

Labor Day 2017: State Of The U.S. Labor Unions

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**David J.
Pryzbylski**
Partner

A broad look at the U.S. labor relations landscape shows it is a mixed bag for labor groups at the moment. In its just-released annual poll tracking public support for labor unions, [Gallup data](#) indicates support for unions is growing. According to Gallup: "In the U.S., 61 percent of adults say they approve of labor unions, the highest percentage since the 65 percent approval recorded in 2003. The current labor union approval is up five percentage points from last year and is 13 points above the all-time low found in 2009." While approval is still way down from the 70 percent average unions enjoyed in the 1930s, it appears to be on the upswing. However, nearly half of those polled (46 percent) indicated they believe that unions will only become weaker in terms of clout in the future. Union membership numbers seem to support that belief. Notwithstanding the Gallup data, unions are having a tough time gaining and retaining new members. Indeed, [U.S. private sector union membership](#) reached an all-time low of 6.4 percent, and unions continue to suffer high profile election losses, such as at [Nissan in Mississippi earlier this year](#). Employers desiring to remain union-free nevertheless must remain vigilant, as the [National Labor Relations Board continues to issue decisions](#) that make it easier for unions to organize workforces (e.g., micro-unit rulings, etc.). Thus, while unions likely will never see membership numbers close to what they saw decades ago, they remain a force of which companies need to be cognizant.

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