



## Labor Day 2021: State Of The U.S. Labor Unions

September 2, 2021 | [Labor And Employment, National Labor Relations Board, Federal Laws And Legislation](#)



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Hard to believe, but Labor Day 2021 is already upon us. In addition to (hopefully) preparing for an extended, relaxing weekend with family and friends, that also means it's time for my annual bird's-eye look at the current [labor relations landscape in America](#). While this year on the surface appears to be a mixed bag for unions, the labor movement may have reason to be optimistic in the coming years.

Let's start with a look at the numbers. According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics' annual report](#), union membership in the private sector rose on a percentage basis for the first time in years from 2019 to 2020. However, this percentage increase largely was attributable to a decline in overall workforce numbers related to the pandemic, as unionized employees were not hit with job loss to the same extent as their non-union counterparts.

Nevertheless, it wasn't all good news for unions. According to a Bloomberg Law report, [13 major unions saw a decline](#) in their membership ranks last year.

As the economy and soaring jobs market heats up, though, it should be expected that union membership numbers will increase. Further contributing to a likely increase in 2021 is the favorable legal landscape ahead for unions. Indeed, Congress currently is considering passing the [PRO Act](#), which would, among other things, make it easier for unions to organize workforces. In addition, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) now has a [pro-union](#)

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majority for the first time in years. It is widely anticipated that the NLRB will issue a host of opinions favorable to unions, such as decisions that limit management flexibility to unilaterally alter organized workers' terms and conditions of employment, and that it will promulgate rules to streamline the union organizing process.

In sum, unlike prior years, there appears to be a basis for optimism within the labor movement. We'll see what they do with this potential momentum. Employers with unions and those desiring to remain union-free should continue to monitor legal developments and organizing trends so they can be prepared to navigate the changing landscape. In the meantime, hope everyone enjoys the Labor Day weekend.