



## Poll: Americans favor union bargaining rights

Updated 1d 8h ago |

By **Dennis Cauchon**, USA TODAY

MADISON, Wis. — **Americans** strongly oppose laws taking away the collective bargaining power of public employee unions, according to a new USA TODAY/Gallup Poll. The poll found 61% would oppose a law in their state similar to such a proposal in **Wisconsin**, compared with 33% who would favor such a law.



Danny Johnston, APArkansas union members rally in support of Wisconsin union members at the Arkansas state Capitol in Little Rock on Tuesday.

Tuesday.Enlarge

By Danny Johnston, AP

Arkansas union members rally in support of Wisconsin union members at the Arkansas state Capitol in Little Rock on Tuesday.

**Republican Gov. Scott Walker** and Republican legislators in Wisconsin have proposed cutting union rights for most state

government workers and making them pay more for benefits. Ohio, **New Jersey**, **Indiana**, **Iowa** and other states with Republican governors are considering similar laws.

Thousands gathered in Madison for an eighth day to protest Walker's plan. Rallies were also held in Columbus, Ohio, Des Moines and Montpelier, Vt.

"Most people ... mistakenly think worker rights come from collective bargaining," Walker told USA TODAY Tuesday. He said his plan would not remove union workers' protections from wrongful termination or inappropriate discipline or hiring. "When you alter collective bargaining, it doesn't alter workers' rights," he said.

**WISCONSIN:** [Thousands protest at Capitol](#)

**Q&A:** [Nuts and bolts of Wisconsin battle](#)

**PHOTOS:** [Thousands rally in Wisconsin](#)

Walker wants union members to pay more for their health care and pension benefits, moves he and other Republicans say would save \$300 million over the next two years as

Advertisement

Print Powered By FormatDynamics



the state faces a projected \$3.6 billion budget shortfall.

Fourteen **Democratic** legislators have left the state for the past week to keep the Senate from having a quorum needed to vote on the bill. **Democrats** in the Indiana House of Representatives also stayed away from their Capitol on Tuesday as unions protested Republican-backed labor bills.

Almost two-thirds of those polled say their states face budget crises, but respondents oppose or are split on potential solutions, from tax hikes to spending cuts.

Key results:

— 71% oppose increasing sales, income or other taxes while 27% are in favor that approach.

— 53% oppose reducing pay or benefits for government workers while 44% are in favor.

— 48% opposed reducing or eliminating government programs while 47% were in favor of cuts.

"This underlines the difficulty of solving these problems," Jeffrey Jones of Gallup says. "It's hard to find a consensus on what to do."

Despite the opposition to tax hikes or spending cuts, those surveyed agreed overwhelmingly that their state was facing a budget crisis.

Sixty-four percent said their state was in financial crisis while only 5% said it wasn't. The rest were unsure.

The poll found people were divided on whether public employee unions were a

good thing. A slight majority of 46% said unions were generally more harmful to states while 45% thought they were helpful.

Still, this mixed view did not extend to supporting changes in pay, benefits or bargaining rights.

Republicans supported limiting bargaining by a 54%-41% margin. However, only 18% of Democrats favored restrictions while 79% were opposed. Independents were against bargaining restrictions by a 31% to 62% margin.

Jones says that public support for unions has been strong for decades, although it has dropped in the last few years. Still, he says the poll shows Americans are reluctant to take away something that unions have already.

#### USA TODAY/Gallup Poll

#### USA TODAY/Gallup Poll

Q. Do you favor or oppose these ways to reduce state budget deficits?

Advertisement



Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



Source: USA TODAY/Gallup Poll of 1,000 adults  
Monday. Margin of error: +/-4 percentage points

**Copyright 2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.**

For more information about [reprints & permissions](#), visit our [FAQ's](#). To report corrections and clarifications, contact Standards Editor **Brent Jones**. For publication consideration in the newspaper, send comments to [letters@usatoday.com](mailto:letters@usatoday.com). Include name, phone number, city and state for verification. To view our corrections, go to [corrections.usatoday.com](http://corrections.usatoday.com).

Advertisement

**USA TODAY**  
**AutoPilot**

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by:

**SEE HOW IT WORKS >>**

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™