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News Release

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Unions Boost Pay for Young Workers in West Virginia Unionized Young Workers Earn \$4 More Per Hour than Non-union Workers

Union membership raises the wages of West Virginia young workers by almost \$4 an hour. After adjusting for inflation, the wage of the typical unionized 18-to-29 year-old worker in West Virginia was \$14.12 while a non-union young worker earned just \$10.21 in 2007, according to a new study released jointly by the [Center for Economic and Policy Research](#) (CEPR) in Washington, DC, and the [West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy in Charleston](#).

"Despite having more high school and college educated young workers than ever in West Virginia, they've seen their wages decrease by 25 percent over the last 30 years after adjusting for inflation," said Ted Boettner, Executive Director of the WV Center on Budget and Policy. Real wages for the typical young worker in West Virginia dropped from \$13.31 per hour in 1979 to \$10 in 2007. Older workers, those age 30 to 64, saw their wages decrease from \$16.50 in 1979 to \$15.49 in 2007 after adjusting for inflation.

The study, "[Unions and Upward Mobility for Younger Workers](#)," also concluded that young unionized workers earned, on average, 12.4 percent more than their non-union peers. In addition, young workers in unions were much more likely to have health insurance benefits and a pension plan.

"Unions make a big difference for younger workers," said John Schmitt, the author of the study and a Senior Economist at CEPR. "There is no economic theory that says young people have to be poorly paid or go without benefits."

According to the study, unionization also strongly benefited young workers in typically low-wage occupations. Among young workers in the 15 lowest-paying occupations, union members earned 10.2 percent more than those workers who were not in unions. In the same low-wage occupations, unionized young people were 27 percentage points more likely to have employer-provided health insurance and 26 percentage points more likely to have a pension plan than their non-union counterparts. "This study makes it real clear: belonging to a union is one of the best ways for young people to not only increase their pay but to ensure that they have benefits like health care and a pension as well," said Boettner.

The study also pointed out that unionization strongly benefited young workers in typically low-wage occupations. Among young workers in the 15 lowest-paying occupations, union members earned 10.2 percent more than those workers who were not in unions. In the same low-wage occupations, unionized young people were 27 percentage points more likely to have employer-provided health insurance and 26 percentage points more likely to have a pension plan than their non-union counterparts.

The Center for Economic and Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan think tank that was established to promote democratic debate on the most important economic and social issues that affect people's lives. CEPR's Advisory Board of Economists includes Nobel Laureate economists Robert Solow and Joseph Stiglitz; Richard Freeman, Professor of Economics at Harvard University; and Eileen Appelbaum, Professor and Director of the Center for Women and Work at Rutgers University.

The Full Report: <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/publications/interactive-reports/unions-and-upward-mobility-for-young-workers/>

The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy is a policy research organization that is nonpartisan, nonprofit, and statewide. It focuses on how policy decisions affect all West Virginians, especially low- and moderate-income families. This new release and the full report is available on the web: www.wvpolicy.org

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