to them (Noyes). This places the union as a sort of intermediary between the company and the workers in which case the union acts as a referee making sure the company honors their end of the deal, but in return ensures that the workers behave according to company policy and work harmoniously with one another creating production. So just how is this entire system good for the well being of the American nation? The answer is simple; this type of system is good for America because it ensures that the country retains a solid and productive work force. If the workers are happy, then work is being completed on time and the country is ensured to operate and function properly. In studying history, no country has ever been able to stand without a solid and productive work force behind it. The workforce and those who occupy it is a very essential piece to the inner workings of a nation and is vital for that nation to remain efficient.

The second way unions are good for America can be shown through the way unions protect the livelihood of working American citizens. Greed is a natural part of human nature, which without proper precautions can tempt even the most noble of men in power to become too ambitious and attempt to gain more power. Obviously, it is only natural for humans to want to gain more in life for this is actually the basic idea of capitalism, which promotes individuals to make an attempt at gaining more by going further where others have failed; however, greed and exploitation are very different than having the will to succeed in life in which case it is only natural for human beings to want to defend themselves against anybody or anything who would try to compromise their livelihood. This is not meant to paint the picture that those in big business are evil, but that being said, history has shown that corporate greed does exist and can be a very big threat without the proper precautions in place.

An example of this can be seen through the cause of the initial creation of the union system, which first came about during the Industrial Revolution when exploited workers banded together to fight the greed and corruption demonstrated by the factory owners (“Labor Union- Definition.”). Basically, the factory owners were able to do whatever they wanted to the workers due to the reason that the workers were in desperate need for work and lacked any other option (“Labor Union- Definition.”). In short, the workers of the era were angry toward their lack of defense of being paid little to nothing in wages, being fired for no reason, and just being down right degraded, oppressed, and left to the mercy of another man. It was by joining together in numbers, that the workers discovered they were able to take by force their basic and necessary rights, and establish good working conditions and better, steady ways of living. This shows that this system is good for America and must continue on today because it ensures that American workers retain steady and good working conditions and just an all around better state of living, which in turn allows for wealth to be created and attained by striving individuals. This does not ensure that American citizens will become extremely wealthy or powerful; however, it does ensure that American workers have every opportunity available to have a steady and reliable job and can live a good steady life. In short, the union protects the people of America because it protects people from being taken advantage of and left impoverished with nothing.

The third way unions are good for America can be shown through the way they protect the future of America. The first way the union protects the future of America is accomplished through the way unions protect the future American economy. David Madland and Karla Walter, two writers from *The Center for American Progress*, explain that allowing American workers to unionize is good for all American workers because unions seek to create equal pay for all workers. This means that since unions fight to get better pay; non union workers are affected as well due to competition between businesses. Madland continues to states, “It would help boost workers’ wages and benefits. And putting more money in workers pockets would provide a needed boost for the U.S. economy. Increasing unionization

is a good way to get out of our current economic troubles.” In short, this means that unions actually ensure prosperity for the future country because they seek to ensure that the American workers are being paid a fair and competitive wage. This is important because it adds more money into the nation’s money supply, which in turn allows people to make more long term investments.

The second way the union protects the future of America is accomplished through the way unions actively participate in the legislative process of this nation. Lawrence Mishel and Matthew Walters states, two writers at *The Economic Policy Institute*, state, “Unions play a pivotal role both in *securing legislative labor* protections and rights such as safety and health, overtime, and family/medical leave and in enforcing those rights on a job. Unions are thus an intermediary institution that provides a necessary complement to *legislative benefits and protections*.” This means that the union plays an active role in influencing pieces of legislation, which can be extremely important for two reasons. The first reason being that unions and be the voice of the working people and voice their opinions. The second reason being that the unions directly show support toward democracy, which our nation happens to be built upon. *WordIQ.com* states, “Today most democracy governments have unions where authoritarian governments do not” (“Labor Union- Definition.”). In short, this means that unions support democracy and as long as they are in existence, will continue to fight and ensure democracy exists.

In conclusion, unions are good for America because they protect the rights, livelihood and the future of working class Americans who make up this great country in which we live. Greed and corruption are always going to be a part of our society; however, established systems, such as the union system can always be there to help fight for justice and ensure equality amongst the people. The union can almost be portrayed as a kind of superhero, just flying around, waiting to thwart the evil and corruptible powers of greed and in the end save the day. On a more serious note, the biggest pro of the union system is the fact that workers have a form of power they can count and rely on. It serves as a

beacon of hope, truth and justice in which case Americans everywhere can rest assured with the sense of peace that there is a brighter tomorrow.