



Why Police Unions Are Not The Same As Labor Unions

1. **Police have been on the wrong side of the centuries-old struggle between workers and employers.**
 - a. Rather than side with members of the working class, police have used their legal authority to protect businesses and private property, enforcing laws viewed by many as anti-union.
 - b. When workers managed to form unions, companies called on local police to disperse union gatherings, marches and picket lines using violence and mass arrests to break the will of strikers.
 - i. Officers shot at the families of coal miners during the Battle of Blair Mountain,
 - ii. Officers crushed the ribs of immigrant garment workers during the Uprising of the 20,000,
 - iii. Officers teargassed working-class protesters in Minneapolis after police killed George Floyd.
2. Exclusively protecting the interests of their members without consideration for other workers also sets police unions apart from other labor groups.
 - i. SAPOA was not supportive of park and airport police being able to collectively bargain on their own
3. Collective Bargaining is meant to be used as a tool for workers rights. A tool for reform and accountability. It is not meant to shield workers from accountability for their actions, especially when they have caused harm to other workers or the public.
 - a. SAPOA has used collective bargaining to negotiate a contract that reduces police transparency and accountability. This allows officers who engage in excessive violence to avoid the consequences of their actions and remain on the job.



- b. No other union members hold the legal ability to use excessive and even lethal force on another human being while on the job. Discipline cannot be viewed the same for an officer as an ironworker or a teacher
 - i. If an ironworker bashed someone's head onto the concrete, or a retail worker shot someone in the back as they were running away, or a teacher attempted to feed a feces sandwich to a student, there would be swift consequences. This is not so with our police force.
- c. "As long as police unions continue to wield their collective bargaining power as a [weapon], preventing reforms and accountability, no one is safe,"- Writers Guild of America, East

"Virtually all of the published items that express an opinion on the impact of police unions regard them as having a negative effect, particularly on innovation, accountability, and police — community relations," as a [review in the journal Police Practice and Research](#) put it.

There is a direct correlation between officer misconduct and police unionizing under bad contracts

- Police misconduct hurts our communities of color most of all
 - "...collective bargaining rights are being used to protect the ability of officers to discriminate in the disproportionate use of force against the nonwhite population," Economist Rob Gillezeau [recently said on Twitter](#).
- A [University of Chicago working paper](#) found violent misconduct among sheriff's officers increased about 40 percent after a state supreme court ruling allowed the officers to unionize.
 - Certain union-negotiated contract provisions — such as time limits on misconduct investigations and deletion of misconduct records— make it more difficult to detect and punish officers who abuse their position, the researchers say.
- Contracts that include so-called "Law Enforcement Bill of Rights" language (Chapter 143 in Texas) are worse, [giving cops extra protections](#) when they face investigations over use of force;



- In Baltimore these protections have been blamed for getting in the way of [properly investigating](#) the 2014 death of Freddie Gray.
- “Their contracts in various ways can often make it very difficult to remove or discipline police officers... And there are a lot of protections provided to the police officers that go beyond what most of us would regard as fair and reasonable for employees.”- Daniel Nagin, Carnegie Mellon University

The Police Union Playbook - Intimidation

- “Police unions often strategically frame any opposition to their agenda of secrecy as endangering public safety and harming the public interest,” Katherine Bies, [Stanford Law & Policy Review](#).
 - This is evidenced now by SAPOA falsely stating that Prop B will cause us to lose officers and crime will rise. There is no evidence of this from any other major city in Texas that operates under Meet and Confer for their police department
- Police unions nationwide have long employed high-pressure scare tactics against their opposition or the public. Behavior we would not want to see from anyone, especially our men and women in uniform.
 - When a San Antonio City Council member tried to cut police costs in the 1980s, the union sent him an Easter basket with a dead rat.
 - A Boston union in the 1990s [handed out pamphlets](#) emblazoned with the Grim Reaper, describing the area as “Fear City, USA” and advising people to stay off the streets — a tactic similarly used by [New York City](#) and [Newark](#) unions. ([NY Times, 2021](#))
- SAPOA's police contract calls for contributions to be deducted from officers' paychecks to fund a new political action committee. By 1987, that PAC was the biggest donor in City Council races.
 - The money also built a war room with telephones and computers loaded with voter data. If a politician defied the union, the union flooded constituents with negative mailers and calls.
 - This continues today as the police fight Prop B with negative ads, mailers, texts, and calls full of disinformation



Meet and Confer vs. Collective Bargaining

Every other major city in Texas uses Meet-and-Confer systems: Dallas, Austin, Houston

- Have less fired officers being returned to the force
 - **San Antonio - 70%, Dallas - 28%, Austin - 13%**
- There is no evidence that this will cause officers to leave the force in droves- cities under Meet and Confer generally have more officers per person (officers per 10k population)
 - **San Antonio - 15.3, Dallas - 22.1, Austin - 19**
- These cities offer the same rate of pay and some even have better benefits than SAPD
- Have higher ranked civilian oversight systems
 - San Antonio has the worst ranked civilian oversight system in Texas (Kinder Rice Study)

Under Meet and Confer, the community can vote on a contract if they don't agree with the terms. ([See 143.308](#)).

The Big Picture - Pathway to True Reform

The community deserves to have a voice in their police contract, deserves to be able to vote on it if there is a question, and deserves to have a fully independent civilian oversight system of police. None of that can happen under Chapter 174.

Fix SAPD's goal is to first remove Chapter 174 and then remove Chapter 143 (Law Enforcement Bill of Rights).

- There is no way to truly and fully remove Chapter 143 unless you remove Chapter 174 as well. This is because Chapter 174.005 allows anything in the contract to overrule local and state laws, meaning some of the disciplinary barriers under Chapter 143 could stay in the contract, even if we were to repeal Chapter 143 just by itself.



After these two laws are repealed, we can vote to move to a system of Meet and Confer under [Chapter 147](#) (which Dallas operates under). Under this system:

- Discipline is not defined under this law, meaning that the Civil Service Commission or another chosen commission of voters and police can set the disciplinary standards for police
- Officers can still negotiate for great wages, benefits, and working conditions
- Multiple parties can represent officers at the negotiating table instead of only one group representing a diverse police force. Ex: Black Officers Coalition, SAPOA, Park Police, etc. [\(147.003\)](#)
- If the community does not agree with the provisions of the contract they can petition to put it to a vote to repeal the contract and have a better one created [\(147.010\)](#)

Contract Issues

Even now COSA has brought forth 4 of the 10 issues with the contract that the community has identified into contract negotiations. Even now, SAPOA refuses to address those 4 issues fully. And worse, SAPOA DID NOT bring ANY disciplinary reforms to the table for negotiations themselves, showing that accountability is not a top priority for them. They haven't budged on arbitration at all. The current system of negotiations under Chapter 174 is NOT working for the community.

Mythbusting #2: Under Meet and Confer, the city will refuse to meet with the police association. False!

- Police contracts under Meet and Confer are still binding for both parties involved
- The city has no intention of NOT bargaining with SAPOA, and never will. City Council members have echoed this several times.
- The city does not have the option to NOT meet at the table because it's our public safety and our taxpayer dollars. Public safety is $\frac{2}{3}$ of our city budget.
- Every other major city under Meet and Confer meets religiously with their police unions for a new contract.