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Professional Union Membership Hit New High in 2017, Public Sector Realized Largest Gains

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19, 2018—This morning, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) published its [annual report](#) on union membership and revealed [professionals in unions](#) grew to a new high at over 6.1 million members in 2017. The largest gains in professional union membership came from those working in the public sector. Today’s BLS union membership report is based on analysis of 2017 union data released earlier this month.

Union members employed in [professional and technical occupations](#) grew by nearly 90,000 members in 2017—from 6.06 million in 2016 to 6.15 million. The public sector realized almost 80 percent of the gains with the addition of nearly 70,000 professional union members. This increase follows the long-term trend of professionals choosing to join together in union. In the last 15 years, 800,000 more professionals have become union members.

“DPE is pleased to see professional union membership continue to grow. Our coalition of affiliate unions values the role professionals play in the labor movement, which is why we’ve worked hard to determine how to effectively represent current union members and organize new members,” said Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO ([DPE](#)) President Paul E. Almeida. “The tremendous gains in the public sector are the result of professionals deciding to join together to have a voice and make workplace improvements in a climate often hostile to those who work in government.”

The [BLS report](#) on 2017 union membership also showed that overall union membership was up. Union membership increased from 14.5 million members in 2016 to 14.8 million members in 2017—an over 260,000 member increase. Due to the recent growth in overall union membership and professional union membership, professionals continue to make up over 40 percent of the labor movement.

In October 2016, DPE sponsored [a survey](#) that found most professionals want to be part of a union. The 2017 gains in professional union membership indicate that professionals are acting on their interest in unions.

“We know that professionals want a union and it is good to see the BLS numbers reflect professionals’ support for unions,” said Almeida. “We will continue to work with our affiliates to ensure professional union membership continues to grow in the coming years.”

About DPE

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO ([DPE](#)) is a coalition of 23 unions representing over four million professional and technical union members. DPE affiliate unions represent professionals in over 300 occupations in education and healthcare; science, engineering, and technology; legal, business, and management; media, entertainment, and the arts; and public administration.