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WHITE HOUSE CLAIMS THAT FEDERAL UNION MEMBERSHIP GREW UNDER BIDEN APPEAR INCORRECT

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TOPLINE POINTS

- ★ The White House recently claimed that federal sector unions added 80,000 members in 2022—a 20% increase. The White House claims this shows the Biden Administration’s efforts to boost union membership are working.
- ★ However, union financial filings document that the largest federal unions gained 1,500 members in 2022, while their total receipts fell by \$1.6 million. Bureau of Labor Statistics data also shows little change in federal union membership in 2022.
- ★ Accordingly, White House claims that federal union membership has grown significantly appear incorrect.

In 2021, the Biden Administration created a [Task Force](#) to increase union membership. The White House recently released [a progress report](#) claiming significant progress towards this goal. This report claimed that:

[T]he number of Federal Government employees in a union has increased by nearly 20%. Since the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) began working with agencies to better inform federal workers of their right to join a union, nearly 80,000 workers have done so.

Left-wing commentators have [interpreted this announcement](#) as demonstrating the effectiveness of the Biden Administration’s policies for boosting union power, such as making it easier for unions to communicate with federal employees. However, independent data sources show federal union membership changed little in 2022 and has fallen since President Biden took office. The White House’s claims



appear incorrect, and the Task Force’s efforts to increase the number of federal union members have had a little apparent effect.

[Federal law](#) requires most unions, including federal unions, to file detailed [financial disclosure](#) reports with the Department of Labor. Congress intended this transparency to expose and deter the corruption that has historically [challenged the union movement](#). These reports require unions to disclose annually, among other things, their total membership and receipts. The information unions have reported in these filings is inconsistent with the White House’s claims.

FEDERAL UNION	MEMBERS REPORTED IN LABOR DEPARTMENT FINANCIAL REPORTS				CHANGE:
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2021-2022
American Federation of Gov't Employees	323,285	305,473	298,873	298,102	-771
National Treasury Employees Union	80,059	80,015	79,787	82,860	3,073
National Federation of Federal Employees	8,860	8,361	8,836	8,686	-150
Association of Civilian Technicians	4,090	3,848	3,802	3,419	-383
Professional Engineers & Scientists Organization	1,729	1,802	1,870	1,871	1
Patent Office Professional Association	2,723	2,809	2,753	2,725	-28
American Foreign Service Association	16,679	16,742	16,646	16,433	-213
TOTAL	437,425	419,050	412,567	414,096	1,529

Source: Union national headquarter financial transparency reports filed with the U.S. Department of Labor (form LM-2). Data available online at www.unionreports.gov. **TABLE 1**

Table 1 shows membership reported by the largest exclusively federal unions.¹ These seven unions collectively represent more than 1 million federal employees, accounting for over 80% of the 1.2 million unionized federal employees.²

In 2022 these unions reported gaining only 1,500 members—a gain of less than one-half of a percentage point. Since 2020, the last year of the Trump Administration, the largest federal unions have collectively lost nearly 5,000 members. This net drop was

¹ Some unions such as the Service Employees International Union represent both federal employees and private sector or other government employees. These unions are excluded from Tables 1 and 2, as their reported membership and receipts include many non-federal employees.

² Unionized federal employees are not required to join a union or pay union dues as a condition of employment. Many federal employees are represented by unions but choose not to become members.



entirely attributable to losses in the American Federation of Government Employees, which has been enmeshed in [corruption scandals](#) that may have repulsed prospective members.

FEDERAL UNION	ANNUAL UNION RECEIPTS REPORTED TO THE LABOR DEPARTMENT				CHANGE:
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2021-2022
American Federation of Gov't Employees	\$139,997,788	\$133,877,987	\$130,369,043	\$130,989,267	\$620,224
National Treasury Employees Union	\$43,854,347	\$46,899,083	\$46,204,332	\$42,759,029	-\$3,445,303
National Federation of Federal Employees	\$7,111,684	\$6,749,953	\$6,824,185	\$7,975,030	\$1,150,845
Association of Civilian Technicians	\$1,783,386	\$1,679,729	\$1,756,988	\$1,688,639	-\$68,349
Professional Engineers & Scientists Organization	\$1,220,994	\$1,276,900	\$1,309,195	\$1,355,806	\$46,611
Patent Office Professional Association	\$419,893	\$390,813	\$379,765	\$371,547	-\$8,218
American Foreign Service Association	\$6,259,722	\$6,398,911	\$6,698,159	\$6,768,469	\$70,310
TOTAL	\$200,647,814	\$197,273,376	\$193,541,667	\$191,907,787	-\$1,633,880

Source: Union national headquarter financial transparency reports filed with the U.S. Department of Labor (form LM-2). Data available online at www.unionreports.gov. **TABLE 2**

Union financial filings confirm this finding. Total union receipts fell by \$1.6 million in 2021 and are down by over \$5 million since 2020. If federal union membership had grown by 20%, these union's dues income would have grown substantially. Federal unions report that did not happen.

Unless federal unions are systematically falsifying their Labor Department filings to underreport their membership and revenues, which seems highly unlikely, the White House's claim that federal unions added 80,000 members in 2022 is incorrect.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data reinforces this conclusion. BLS works with the Census Bureau to conduct monthly surveys used to calculate the unemployment rate. The interviewers also ask respondents questions about where they work and whether they are union members. Economists use the survey data to estimate union membership in various industries, including the federal government. Because the BLS data comes from a survey, it has a statistical margin of error and is less precise than union financial filings. Nonetheless, the BLS data shows the same pattern as union financial filings: A slight increase in 2022 and a modest overall decrease since 2020.



YEAR	BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS DATA ON FEDERAL UNION MEMBERSHIP			
	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Federal Union Membership (Excluding Postal Workers)	586,000	634,000	581,000	587,000

Source: Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Data compiled by Barry T. Hirsch, David A. Macpherson, and William E. Even and published on http://unionstats.com/members/htm/members_fed.htm **TABLE 3**

Union financial filings or independent government survey data do not support the White House’s claims that federal union membership grew substantially in 2022. Contrary to their statements, the Presidential Task Force’s efforts to boost federal union membership appear to have had little effect.

