National Labor Relations Act (NLRA,1935), Title 29, Chapter 7, Subchapter II, United States Code §§ 151-169

§ 152 (5) The term "labor organization" means any organization of any kind, or any agency or employee representation committee or plan, in which employees participate and which exists for the purpose, in whole or in part, of dealing with employers concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of work.

For full context, see [National Labor Relations Act | National Labor Relations Board (nlrb.gov)](https://www.nlrb.gov/guidance/key-reference-materials/national-labor-relations-act)

Facts about police and police unions:

The first publicly funded, organized police force with officers on duty full-time was created in Boston in 1838.

In the South, the economics that drove the creation of police forces were centered not on the protection of shipping interests but on the preservation of the slavery system.

By the late 1880s, all major U.S. cities had police forces.

the late 19th century was the era of political machines, so police captains and sergeants for each precinct were often picked by the local political party ward leader, who often owned taverns or ran street gangs that intimidated voters. They then were able to use police to harass opponents of that particular political party, or provide payoffs for officers to turn a blind eye to allow illegal drinking, gambling and prostitution.

President Hoover appointed the Wickersham Commission in 1929 to investigate the ineffectiveness of law enforcement nationwide. To make police independent from political party ward leaders, the map of police precincts was changed so that they would not correspond with political wards.

<https://time.com/4779112/police-history-origins/>

The Fraternal Order of Police was founded in 1915. In 1918, it was decided that the Order should become a national organization.  The FOP official history states that the founders decided to not use the term "union" because of "the anti-union sentiment of the time," but nevertheless acted as a union. Today it reports a membership of over 355,000 members organized in 2,100 local chapters (lodges), [state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state) lodges, and the national Grand Lodge. The FOP encompasses both union lodges and fraternal lodges

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraternal_Order_of_Police>

Of those unions which conduct labor negotiations on behalf of its police members, 80% are independent and have no affiliation to any larger organized labor groups. There were a reported 800,000 sworn officers in the United States as of 2017, and an estimated 75-80% of them belonged to a union. There is no single dominant national association.

The self-described "largest municipal police union in the world" is the [Police Benevolent Association of the City of New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Police_Benevolent_Association_of_the_City_of_New_York) that represents 24,000 members of the [NYPD](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City_Police_Department).

The largest national union *per se* is the [International Union of Police Associations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Union_of_Police_Associations), with about 20,000 members, which is among that 20% of [police unions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Police_union) with affiliations to organized labor. The IUPA chartered with the [AFL–CIO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AFL%E2%80%93CIO) in 1979. Likewise the [International Brotherhood of Police Officers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Brotherhood_of_Police_Officers) has a national scope, and is a member organization of the [National Association of Government Employees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Association_of_Government_Employees), which is itself affiliated with the [Service Employees International Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Service_Employees_International_Union).

It was not until the 1960s that most state laws change to allow [public-sector employees the right to collective bargaining](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public-sector_trade_unions_in_the_United_States). So the official history of public sector unions in this country is not very old.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Police_unions_in_the_United_States>

For a look at public-sector law enforcement traditions internationally, see

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/how-police-compare-different-democracies>