



# OPEN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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**THE PROBLEM:** Under the current Sunshine Law in Missouri, government bodies may close meetings, records, and votes relating to contract negotiations until the contract is executed or rejected. This lack of transparency in negotiations between government unions and government officials can lead to contractual agreements that aren't in the public's best interest.

**THE SOLUTION:** *Open collective bargaining.*

Open collective bargaining would allow the public to attend meetings where government bodies are negotiating collective bargaining agreements with unions to ensure that tax dollars are being spent wisely. Openness in public affairs empowers citizens to hold their government representatives accountable. The public is directly affected by policies set during collective bargaining; citizens therefore have a right to be present during such meetings. An open collective bargaining rule would not prohibit the public agency from discussing and formulating its bargaining positions in executive session.

**WHO ELSE DOES IT?** Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, and Texas all require contract negotiations to be open.

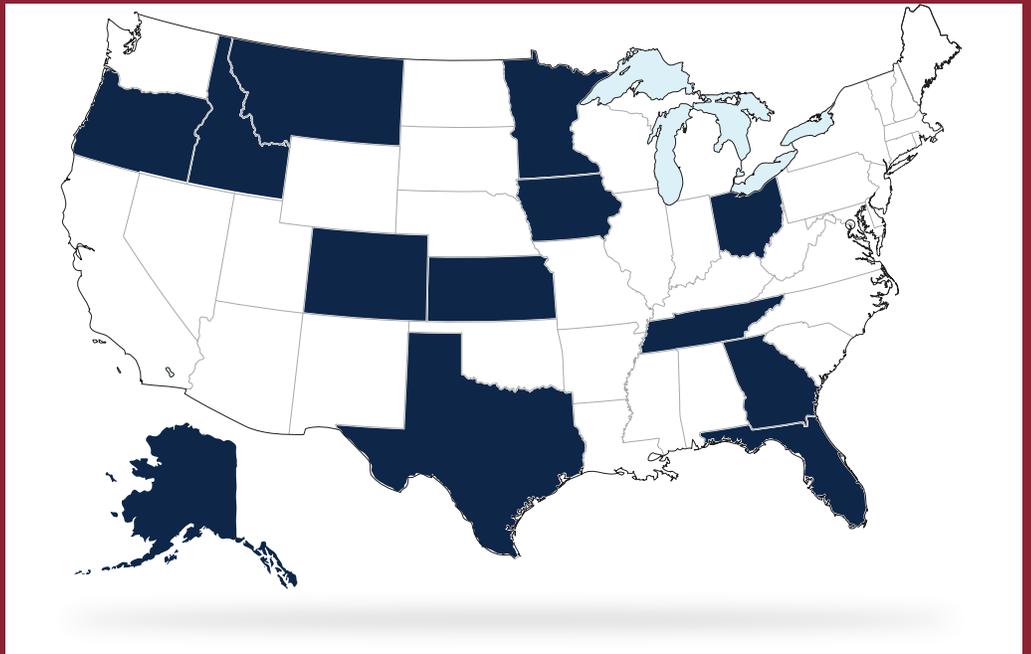
**THE OPPORTUNITY:** A transparent negotiating process will enable the public to hold government accountable in its dealings with public employee unions and help ensure that the agreements reached between the two parties are in the interest of everyone instead of just a select group of employees.

## KEY POINTS

- Open collective bargaining gives citizens the opportunity to attend union negotiations with government bodies and

## OPEN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE UNIONS

Several states (in blue) already conduct transparent negotiations with public employee unions.



Source: Freedom Foundation. "Public Meetings Aren't Scary," March 22, 2017.

- help ensure that tax dollars are spent responsibly.
- Missouri's Sunshine Law allows government bodies to close meetings to the public if they relate to a negotiated contract, even though there is no compelling reason why negotiations between a union and a public body should be held in secret.
- Government unions can make campaign contributions and support candidates that they will potentially bargain with after election. This advantage makes it especially important that the public be aware of how the government and public employee unions interact.

## SHOW-ME INSTITUTE RESOURCES

**Policy Study:** "A Primer on Government Labor Relations in Missouri"

**Video:** "Government Unions: Restoring Accountability"