

What am I missing if I choose not to belong to my union?

You may be wondering what you have to lose if you choose not to belong to your local and OEA. Ohio Collective Bargaining law requires that all members of a bargaining unit receive the salary and benefits negotiated by the local union, and it also requires that your union represent you if the employer violates the contract, but that's about it. You may not be entitled to the services of an OEA-appointed attorney if you're forced into legal action in a matter related to your job. Consider what all is at stake:

	Union Member	Non-Member
I am supported as a member of a 120,000-member network of fellow education professionals who share my interests and needs. I can exercise collective power to improve and defend public education and the teaching profession.	Yes	No
I can connect to specific networks of members near me and across the state who have similar backgrounds, experiences, job responsibilities and values (examples: Ohio's New Educators (ONE); OEA-Retired; Ohio Association of Special Needs Professionals; Doris L. Allen Minority Caucus).	Yes	No
I can exercise my voice in shaping public policy affecting education employees, students, and public education through participation in the OEA and NEA Fund.	Yes	No
I can vote in elections for my local representatives and officers, for delegates who make policy decisions at the local, district, state and national level of my union.	Yes	No
I can vote in elections to approve (ratify) or reject negotiated contracts that affect my working conditions and my students' learning conditions.	Yes	No
I can serve on my local union's bargaining team.	Yes	No
I have access to a wide array of union-provided training and supports to help me improve my professional practice and leadership skills.	Yes	No
I am entitled to OEA's Higher Education Benefit, which allows members and their families to earn an Associate Degree and Bachelor's Degree with NO out-of-pocket cost.	Yes	No
I receive ongoing print and electronic communications on important issues affecting my profession and public education in Ohio and the nation.	Yes	No
I receive \$1 million in liability protection plus payment of legal fees if sued in connection to my job.	Yes	No
My family and I receive discounted legal services for personal issues unrelated to my job through OEA's Attorney Referral Program.	Yes	No
I can run for union office or delegate to help lead the direction of the union at the local, district, state and national levels.	Yes	No
I can stretch my paycheck by hundreds of dollars per year through access to the NEA Member Benefits Program, which offers favorable rates in a wide range of areas including credit cards, investments, student loans, car rentals, home mortgages, magazine subscriptions and insurance programs.	Yes	No

And one more thing is certain: if you choose not to be a member, that **weakens the voice** of your fellow educators, leading to less influence and power with your school board, in the legislature, and in the halls of Congress on issues that matter most to your students.

The choice is yours.