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Number of doctors joining unions increasing quickly



The share of doctors who belong to unions rose from 5.7% in 2014 to 7.2% in 2019. By 2024, an estimated 8% of physicians were union members. GETTY IMAGES

Aim to improve working conditions and raise wages in a stressful system

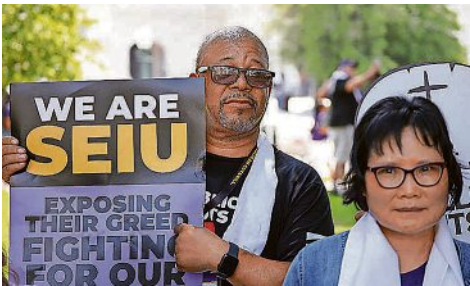
Patrick Aguilar
Washington University in St. Louis
THE CONVERSATION

The share of doctors who belong to unions is rising quickly at a time when organized labor is losing ground with other professions. The Conversation U.S. asked Patrick Aguilar, a Washington University in St. Louis pulmonologist and management professor, to explain why the number of physicians joining unions is growing – a trend that appears likely to continue.

How long have there been health care unions?

U.S. nurses first joined labor unions in 1896. Today, about 1 in 5 registered nurses are union members, twice the rate of unionization in all professions. The first physicians union formed in 1934, when hospital residents – doctors in training who tended then, as now, to be paid relatively little and forced to

work long hours – organized to demand higher pay and shorter shifts. For the next eight decades, those unions grew slowly. But the pace has picked up. The share of doctors who belong to unions rose from 5.7% in 2014 to 7.2% in 2019. By 2024, an estimated 8% of physicians were union members. This swift growth contrasts with declining union membership overall. The share of American workers in unions fell by more than half, from 20.1% to 9.9%, between 1983 and 2024. Residents and interns are particularly interested in joining unions. Nearly 2 in 3 have said they might want to join one. Membership in the Committee of Interns and Residents, a chapter of Service Employees International Union, rose by nearly 14% to 37,000 between late 2024 and early 2025. By September 2025, the union was saying that its ranks had grown to more than 40,000.



Several U.S. unions represent physicians. Doctors Council, which is affiliated with Service Employees International Union, represents physicians, dentists, optometrists, podiatrists and veterinarians. TASOS KATOPODIS/GETTY IMAGES FOR SEIU

Several other U.S. unions also represent physicians. Doctors Council, which is also affiliated with Service Employees International Union, represents physicians, dentists, optometrists, podiatrists and veterinarians. The Union of American Physicians and Dentists, part of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, says it has at least 7,000 members.

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REPORT

Great Lakes water is at risk from data centers

Matthew Rink
USA TODAY NETWORK

A data center is to artificial intelligence what the human body is to the brain. And both require water to survive and thrive. As Pennsylvania begins playing a significant role in rapidly developing AI technology, a new report suggests that it and other Great Lakes states are ill-prepared for the increased demand that data centers will impose on their vast but limited water resources. The Alliance for the Great Lakes' 46-page report, "A Finite Resource: Managing the Growing Water Needs of Data Centers, Critical Minerals Mining, and Agriculture in the Great Lakes Region," offers a blunt assessment of the challenges to come. "Without comprehensive planning and resource management, there is great potential for the kinds of large water use sectors highlighted in this report to simultaneously converge on

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