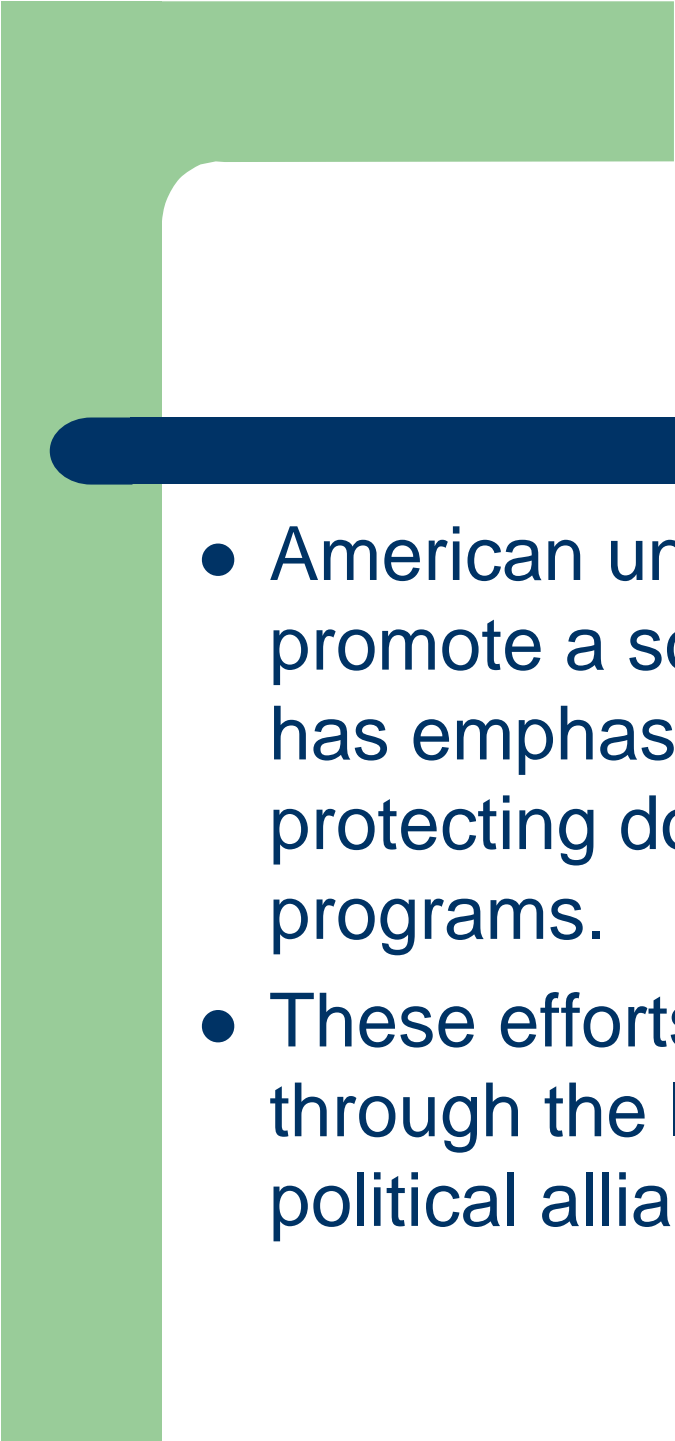

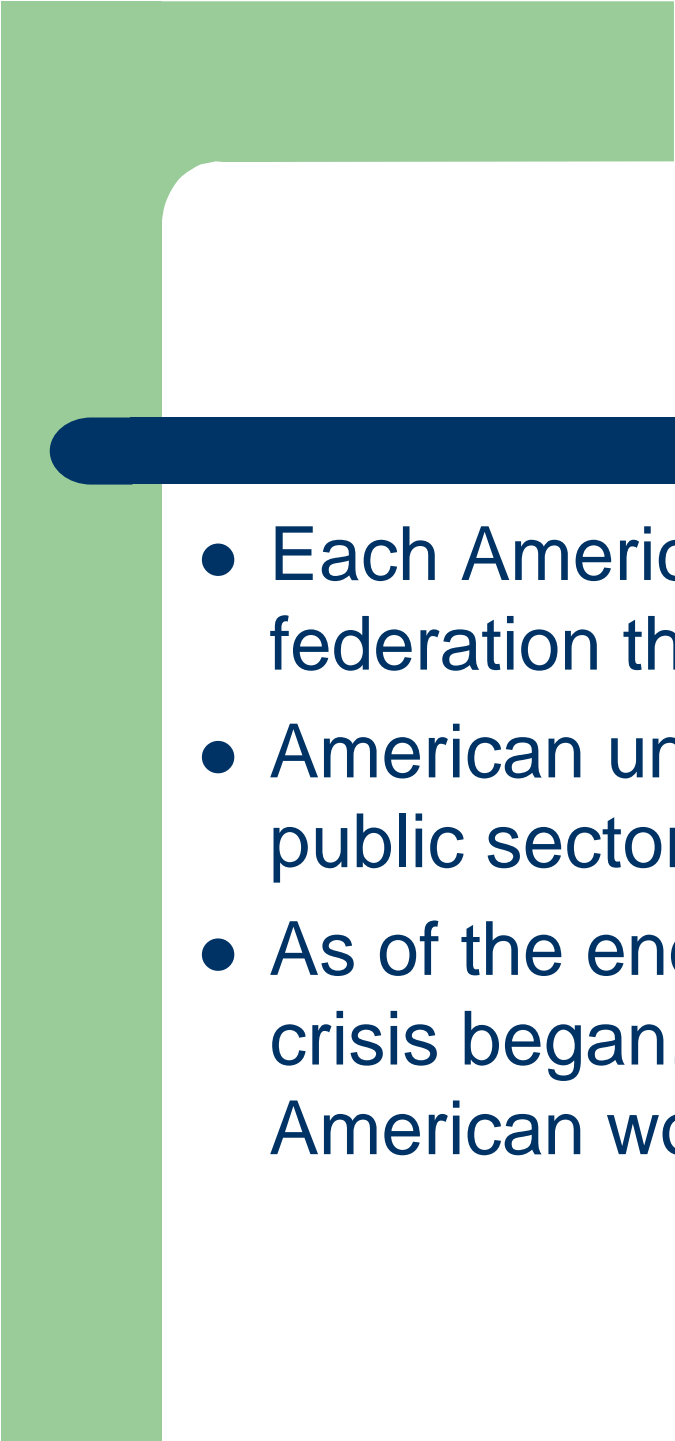





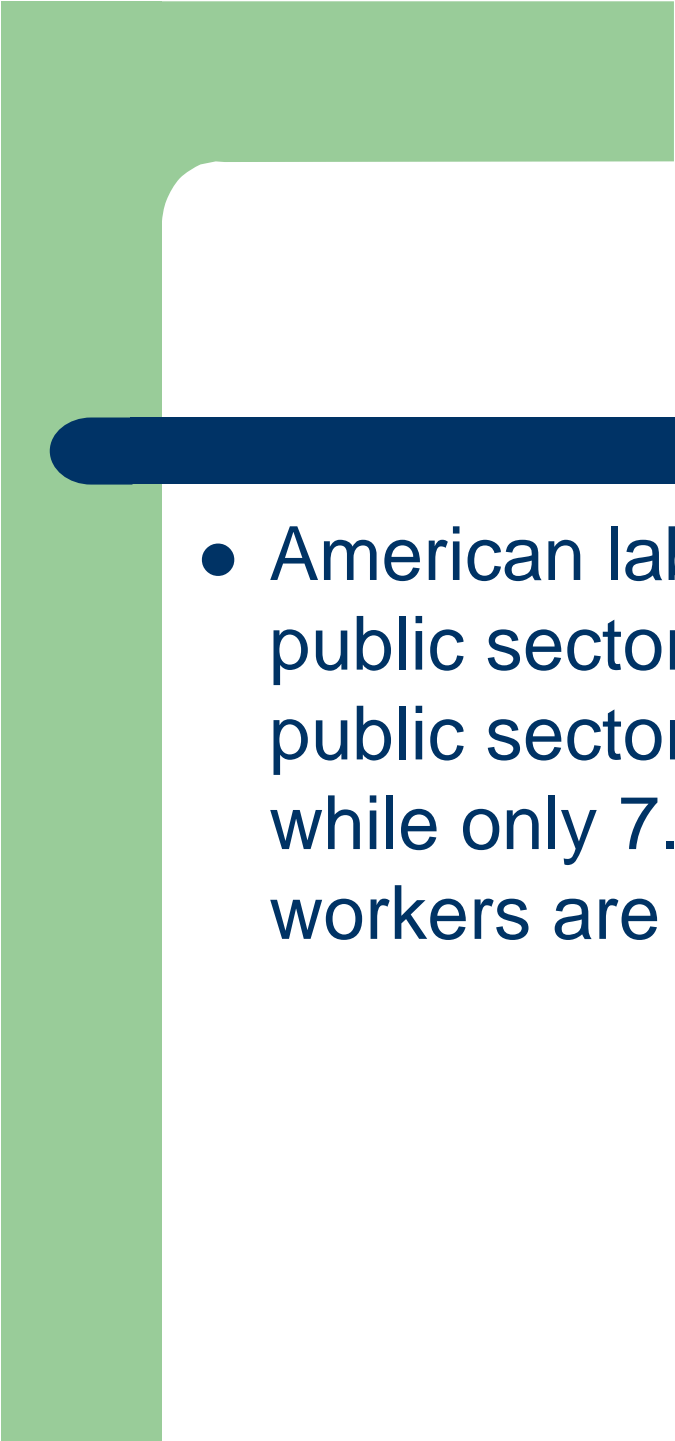

Response of the US Labour Movement to the Economic Crisis

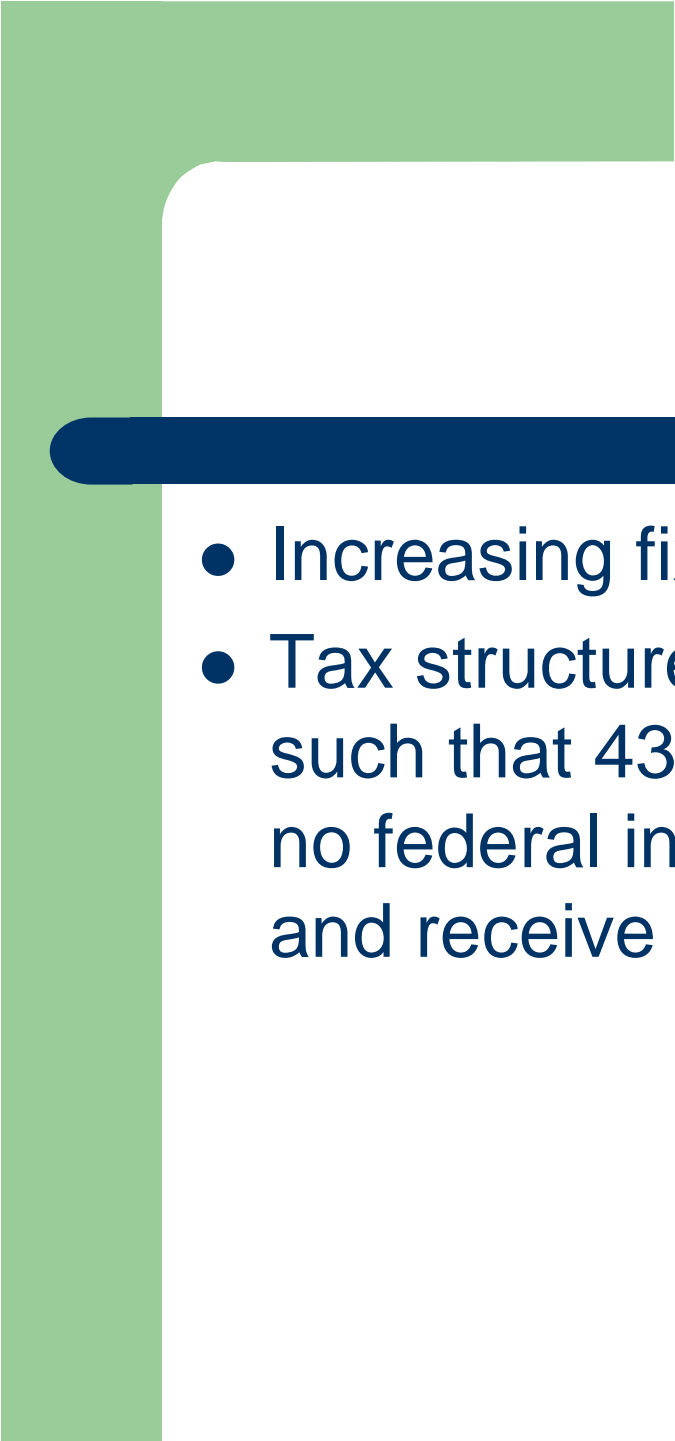

Jason Russell
Empire State College –
State University of
New York

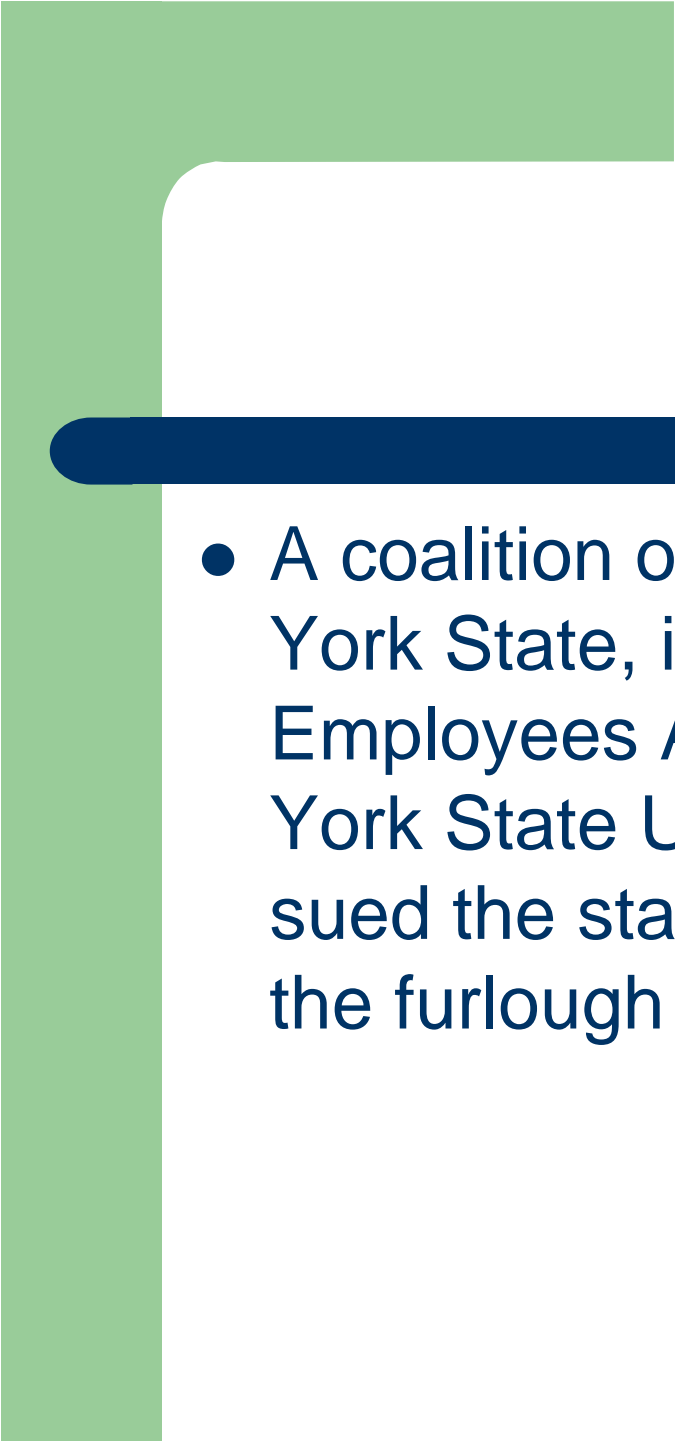

- 
- 
- American unions and their allies have tried to promote a social and economic agenda that has emphasized the role of the state in protecting domestic jobs and social programs.
 - These efforts have often been pursued through the labour movement's traditional political alliance with the Democratic Party.

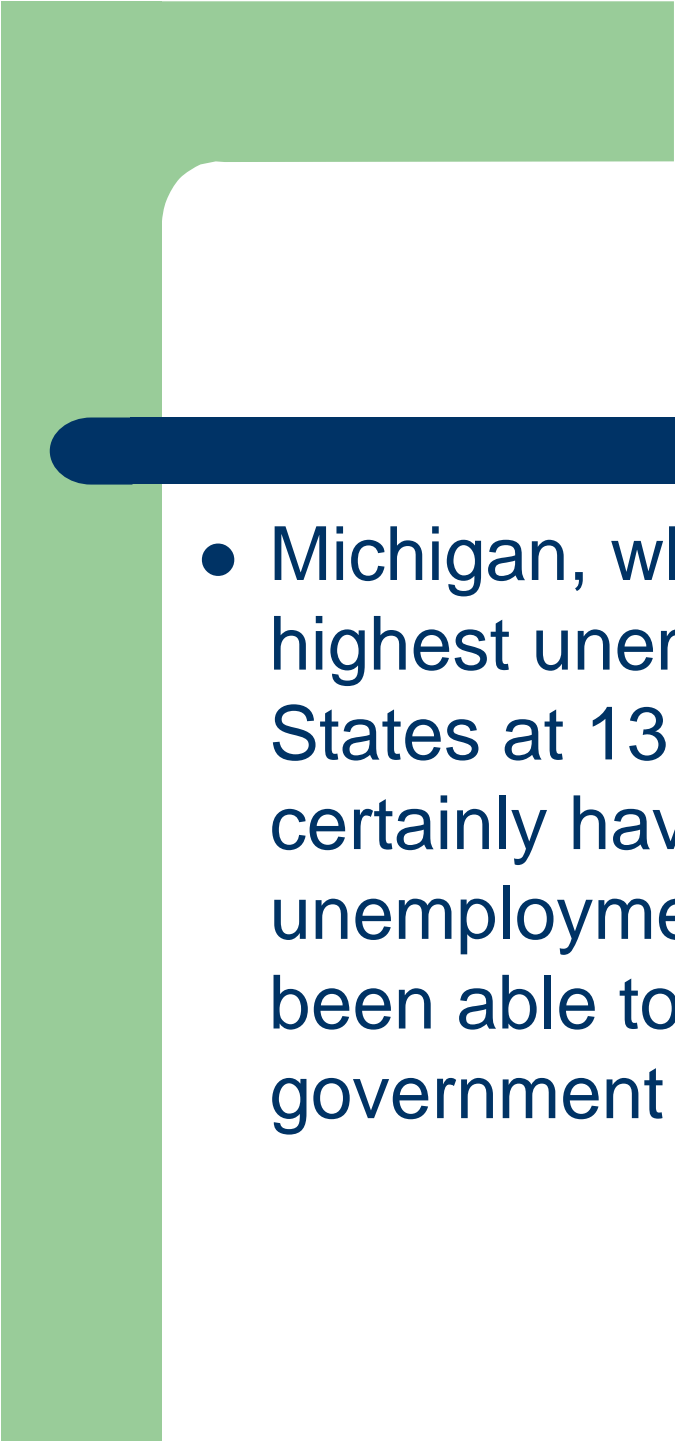

- 
- 
- Each American state has a state-wide labour federation that is chartered by the AFL-CIO.
 - American unions are now an overwhelmingly public sector movement.
 - As of the end of 2008, when the economic crisis began, approximately 12.4 percent of American workers belonged to unions.

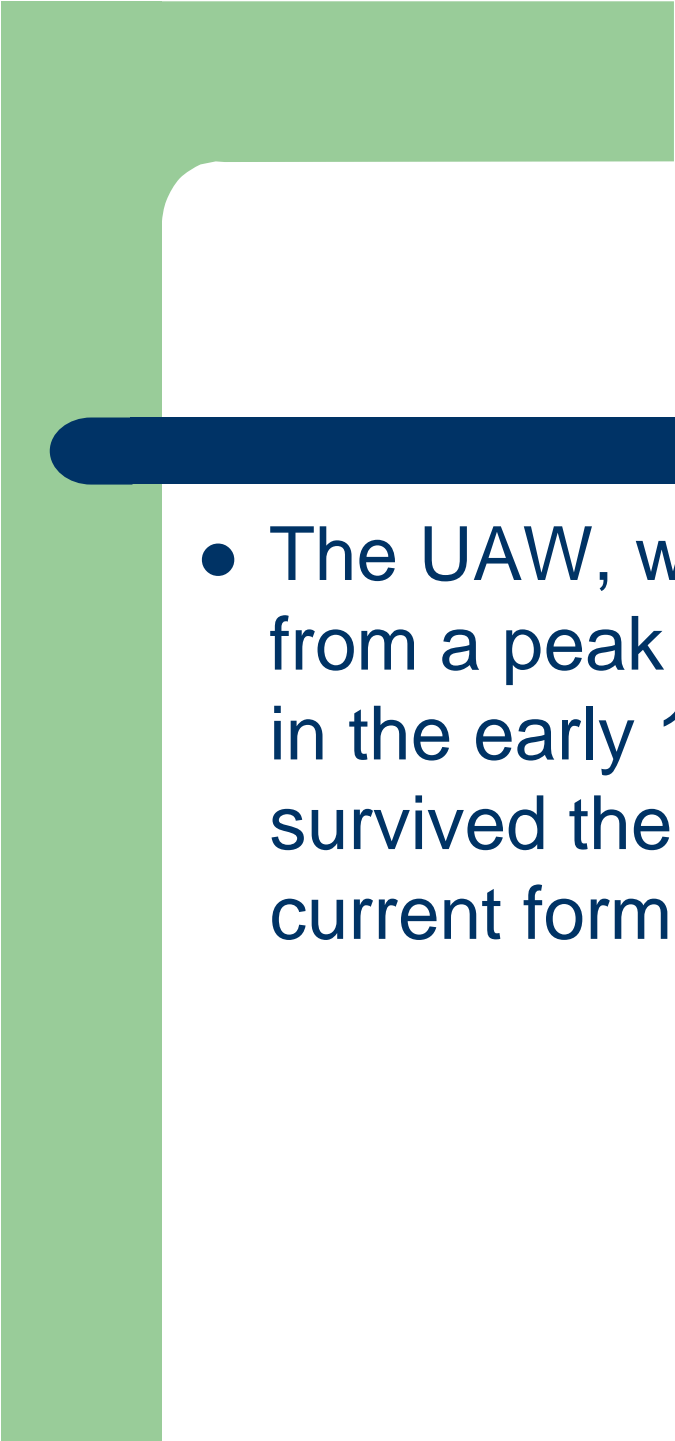

- 
- 
- New York State has the highest union density at 24.9 percent, while North Carolina has the lowest at 3.9 percent.
 - Around half of American union members, 8 million people, live in just six states: California, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio.

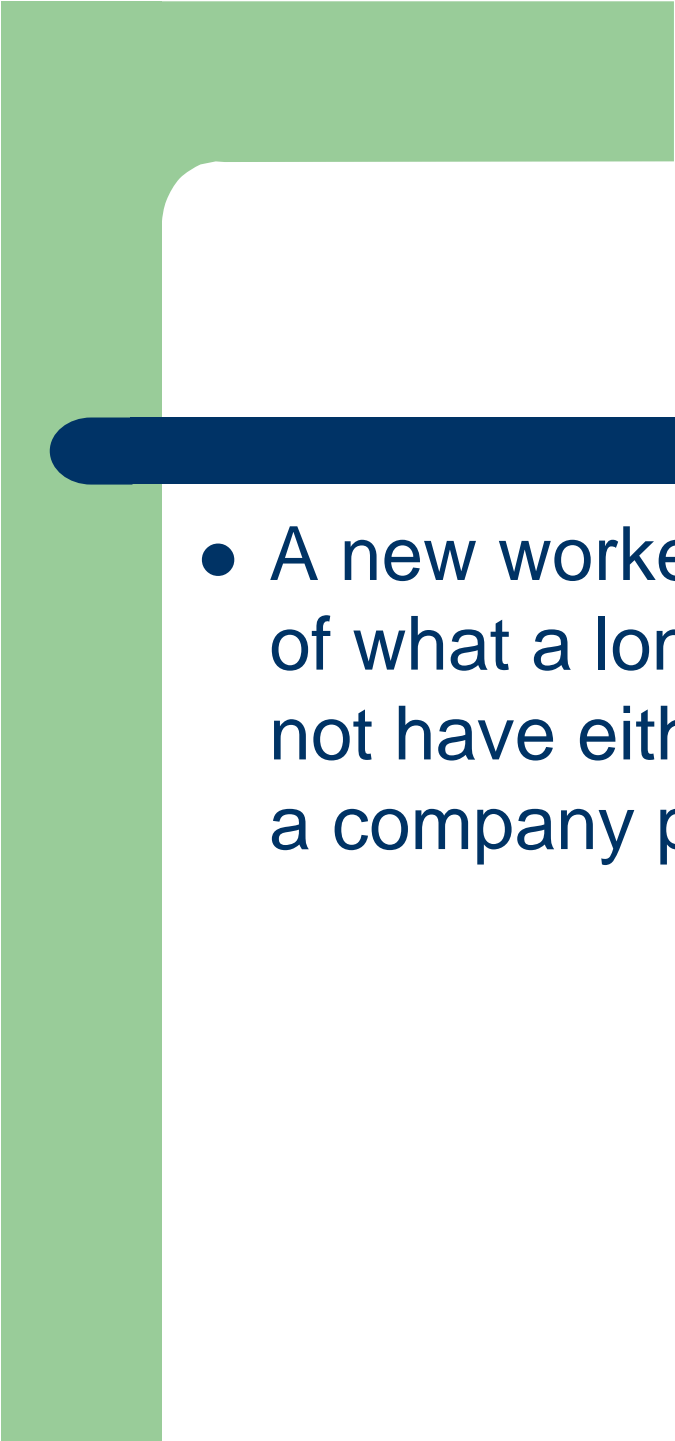

- 
- 
- American labor movement is increasingly a public sector movement as 37.2 percent of public sector workers belonging to unions, while only 7.2 percent of private sector workers are unionized.

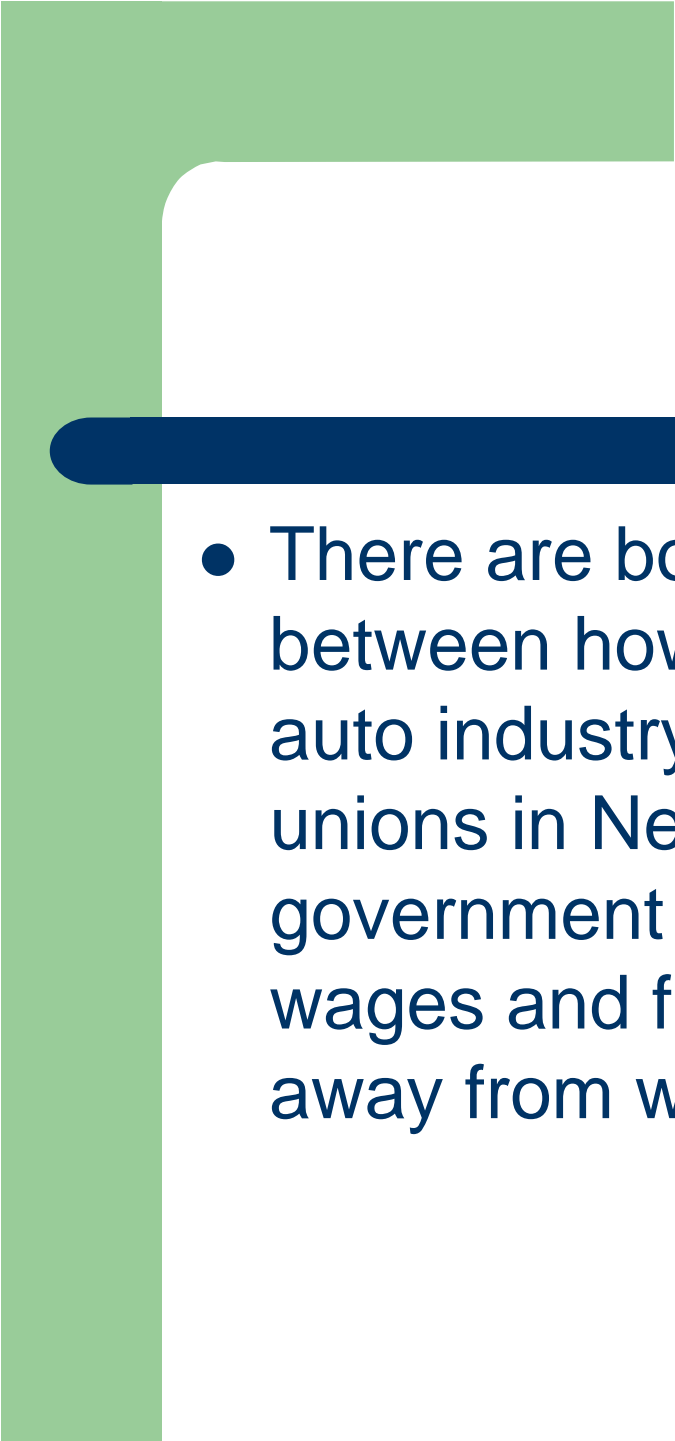

- 
- 
- Increasing fixation on public debt levels.
 - Tax structure in the United States is now such that 43 percent of Americans either pay no federal income tax, or pay negative taxes and receive rebates.

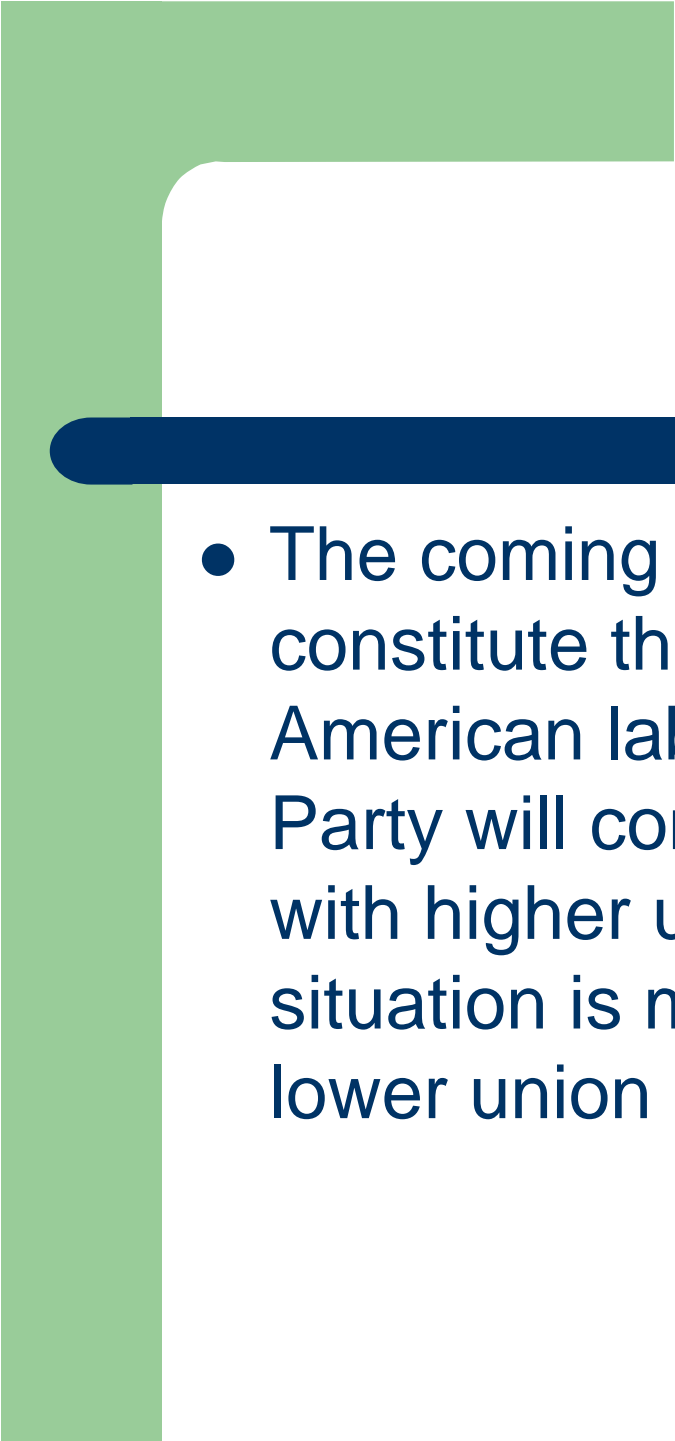

- 
- 
- A coalition of public sector unions in New York State, including the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) and the New York State Union of Teachers (NYSUT), sued the state government and overturned the furlough legislation

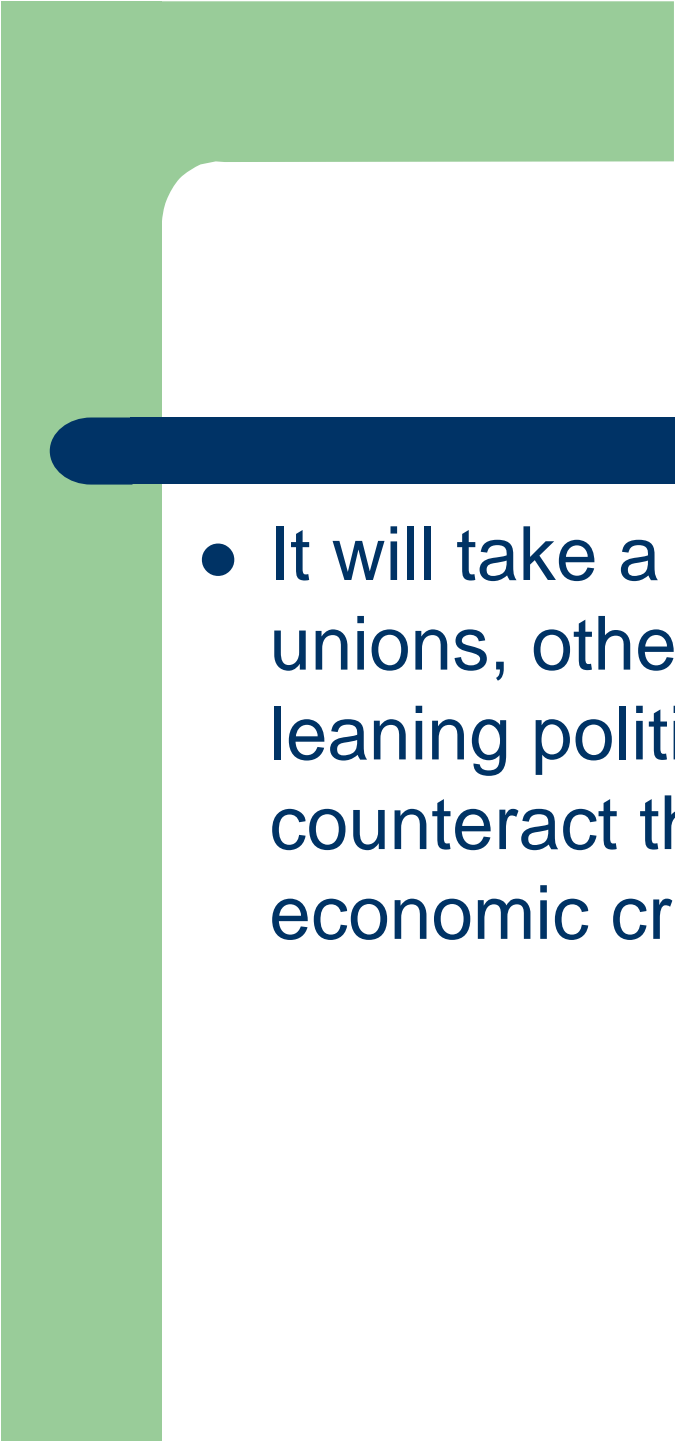

- 
- 
- Michigan, which currently has the second highest unemployment rate in the United States at 13.1 percent, would almost certainly have had even worse unemployment had GM and Chrysler not been able to continue operating without government assistance.

- 
- 
- The UAW, which is now down to 390,000 from a peak membership of over 1.5 million in the early 1970s, would probably not have survived the loss of GM and Chrysler in its current form.

- 
- 
- A new worker hired at GM will now make half of what a long-service worker is paid, and will not have either health insurance or access to a company pension plan.

- 
- 
- There are both similarities and differences between how the UAW responded to the auto industry crisis, and how public sector unions in New York state responded to government efforts to freeze their members' wages and force them to take unpaid time away from work.

- 
- 
- The coming November mid-term elections constitute the greatest challenge for the American labor movement. The Democratic Party will continue to be successful in states with higher union density. The political situation is much more tenuous in states with lower union density.

- 
- 
- It will take a determined effort that involves unions, other social movements, and left-leaning political groups in order to more fully counteract the long-term effects of the economic crisis.