

OPEN SHOP GAZETTE

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This following article appeared in the *Orange County Register* Business Section on January 30, 2017. It was written by Jonathan Lansner.

***“California unions grow as U.S. rolls shrink”
Membership grew with the job market,
up 2.6 percent in 2016 vs. 2015***

“Love unions or hate them, California continues to be a relative hotbed for organized labor.

A new report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows union influence in the entire California workplace grew slightly last year, a stark contrast to declining union rolls nationwide.

Here are six things worth knowing:

1. Big numbers: California is a comparative union town, with 2.55 million members statewide in 2016, highest in the nation. Those unionized workplaces roughly equal all the jobs in Minnesota. New York was second last year at 1.9 million; Illinois third, at 812,000.
2. Growing rolls: California union membership grew with the state job market, up 65,000, or 2.6 percent, in a year. Nationally, it's a different story; Unions had 14.6 million members in 2016, down 237,000, or a dip of 1.6 percent.
3. Stable share: California union membership equaled 15.9 percent of its workforce, flat vs. 2015. And union share of statewide employment ranks high on the national scale, sixth behind New York (23.6 percent); Hawaii (19.9 percent); Alaska (18.5 percent); Connecticut (17.5 percent) and Washington (17.4 percent). Nationally, 10.7 percent of workers were union members, down from 11.1 percent in 2015. South Carolina had the lowest union share at 1.6 percent.
4. Still growing: Look back a decade, as the regional economy was peaking. In 2006, California had 2.42 million union members, 130,000 less than 2016. Those workers equaled 15.7 percent of all workers in the state, 0.2 percentage point lower than last year. Union troubles nationwide have been long-running. A decade ago, there were 800,000 more U.S. union members, and those workers represented 12 percent of all jobs, 1.3 percentage points higher than 2016.
5. Higher pay: No details about California's union members were available, but nationally those organized workers on median weekly pay, \$1,004 vs \$802, were 90 percent full-time employees; and equaled 34 percent of government workers vs. 6.4 percent in the private sector. The most unionized jobs were education (39 percent), protective services (38 percent) and construction/extraction (18 percent).
6. Trump voters? Forget exit polls. My trusty spreadsheet translated this union data into curious presidential political insight. The 30 states that Trump won had a total of 5.5 million union members last year (7 percent of their workforce) vs. 9.1 million in the other 20 states and D.C. (15 percent of all jobs.) But in Trump states, union rolls were down 244,000 and up 7,000 elsewhere. Did Trump draw well from the recently unemployed? Look at key swing states like Florida (down 90,000 union jobs in 2016) or Pennsylvania (off 62,000), both won by the new president.”

