FEDERAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING · ANSWERS TO COMMON OBJECTIONS

What critics claim, and what the record shows

The case against federal bargaining comes mostly from the Heritage Foundation, its Project 2025 and the White House fact sheet on the 2025 orders. Here are the main arguments next to the facts.

THE CLAIM

Nobody lost the right to join a union. Only bargaining ended.

THE RECORD A union that cannot bargain, file a grievance or go to arbitration is a club. Agencies were told to stop honoring grievances and stop deducting dues.

THE CLAIM

Official time costs taxpayers more than $300 million a year.

THE RECORD OPM's own reports put the payroll cost between $135 million and $177 million a year from fiscal 2012 through 2019, about one-tenth of one percent of federal pay and benefits. It exists because the law requires a union to represent every employee, member or not, at no charge.

THE CLAIM

This is about national security.

THE RECORD Police, firefighters and Customs and Border Protection kept their rights. The White House fact sheet complained that unions were fighting the president's agenda. TSA granted bargaining in 2011 because poor morale was hurting security.

THE CLAIM

Even FDR opposed bargaining in the federal government.

THE RECORD His 1937 letter was about strikes, which are still illegal for federal workers. Congress then watched bargaining work under Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon and Ford for 16 years and made it law in 1978.

THE CLAIM

Unions should not be able to obstruct an elected president.

THE RECORD Congress is elected too, and Congress wrote the bargaining law. That law reserves hiring, firing, budget and mission to management, and lets managers act first in an emergency.

THE CLAIM

Presidents of both parties have used this exception.

THE RECORD True. Carter used it first, in 1979. For 45 years the list was intelligence offices and a few law enforcement units. In 2025 it became about two-thirds of the federal workforce.

1962 Kennedy grants the first bargaining rights by executive order

1969 Nixon expands the program and creates its machinery

1975 Ford widens what can be bargained

1978 Congress writes bargaining into law and calls it "in the public interest"

2025 Twenty House Republicans vote to restore the rights taken that year

Read the full record, sources and draft text

reform.local1776.org

Scan the code with a phone camera. Every figure and quotation on this page is sourced on the site. The bill language is a discussion draft and has not been reviewed by legislative counsel.

LIUNA Local 1776
Ben Banchs
Business Manager-Secretary Treasurer
We represent U.S. government employees