

Frequently Asked Questions

GSU Dues Proposal

(As at June 30, 2026)

The Joint Executive Council (JEC) recommends a 0.25% adjustment to member dues—moving from 1.75% to 2% of regular wages.

The Final Decision is Yours. All members will vote at the fall Annual General Meetings (AGMs) between October and December 2026. The adjustment will not take effect unless approved by the membership.

Questions

The following are the most frequently asked questions. If you have a question that isn't in this list, please send your questions talk to your JEC representative, elected officers or GSU staff. We will update this list of questions as we get more questions.

1. What is being proposed?

The GSU Joint Executive Council is proposing to increase member dues from 1.75% to 2.0% of gross wages — an increase of 0.25%. This proposal will be put to a membership vote in Autumn 2026. As well, the JEC has asked the GSU Defense Fund to provide \$300,000 to the GSU Legal Fund over a three- to four-year period.

2. Why is this increase being proposed now?

GSU's operating budget has been under serious pressure for several years. Rising legal costs, the increasing expense of delivering member education and bargaining support, and a period of constrained revenues have stretched the budget to the point where the JEC had to cut education, bargaining schools, and organizing in 2024 and 2025 to avoid large deficits. These cuts are not sustainable to maintain the power members want in the workplace.

In October 2025, the JEC established a Special Strategic Financial Planning Committee to examine the financial situation in detail and recommend options. After three meetings and a thorough review of GSU's finances, surveys, and spending history, the committee concluded that an additional roughly \$200,000 per year is needed to stabilize GSU's operations and restore vital programs. This conclusion was presented to the JEC who proceeded down the path we are currently on.

3. How was this number decided?

The Special Strategic Financial Planning Committee — made up of elected JEC members Dave Barrett, Kaylee Yanoshewski, and Colton Buck, along with General Secretary Steve Torgerson and accounting administrator Rebecca Forness — modelled several options. A 0.25% increase is projected to generate approximately \$200,000 per year based on current average membership of around 1,200 members. [This is the amount the Joint Executive Council determined is needed to address the four priority areas identified.](#)

4. What will the money be used for?

The additional revenue would be allocated across three main areas:

- **Member engagement** — \$130,000/year for funded leave days so Local officers and members can do union work at their worksites, an increased dues rebate to give Locals resources for events and communications, and support for Local executives to better connect with members.
- **Education** — \$45,000/year to restore and expand training for stewards, new officers, grievance handlers, and bargaining committees on a predictable multi-year schedule.
- **Organizing** — \$25,000/year to support GSU's capacity to bring new workers into the union.

How much more will I pay?

The increase depends on your annual wage. The table below shows what the change looks like at different salary levels:

Annual salary	Extra dues per year	Extra dues per month
\$30,000	\$75	\$6.25
\$40,000	\$100	\$8.33
\$50,000	\$125	\$10.42
\$60,000	\$150	\$12.50
\$70,000	\$175	\$14.58
\$80,000	\$200	\$16.67

5. Why hasn't GSU just cut costs instead of raising dues?

The Joint Executive Committee (JEC) also asked this question.

The JEC has been working within tight annual budgets for the past three years, looking to find every possible cost saving. After reviewing years of detailed financial data, they concluded that the problem is not overspending — it is that our revenue hasn't kept pace with the real cost of running a union that can actually fight for its members.

There are simply no obvious large savings left to find that don't further reduce services. Cutting any deeper would mean permanently eliminating programs and capacity that directly serve members and officers, and will further increase responsibilities on staff.

Ultimately, the JEC's view is that the union needs to invest in itself to grow stronger, rather than shrinking just to survive.

6. How long has it been since dues were last increased?

It has been a very long time — longer than most members have been with the union. The last dues increase was over 20 years ago (phased in between 2003 and 2004), which raised the rate from 1.3% to 1.75%.

Meanwhile, the cost of everything the union does has gone up significantly. The costs of legal services, education delivery, travel, and staffing have all risen.

The committee's review of past budgets confirmed that GSU has been absorbing these cost increases for two decades without a corresponding revenue adjustment. That growing gap is what has put us in the position we're in now, bringing the budget to a breaking point.

7. What happens if the increase is not approved?

If the membership votes no, GSU will need to continue operating on a constrained budget. That means education programs, bargaining schools, and organizing will remain unfunded or limited. The legal fund will not be robust right away. Local engagement activities will remain at current minimal levels. The union will continue to function, but with a reduced capacity to serve and represent its members as fully as it wants to.

8. What is the Defense Fund, and is it part of this?

The GSU Defense Fund is a separate fund — funded by an additional \$10 per member per month — that exists to support members during strikes and lockouts. It is separate from the operating budget.

The committee considered all options involving the Defense Fund and agreed to a hybrid approach seeking increase to regular operating dues and also drawing on the Defense Fund gains, not principal to fund the Legal Fund.

9. How does the vote on increasing union dues work?

A dues increase requires approval by two-thirds (2/3) of members who vote. The vote will take place in October, November, and December 2026 at Sub-Local and Local Annual Meetings. Full details on the voting process — including how to cast your vote — will be communicated well in advance of the vote opening.

10. Who decided to put this to a vote?

The Joint Executive Council voted at its March 2026 meeting to bring this proposal to the membership. The decision followed years of work, the presentation of the Special Committee's report and extensive deliberation. The JEC is recommending a yes vote, but the final decision belongs to the membership.

11. Where can I ask more questions?

Local meetings open to all members may be held in July to September 2026, based on request and member interest. You can also submit questions through the feedback form on the GSU website, or reach out directly to your Local executive, JEC Representative for your Local or GSU staff.

12. Why does GSU need more money? Where has the money gone?

GSU's costs have risen significantly over the years — legal fees especially, but also the cost of delivering education, supporting bargaining, and running the union's operations.

Dues have not increased in a very long time (over 20 years ago) and employers have downsized their employees (meaning less dues-paying members), so we've been absorbing those cost increases without any new revenue to match them. Actively bargaining new collective agreements must continue; however, over the past two years, the JEC had to cut education and bargaining schools entirely just to avoid going into deficit. That's not a position we can sustain.

13. What happens if the vote fails?

If members vote no, GSU will continue to operate on the current budget.

That means education programs, bargaining schools, and organizing remain unfunded or severely limited. The legal fund will not be rebuilt. Locals will continue to have minimal

resources for engagement.

The union will function, but with much less capacity to serve and represent its members effectively. The JEC believes that's a worse outcome — but the decision belongs to the membership.

14. How do I know the money will actually go where you say it will?

That's a fair question and the JEC takes it seriously. [The allocation of new revenue will be part of the annual budget, which is presented to and approved by the Joint Executive Council.](#)

The JEC is comprised of at least one member from each Local in GSU. Members have the right to see those budgets and hold the JEC accountable and elect their representative(s). We are committed to reporting back to members on how these funds are being used.

15. Why is member engagement getting the most money?

Because [the JEC believes it's where the investment will have the most impact.](#)

Right now, most members only hear from their union a handful of times a year — maybe at a Local meeting if they attend. That's not enough. A strong union depends on members who know what the union is doing for them, who feel connected to their Local, and who are ready to stand up when it matters.

The \$130,000 for engagement goes directly to Locals — funded leave days so officers and members can do union work at your worksite, and a bigger dues rebate so Locals have real resources to work with.

16. What specifically will the education money fund?

The committee designed a three-year education cycle.

- Year one covers new officer training, Steward Level 1 training, and grievance handling — about 35 seats total.
- Year two adds Steward Level 2 and a Local mobilizing course.
- Year three includes bargaining school.

The goal is a predictable, rotating curriculum so members can plan to participate and build skills over time rather than hoping for a one-off session.

17. I'm already paying dues and a Defense Fund contribution. Why should I pay more?

The Defense Fund is separate — it exists specifically to support members during strikes and lockouts, and it stays there.

This proposed dues increase is to the operating dues that fund the union's day-to-day work: legal representation, member education, bargaining support, and Local engagement. Those are the things that make a difference for members every working day — not just in a strike. The JEC believes those programs are worth funding properly.

18. Are dues going to keep going up every few years?

There are no plans for further increases beyond this proposal.

The JEC's analysis shows that a 0.25% increase gets GSU's finances to a stable, sustainable place for the foreseeable future. Any future change to dues would also require another membership vote under the same two-thirds threshold.

19. How does the vote work?

The vote will take place at Annual Membership meetings this Fall. It requires approval by two-thirds of the members who cast a ballot. Full voting instructions will be communicated to all members well before the vote opens. Every member in good standing is eligible to attend their AGM and vote.

20. Did members have any input into this proposal?

Yes, the JEC are all working members of GSU. The JEC worked on both spending priorities and revenue options. This work by the JEC began almost three years ago when they began to work on the annual budget and do a deep review into revenue and spending.

21. Why is the JEC recommending a yes vote? Shouldn't they be neutral?

The JEC commissioned this work, reviewed the committee's findings, and voted to bring this proposal forward. Part of that decision is a recommendation — the JEC believes this is the right investment for the union's future. But making a recommendation is not the same as making the decision. The vote belongs to the members.