

# Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

The facts Big Labor bosses would rather you didn't hear about.

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*Compulsory unionism breeds corruption. In each issue of "Exposed," the National Right to Work Committee will highlight yet another example of union-boss abuse spawned and perpetuated by Big Labor's government-granted privilege to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired.*

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## **Big Labor Fiscal Time Bombs Now Exploding in California**

One possible silver lining of the sharp declines in real estate prices that many communities are experiencing is that they may help alert the country, before it's too late, to a deadly long-term threat to the fiscal health of state and local governments across America.

Until recently, the vast majority of taxpaying citizens in state and local jurisdictions where public employees are under Big Labor monopoly-bargaining control have clearly been unaware of how badly they are being ripped off by government union bosses and their puppet politicians.

It's taken a host of current fiscal crises that have been brought to a head by the real estate crunch, but are to a much greater extent the result of costly spending mandates engineered over the years by government union lobbyists, to alert countless taxpayers to how their pockets have been picked.

Many of the worst crises are unfolding in California, where, according to economists Barry Hirsch and David Macpherson, the number of public-sector employees who are forced to accept a union as their "exclusive" (monopoly) bargaining agent in the workplace soared by more than 20% over the past decade.

In a recent article for the *Weekly Standard* magazine, Stephen Moore, the senior economics writer for the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, observes that a number of cities in the Golden State are now contemplating "the bankruptcy option" because of "multi-billion-dollar," taxpayer-funded "pension and health care obligations that have become effectively unpayable."

In late February, Vallejo, a San Francisco Bay suburb of 120,000 residents, openly planned to go bankrupt. This seemingly prosperous town "can no longer afford," reports Moore, to comply with spending mandates foisted on local taxpayers by government union bosses and local public officials who for years routinely acquiesced to Big Labor demands. Only a last-minute deal

forged by police, fire and other union bosses, who didn't want to flat out "kill the goose" that has made them rich, kept the town from going broke, for now.

Moore goes on to illustrate how other California jurisdictions are in nearly as dire shape as Vallejo. For example, in the Los Angeles County school system, "health, pension, and workers compensation liabilities are so mountainous that an estimated one of every three dollars budgeted for the L.A. schools goes to teacher retirement costs."

Statewide, Big Labor-instigated public spending mandates are also busting the budget: "The California Public Employees' Retirement System has \$26 billion of unfunded liabilities. The teachers' retirement system is \$20 billion in the red – health benefits add another \$48 billion to its shortfall."

With well over half, 56%, of its government employees under union monopoly-bargaining control, compared to the nationwide average of just under 40%, California's immediate fiscal outlook is understandably far worse than those of many other states. But all states that empower union bosses to corral public employees into monopolistic unions will eventually be looking over the same precipice, unless they change course soon.

To stop heading down the path toward public bankruptcy even as heavier and heavier tax burdens are foisted on private individuals and businesses, California and other states need to revoke Big Labor's monopoly-bargaining power over public employees and its power to collect forced dues as a job condition from all employees.

States that authorize both union monopoly bargaining and forced dues in public employment collectively lost a net 4.4 million in population through domestic out-migration since the year 2000. And with people and businesses now more mobile than ever before, states that impose excessive taxes at the behest of union officials who wield compulsory-unionism power over public employees can expect to continue to lose millions of productive citizens to out-migration for years to come.

Terminating government union bosses' monopolistic privileges would mark a dramatic shift in direction for California and other fiscally troubled states. As desperately as these states are in need of pro-Right to Work reform now, it may still seem impossible.

But the tens of millions of Californians who want to continue to live and work in the Golden State, but know it is in serious trouble, could make it a bellwether. At some point in the not-too-distant future, people who are fed up with the dismal status quo may topple the forced-unionism empire that now rules over California.

(Nearly a decade ago, then-National Right to Work Committee President Reed Larson sounded the alarm about the soaring cost of government union monopolies to taxpayers at all levels in his book *Stranglehold*. E-mail Cathy Jones – [clj@nrtw.org](mailto:clj@nrtw.org) – to obtain a free copy.)

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