

# Unionization of South Carolina Newspapers

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## Practices

Employment & Labor Law

## Article

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One of South Carolina's oldest and largest newspapers may soon become unionized. An affiliate of the Communication Workers of America recently filed a petition seeking to unionize all non-supervisors who work at *The State* newspaper. The Carolinas are the least unionized States in the nation, but they are certainly not immune to unionization efforts such as the one at *The State* as well as elsewhere.

The union seeks to represent "all full-and regular part-time reporters, photographers, editors and producers" at *The State*. A national newspaper publisher, McClatchy, owns *The State* along with several other newspapers in South Carolina. One of those is *The Island Packet*, located in Hilton Head, whose employees became unionized last fall.

Employers currently have the legal right to oppose unionization. During a union campaign, most employers insist that the National Labor Relations Board monitor the voting process and confirm whether the union wins a majority of the votes cast in a secret ballot election. In the union campaign at *The Island Packet*, however, the employer voluntarily recognized the union based on union cards before the employees could vote in a secret ballot election. What will happen at *The State* remains to be seen.

Union campaigns regularly occur in the Carolinas, so union-free employers should prepare now by regularly reviewing and updating their workforce policies, plans and training.