

FACT SHEET



Private-Sector Union Household Voters Vs. Big Labor Politics

Union Members Employed by Businesses Favored Donald Trump, But Their Forced Dues Bankrolled Kamala Harris

by Stan Greer

According to the oft-cited Open Secrets website, in last year's bitterly fought presidential contest, Big Labor poured \$54.5 million directly into the campaign of pro-forced unionism Democrat nominee Kamala Harris and political organizations backing Harris.¹

Reported union-boss contributions to the Harris-Walz ticket and its allies exceeded union-boss contributions to Trump-Vance and pro-Trump-Vance organizations by an incredible 260-to-one. And a solid majority of the Organized Labor cash directed at the Democrat ticket and its partners came from the coffers of predominantly private-sector unions.²

Meanwhile, most members of private-sector union households across the U.S. who voted in the 2024 presidential race evidently cast their ballots against the ticket top union bosses were lavishly bankrolling with workers' forced dues and fees as well as with union PAC money.

Sean O'Brien, the top boss of the 1.3 million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the largest predominantly private-sector union in the U.S., has been publicly blunt about the fact that rank-and-file IBT members strongly favored Donald Trump over Harris last year.

Teamster Polling of Members 'Was All Leaning 60-62% Republican'

For example, in a videotaped *Free Press Live*³ interview conducted roughly a week after Election Day, O'Brien cited two different polls of IBT members that had been taken in the wake of Harris's replacing then-President Joe Biden at the head of the Democrat ticket:

"[W]e did a polling . . . of our members, and then we did some research-based polling using . . . the Biden-Harris pollsters," O'Brien recalled to journalists Michael Moynihan and Batya Ungar-Sargon.

"[I]t was all leaning 60-62% Republican, so that's your members speaking."

It's a safe bet that Sean O'Brien, a lifelong Democrat by his own account, commissioned these polls and made them public because he correctly surmised Donald Trump would win the 2024 presidential race, not because he wanted Trump to win.

Simply in order to avoid being left out in the political cold over the next four years, O'Brien opted in early 2024 to start "making nice" with Trump and a handful of other GOP politicians. And it turns out one small way for a Teamster boss to "make nice" with GOP elected officials is simply to admit what has undoubtedly been true for many years:

Most rank-and-file Teamster members who vote at all vote against the Big Labor Democrat candidates Teamster and other union bosses routinely bankroll with workers' forced union dues.

Despite UAW Don's Loud Harris-Walz Support, Trump-Vance Carried 'UAW Strongholds'

While O'Brien only polled Teamster members, he went on to suggest to Moynihan and Ungar-Sargon that there is no good reason to believe other union members employed by private-sector, for-profit businesses were substantially more supportive of the Harris-Walz ticket than Teamster members were:

"The [United Auto Workers union's] Shawn Fain was on Neil Cavuto [before the election] and I don't know what polling he did, but he said [Harris-Walz] is going to win Michigan, [and] our polling suggests that our members are all for the Harris-Walz campaign. Well, clearly, that wasn't the case . . ."⁴

The loudly pro-Harris-Walz UAW hierarchy has never publicly released any poll showing where their members stood in last year's presidential race, and it isn't even clear Fain and his lieutenants conducted any such polls.

But 2024 election results in key automaking counties show Donald Trump actually had overwhelming support among rank-and-file UAW factory workers and their family members.

A post-election analysis⁵ for State Affairs by veteran Hoosier political writer Brian Howey pointed out that Indiana's Allan County, home of a giant, UAW-controlled truck plant, backed Trump over Harris, 58.6% to 39.7%.

Trump-Vance carried other auto-making Indiana counties by even wider margins. The GOP ticket shellacked the Democrat ticket with 66.6% of the vote in Howard County, home to unionized Stellantis, GM, and Haynes International facilities. Trump-Vance won the GM counties of Lawrence and Grant with "74.7% and 70%, respectively."

Generally speaking, voting margins in favor of Trump-Vance were no wider in Indiana counties that are home to union-free auto plants than in counties with unionized plants.

Government-Sector, Private-Sector Union Members Disagree Politically

With regard to private-sector unions generally, there's no plausible reason to believe the Teamsters and the UAW rank-and-files are political outliers.

In fact, New York City-based IBT Vice President Gregory Floyd, himself an outspoken Harris-Walz supporter, admitted last September that, in his assessment, the roughly 1.6 million rank-and-file members of America's other building-trades unions are even more apt to vote Republican than rank-and-file Teamsters are.⁶

Nevertheless, the principal national exit poll cross-tab stating how "union households" voted in 2024 suggests that a relatively narrow 53% to 45% majority of Organized Labor dues-payers and their family members voted for Kamala Harris over Donald Trump.⁷ What pundits who cite this poll tend to forget is that in recent decades a majority of employed union members don't work for for-profit businesses.

Today, a substantial majority of unionized workers across the U.S. either work for the government at the federal, state or local level, or work for a private academic or other nonprofit organization.⁸

This is true even of vast numbers of employees of ostensibly private-sector unions like the UAW. According to the most recent data, roughly a quarter⁹ of UAW members are employed not in the auto industry, but at a college or university.

Not surprisingly, government and academic employees tend to have political views far to the left of blue-collar workers in the business sector.¹⁰

Right to Work Law Stop Big Labor From Abusing Workers Politically

Even though business-sector union members and their families don't at all see eye to eye politically with members of government and academic unions, top bosses of all kinds of unions lopsidedly direct their political support to the same Big Labor Democrat candidates.¹¹

Union bosses help the candidates they favor politically

not just with PAC and other reported expenditures, but also with even greater amounts of unreported, "in-kind" campaign support that is largely paid for with members' dues money.¹²

Moreover, in states without Right to Work laws, private-sector unionized workers are routinely forced to fork over dues or fees to Big Labor in order to keep their jobs, and union bosses like Sean O'Brien and Shawn Fain don't hesitate to use that money to bankroll candidates those workers oppose.

To stop the union brass from abusing millions of workers politically, Congress needs to adopt national Right to Work legislation. This important reform would protect unionized workers from being forced to finance candidates they and their family members oppose with their union dues and fees by making all financial support for Organized Labor voluntary.

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Endnotes

1. "Presidential Elections, 2024: Sector Totals and Candidates" viewed on the [opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org) website, accessed on March 25, 2025.
2. See "Presidential Elections, 2024: Industries Totals and Candidates" on the [opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org) website.
3. "Teamsters President Sean O'Brien on Trump's Populist Victory."
4. According to the Open Secrets analysis of the Teamster Union's politics, in the 2023-24 campaign cycle, under Mr. O'Brien's stewardship, 92% of Teamster reported contributions to congressional candidates went to Democrats, even though the same Teamsters members who overwhelmingly supported Donald Trump surely also strongly favored GOP over Democrat candidates in their districts and states. The Teamsters' unreported, in-kind expenditures in campaigns surely tilted Democrat at least as lopsidedly.
5. "Trump carried Indiana UAW strongholds," November 21, 2024.
6. See Nick Niedzwiadek, Brittany Gibson, and Holly Otterbein, "Teamsters Skip Presidential Endorsement, Amid Apparently Strong Member Support For Trump," *Politico*, September 18, 2024.
7. See, e.g., "Election 2024: Exit Polls" on the CNN website.
8. While the Union Membership, Coverage and Earning Database, a website maintained by economists Barry Hirsch, David McPherson and William Even, shows 51.4% of the 14.4 million union members nationwide are in the private sector, vast numbers of private-sector union members are not employed by for-profit businesses. The same site indicates 1.7 million union members work in "health care and social assistance," an overwhelmingly nonprofit subsector. According to a 2024 City University of New York analysis, more than 51,000 graduate students at private-sector higher education institutions in the U.S. are union members.
9. Andrea Hsu, "UAW Membership Is Down and Half of the Members Aren't in the Auto Business," *NPR Morning Edition*, October 17, 2024.
10. For example, on November 23, 2016, Greg Toppo of *USA Today* reported that nearly 80% of rank-and-file American Federation of Teachers (AFT/AFL-CIO) members who cast ballots voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump. Nearly two-thirds of the National Education Association union members who voted cast ballots for Clinton. See "Teacher Unions Smarting After Many Members Vote For Trump."
11. See, e.g., the "Labor Sector Summary" on the [opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org) website.
12. See National Institute For Labor Relations Research, "Union Bosses Admit They Spent \$1.67 Billion on Politics in the 2023 Election Cycle," September 10, 2023.