

## ...Byram takes reins at labor agency

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bers in need access information about social programs and other services.

“Vickie has done so much for Labor’s Community Service Agency, and I’ve learned so much from her. Vickie built this thing. She got the ship running strong and in the right direction. Now I hope to take it to the next level,” Byram said.

Byram wants to serve on the United Way Campaign cabinet.

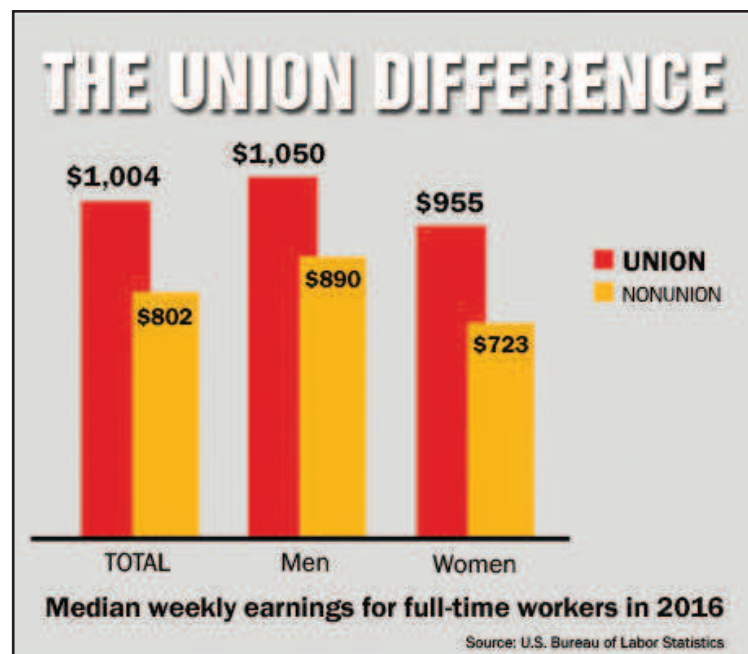
“It’s so important that labor and United Way continue to build a strong partnership. Their impact work on ending the cycle of childhood poverty is important and has an inherent link to labor’s living wage jobs. Together, we can really make a difference.”

Byram will have the labor seat on Workforce Systems Inc. She will be the dislocated worker labor liaison for employees facing layoff or plant closures.

Byram also wants to make some changes to LCSA’s Helping Hands program. She says more and more calls coming into the office are from folks being evicted from their homes, or facing astronomical rent increases.

“What we can offer right now isn’t really helpful to a family living in a car,” she said.

Byram will be reaching out to union locals in the coming months to talk about possible solutions.



## Annual survey records further union membership declines

Union membership fell to 10.7 percent of the U.S. workforce in 2016, down from 11.1 percent the previous year, according to the latest annual report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). That amounted to a loss of 240,000 union members since the previous year. Total U.S. union membership now stands at 14.6 million.

The 10.7 percent figure is the lowest ever recorded since comparable data began to be collected in 1983. That year, union members made up 20.1 percent of the U.S. workforce.

In Oregon, 13.5 percent of workers were union members in 2016 (228,000 workers), compared to 14.8 percent for 2015. In Washington, the survey found 17.4 percent of workers (539,000) were union members in 2016, up from 16.8 percent in 2015. With the increase, Washington is now the fifth most unionized state in the nation. Oregon ranked 11th.

In neighboring Idaho, union members were estimated at 6.1 percent of the workforce in 2016. In California they were 15.9 percent.

New York was the most unionized state, at 23.6 percent,

while South Carolina was the least, with 1.6 percent.

In each case, the figures are slightly higher for “union-represented” workers than for union “members.” That’s because some union-represented workers choose not to become full union members. Nationwide, an estimated 1.7 million workers were union-represented but not union members, and the total of the U.S. workforce that was union-represented was 12.0 percent. In Oregon, union-represented workers were 15.8 percent of the workforce, and in Washington 18.7 percent.

Nationally, just 6.4 percent of private-sector workers were union members, while more than five times that, 34.4 percent, of public sector workers were union members. That amounted to 7.1 million union members in the public sector, and 7.4 million union members in the private sector.

Union members continue to out-earn nonunion workers, on average: Median weekly earnings were \$1,004 for union members, compared to \$802 for workers without a union.

The BLS union membership report is considered fairly reliable at the national level, but small year-to-year fluctuations at the state level may have more to do with how the numbers are obtained. They come from the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey, a monthly sample of 60,000 households nationwide. The smaller the state’s population, the greater the likelihood that a statistical sample might not have been representative.



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