LOW WAGES FOR SECRETARIES AND CLERICAL WORKERS IN INDIANA: A STATE WITHOUT A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

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Secretarial and Clerical: The Largest Women's Occupational Category

Secretarial and clerical work (now labelled administrative support occupations) is the largest women's occupational category in the U.S. Of the 14.2 million full-time workers in these occupations, 80 percent are women. Almost three-quarters are employed in occupations that are at least 70 percent female including typists, bookkeepers, general support clerks and data entry clerks. Of these female-intensive occupations, secretarial work is the largest with 3.2 million full-time workers. An additional 3.8 million workers are employed part-time in these occupations. Of these part-time workers, 86 percent are women.

Secretarial and Clerical Workers' Earnings Are Central to Family Income, but Their Wages Are Low

Three-quarters of full-time, non-supervisory secretarial and clerical workers are married, divorced, separated or widowed. Only one quarter are single. Two out of five have children under age 18 living at home.

Secretaries and clerical workers earn almost half of their families' weekly earnings. Those who are married and have children contribute 42 percent of their families' weekly earnings. Those who are single, divorced, separated or widowed
and who have children earn 70 percent of their families' weekly earnings.

Despite the fact that secretaries and clerical workers are responsible for a substantial share of their families' earnings, their median wages are low compared to other categories of full-time, non-managerial and non-professional workers. The median weekly earnings for full-time, non-supervisory secretaries and clericals in female-intensive occupations are $300. These earnings are lower than those of other categories of non-professional, non-managerial workers such as technicians and related support workers (whose median weekly earnings are $448), and lower than those of other managerial-related support workers (whose median weekly earnings are $501).

These low earnings are explained by several factors: women workers, who comprise the great majority of these secretarial and clerical occupations, lose $2.19 per hour compared to men in the same occupations; workers receive low rewards for tenure (18 cents an hour for each additional year on the job); and workers' combination of technical and human-relations skills is not recognized nor valued.

Strategies for Increasing Wages: The Union Premium

Among the most successful strategies for increasing the earnings of secretarial and clerical workers is union membership or coverage by a union contract. With the growth of service and
public sector unions, more secretaries and clerical workers have begun to benefit from a union wage premium.

Full-time unionized workers in these occupations earn an additional $56 per week compared to those not covered by a union contract. They earn an additional $1.02 per hour, when other factors such as education, job tenure and gender are taken into account. Part-time as well as full-time workers benefit from union membership. Part-time secretaries and clerical workers who are not union members earn only $5.25 per hour compared to part-time union workers who earn an average of $7.61 per hour.

The Union Wage Premium for State and Local Government Workers is Substantial

Of all full-time, non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers, those employed by state and local governments are most likely to be union members or covered by union contracts. More than one-third are union members or covered by union contracts.

These workers benefit from a substantial union wage premium and better fringe benefits. Secretaries and clerical workers who are union members or covered by a union contract earn an additional $1.13 per hour compared to non-union workers, when other factors such as education, job tenure and gender are taken into account.

Secretarial and other clerical workers in the 26 states and the District of Columbia that currently have legislation that provides some form of collective bargaining rights for state,
county, municipal and local government workers earn the highest wages—$340 per week compared to the $260 per week for non-unionized workers in states without such legislation. (See Table 1.)

**TABLE 1**

THE UNION WAGE PREMIUM:

COMPARISON OF MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS FOR SECRETARIES AND OTHER CLERICAL WORKERS IN FEMALE-INTENSIVE OCCUPATIONS IN STATE/LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY UNION MEMBERSHIP AND RESIDENCE IN A STATE WITH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING (Full-time, Non-supervisory workers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States with Collective Bargaining Rights</th>
<th>PERCENT UNION</th>
<th>MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>$ 340 $ 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State without Collective Bargaining Rights</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>$ 300 $ 260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Lower Wages in Indiana, A State Without A Collective Bargaining Agreement

Indiana is currently a state without collective bargaining legislation that covers state, county, municipal and local workers. As a result, an extremely small portion (4.7 percent) of secretaries and clerical workers who are employed by state or local governments are union members or are covered by a union contract. The rate of union membership is lower in Indiana than
in other states, including other states without collective bargaining legislation. (See Table 2.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCENT UNION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States with Collective Bargaining Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States without Collective Bargaining Rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.

Secretaries and clerical workers, employed by state or local governments in Indiana, earn less than their counterparts in other states. The median weekly earnings ($240) and the median hourly wages ($5.79) of full-time, non-supervisory secretaries and clerical workers employed by state and local governments in Indiana are lower than the weekly earnings ($330) and hourly wages ($8.57) of their counterparts who are union members in all other states, and lower than the weekly earnings ($320) and
hourly wages ($8.14) of their counterparts in states with collective bargaining rights, regardless of whether the workers are union members or not. (See Table 3.) These findings show that unions tend to raise wages for non-union as well as union workers in the same occupations, sectors of the economy and bargaining units.

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**TABLE 3**

**COMPARISON OF MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS FOR SECRETARIAL AND OTHER CLERICAL WORKERS IN FEMALE-INTENSIVE OCCUPATIONS EMPLOYED BY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN INDIANA AND OTHER STATES (Full-time, Non-supervisory)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS</th>
<th>MEDIAN HOURLY WAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>$ 240</td>
<td>$ 5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Union</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>8.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States with Collective Bargaining Rights</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>8.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States without Collective Bargaining Rights</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>6.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** IWPR calculations based on the 1988 Current Population Survey.

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Finally, Chart 1 shows that the weekly earnings of full-time, secretaries and clerical workers employed by state and
local governments in Indiana are substantially lower than the average earnings of their counterparts in the surrounding "big ten" states of Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin--states which have legislation that provides some of collective bargaining rights for state and local workers. The gap between Indiana workers and other "big ten" state workers is $73 per week. (See Chart 1.)

![Median Weekly Earnings]

**CHART 1** - Indiana Secretaries and Clerical Workers Employed by State and Local Government Earn $73 Less per Week Than Their Counterparts in All Other Big Ten States.

These findings show the importance of collective bargaining rights and union membership for increasing the wages of secretaries and clerical workers--workers whose earnings are central to their families' economic well-being.
END NOTES

1. For additional information on secretarial and clerical workers see Roberta Spalter-Roth and Heidi Hartmann, Raises and Recognition: Secretaries, Clerical Workers and the Union Wage Premium; Washington, D.C.: Institute for Women's Policy Research, April, 1990.

2. Research reported here is based on data from the 1988 Current Population Survey, a monthly survey of some 60,000 nationally-representative household conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. IWPR's analyses are based on original computer tabulations for both the May 1988 public use files and the 1988 annual compilation of 12 months of data, the merged earnings file, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The sample analyzed here, non-supervisory workers in secretarial and other female-intensive clerical occupations, amounted to nearly 23,000 workers.

3. In the remainder of this report, the phrase "secretaries and clerical workers" will refer to those full-time, non-supervisory workers in administrative support occupations that are at least 70 percent female.