

# NEVADA

OVERALL RANK: 25TH<sup>1</sup>  
TIER 3 (AVERAGE)

STRONGER 
←
→
 WEAKER

OVERALL			25		
1. RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP				28	
2. INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS		18			
3. SCOPE OF BARGAINING				27	
4. STATE POLICIES				28	
5. PERCEIVED INFLUENCE		10			

## AREA 1: RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP TIED FOR 28TH

Nevada’s state teacher union enjoys a fair amount of resources from its members but does not see much spending on K-12 education in the state. With 74.6 percent of the state’s teachers unionized and annual revenue of \$435 per teacher, the NEA-affiliated Nevada State Education Association (NSEA) is in the middle of the pack compared with unions in other states. Spending on K-12 education is relatively high—21.3 percent of the state’s budget goes to K-12 education (the 17th-highest proportion out of 51 jurisdictions). But Nevada is at the bottom of the list when it comes to total dollars for education from local, state, and federal sources: Annual per-pupil expenditures are just \$8,363—only one state spends less.

## AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS<sup>2</sup> TIED FOR 18TH

Over the past ten years, teacher unions contributed significant sums to state political campaigns in Nevada.<sup>3</sup> Donations from unions constituted 1.7 percent of the money received by state-level candidates (the 7th-highest percentage in the nation) and 2.8 percent of all giving to state political parties (9th-highest). But teacher unions faced competition: Their contributions to political candidates amounted to 6.5 percent of all donations from the ten highest-giving sectors (21st). Nor was the union voice at the Democratic and Republican national conventions as loud as in other states: Just 9.1 percent of Nevada’s delegates were teacher union members (37th).<sup>4</sup>

*AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING  
27TH*

Though Nevada is one of thirty-two jurisdictions that require collective bargaining, teachers are not allowed to strike. The Silver State also prohibits unions from automatically collecting agency fees, a key source of revenue, from non-members. Nevada nonetheless empowers unions with a wide scope of collective bargaining; of the twenty-one items examined in this metric, Nevada explicitly requires that fourteen be subjects of bargaining—more than any other state.

*AREA 4: STATE POLICIES  
28TH*

Nevada's state policies are not perfectly in line with traditional teacher union interests, but neither are they badly misaligned. Nevada permits, but does not require, performance pay for teachers. State law requires that student achievement be the preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations, but teachers can earn tenure after just three years. It also mandates that factors other than seniority—but not student achievement—be considered in layoff decisions. The state's charter laws are also a mixed bag: Nevada does not cap charter schools (though some districts do), but neither does it give them automatic exemptions from most district regulations. Collective bargaining agreements apply only to charter employees on leave from traditional schools.

*AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE  
10TH*

Stakeholders perceive teacher unions in Nevada to be among the most influential entities in shaping education policy, and they report that both Democrats and

Republicans seeking state-level office often need teacher union support to get elected. Further, they agreed that teacher unions are often effective in protecting dollars for education and note that they fought hard to prevent reductions in pay and benefits during the recent period of budgetary constraints. Respondents indicate, however, that Nevada's teacher unions have faced struggles of late: Policies proposed by the governor during the state's recent legislative session were mostly *not* in line with teacher union priorities, and the legislative outcomes were only *somewhat* in line with them.<sup>5</sup>

*OVERALL  
25TH*

Nevada's teacher unions are more involved in state politics than many of their counterparts in other states, and they enjoy a relatively strong reputation for influence. The scope of bargaining and state policy environment are middle-of-the-road, neither particularly favorable nor unfavorable to union interests.

## BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

The Clark County Education Association (CCEA) didn't heed Superintendent Dwight Jones when he said in early 2012 that there was simply no money to raise teacher salaries. Jones had warned that layoffs would be inevitable if wages were not held steady. An arbitrator hired to mediate the dispute ruled in favor of the union, and the district paid teachers a total of \$64 million in pay raises.<sup>6</sup>

In June 2012, however, Jones's warning became reality. To offset the cost of the raises, the Clark County School District mailed pink slips to 419 teachers and let another 600 newly-vacated positions go unfilled. While the union contract stipulates that both performance and seniority are key criteria for layoffs, in reality, early-career teachers bore the brunt of the firings: Because only thirty-six veteran teachers met the union's stringent definition of poor performance, roughly 380 newer teachers were let go instead. Teachers who survived the culling face an increase of three students per class, which brings the average to a hefty thirty-five students—one of the highest in the nation.

Faced with threats to teacher job security in Clark County (Las Vegas) and elsewhere, the Nevada state union proposed a solution that would increase state education funding and, ultimately, protect teacher salaries and jobs. The NSEA backed a ballot measure that would impose a 2 percent tax on businesses earning over \$1 million a year, with the revenue going to the state's general fund (and eventually reaching local school districts). Nevada businesses claimed the tax was illegal and misleading, and they are suing to stop the "Education Initiative." If the union can muster over 72,000 signatures by November 2012, the 2013 legislature will consider approving the statutory initiative.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, CCEA and Clark County district leaders are negotiating their 2012–13 contract; early observers say the talks "haven't been promising."<sup>8</sup>

# NEVADA RANKINGS BY AREA AND INDICATOR

OVERALL RANK: 25TH			
Area and Rank <sup>a</sup>	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status <sup>b</sup>
<b>AREA 1: RESOURCES &amp; MEMBERSHIP</b>  28*	Membership	By rank, what percentage of public-school teachers in the state are union members?	28th
	Revenue	By rank, what is the total yearly revenue (per teacher in the state) of the state-level NEA and/or AFT affiliate(s)?	30th
	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?	17th
		By rank, what is the total annual per-pupil expenditure (of funds from federal, state, and local sources) in the state?	50th
		By rank, what percentage of total annual per-pupil expenditures is directed to teacher salaries and benefits?	26th
<b>AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS</b>  18*	Contributions to candidates and political parties	By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state candidates was donated by teacher unions?	7th
		By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state-level political parties was donated by teacher unions?	9th
	Industry influence	By rank, what percent of the contributions to state candidates from the ten highest-giving sectors was donated by teacher unions?	21st
	Status of delegates	By rank, what percentage of the state's delegates to the Democratic and Republican conventions were members of teacher unions?	37th
<b>AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING</b>  27	Legal scope of bargaining	What is the legal status of collective bargaining?	Mandatory
		By rank, how broad is the scope of collective bargaining?	1st
	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?	Agency fees prohibited
	Right to strike	What is the legal status of teacher strikes?	Prohibited
<b>AREA 4: STATE POLICIES</b>  28	Performance pay	Does the state support performance pay for teachers?	State supports/encourages
	Retirement	By rank, what is the employer- versus employee-contribution rate to the teacher pension system?	42nd*
	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?	Required; Preponderant criterion
	Terms of employment	How long before a teacher earns tenure?	Three years
		Is student/teacher performance considered in tenure decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Required; Preponderant criterion
		Is seniority considered in teacher layoff decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Optional; May be considered among other factors
		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?	4th	
Class size	Is class size restricted for grades 1-3? If so, is the restriction higher or lower than the national average (20)?	Yes; Lower	

Area and Rank	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status
<b>AREA 4: STATE POLICIES</b>  <b>28</b>  (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 (but authorizers are capped)
		Does the state allow a variety of charter schools: start-ups, conversions, and virtual schools?	Start-ups and virtual schools only
		How many charter authorizing options exist? How active are those authorizers?	Two or more w/limited jurisdiction
	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

<b>AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE<sup>c</sup></b>  <b>10</b>	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/Always
		On a scale from always to never, how often do Republican candidates need teacher-union support to get elected?	Sometimes/Often
	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 not in line/ Somewhat 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?	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?	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

<sup>a</sup> Area ranks are calculated using a weighted average of sub-indicators. For a more detailed description, see Appendix A.

<sup>b</sup> Where possible, we report a state's rank as compared to other states on a given metric. For example, out of 51 states, Nevada has the 28th-highest percentage of teachers who are union members. Otherwise, we report a status: Nevada has mandatory collective bargaining, and union agency fees are prohibited. 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](mailto:uniondata@edexcellence.net).

<sup>c</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> A state's overall rank is calculated as follows: First, we score it on multiple sub-indicators (sub-indicator data and scores for Nevada are shown in the table, *Nevada 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, Nevada is ranked 28th 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> While our overall metric reports the strength of state teacher unions (in this case, the Nevada State Education Association, Nevada's NEA affiliate), this particular indicator also captures contributions from local (and national) affiliates. Typically, the contributions from locals are significantly smaller than the amount given by state unions. But in Nevada's case, a local affiliate (Clark County Education Association) gave nearly as much as the state union.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> Trevon Milliard, "More Than 400 Teachers, Personnel Receive Pink Slips," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, June 11, 2012, <http://www.lvrj.com/news/more-than-400-teachers-personnel-receive-pink-slips-158446925.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Associated Press, "Lawsuit Filed Against Nevada Tax Initiative," *Las Vegas Sun*, June 26, 2012, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2012/jun/26/nv-nevada-tax-initiative-1st-ld-writethru/>.

<sup>8</sup> Milliard.