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Labor Day 2018: State Of The U.S. Labor Unions

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A broad look at the U.S. labor relations landscape heading into the 2018 Labor Day Weekend shows it is a mixed bag for organized labor at the moment. In Gallup's just -released annual poll tracking public support for labor unions, data indicates [support for unions is growing](#).

According to Gallup: "Sixty-two percent of Americans approve of labor unions today, which is consistent with the 61% who approved last year [2017] and up from 56% in 2016. Before 2017, public support for unions hadn't exceeded 60% since 2003, when 65% approved." While approval is still way down from the nearly 70 percent average unions enjoyed in the 1930s, it appears to be on the upswing. However, more than half of those polled (51 percent) indicated they believe that unions will only become weaker in terms of clout in the future. Union membership numbers seem to support that belief.

Notwithstanding the Gallup data, unions are having a tough time gaining and retaining new members. Indeed, [U.S. private sector union membership](#) remains at a near all-time low of 6.5 percent, and unions continue to suffer high profile election losses, such as [at Nissan in Mississippi](#) last year. Public sector unions also took a hit earlier this year when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled public sector employees generally [cannot be forced to pay union dues](#).

Employers desiring to remain union-free nevertheless must remain vigilant, as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has issued various decisions in recent years that make it easier for unions to organize workforces (e.g., [micro-unit rulings](#), etc.). Thus, while unions likely will never see membership

numbers close to what they saw decades ago, they remain a force of which companies need to be cognizant – even with the more “employer-friendly” NLRB currently in place.