Seven Ways Unions Have Changed Your Life

**Union Plus Team Posted on December 27, 2016**

Unions like the one you belong to have long been a powerful force for improving the living conditions of working families. Consider how these impact your life.

1. **Weekends** without work are the result of strikes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that led to shorter work weeks with weekends off. This gave workers time to take care of personal matters and spend time with their families.
2. **Child labor** was condemned by unions as early as the 1800s, but it took until 1938 for the Fair Labor Standards Act pass. It federally mandates minimum age requirements for employees and working hours for children.
3. **Social Security** provides payments to retired workers 65 or older. It helps ease the economic uncertainty created when workers retire from the paid workforce.
4. **8-hour work days** haven't always been the standard. In 1890, the average work week for a full-time manufacturing employee was 100 hours. It wasn't until decades later that union negotiations resulted in 8-hour work days.
5. **On-the-job health and safety issues** are an ongoing concern of unions. Before the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was created 43 years ago, an estimated 14,000 workers were killed on the job every year. Today, the number of fatal workplace injuries has dropped to 12 a day. Unions continue to work to lower that number.
6. **Health care benefits** have always been central to union negotiations. Today, the Affordable Care Act and its provisions provide points for continued discussion and lobbying efforts.
7. **Employer-provided pension plans** are more likely to be provided to unionized workers than to their nonunionized counterparts. Employers of unionized workers also contribute more toward pensions.

Unions will continue to play a pivotal role in improving and maintaining a better quality of life for America's workers and their families. Help get the word out--unions work for a better standard of living.