

Minneapolis Briefing on the Anti-Middle Class “Right to Work” Constitutional Amendment

Wednesday, February 8th

6:30 – 7:45 pm

(directly after the February MRLF delegate meeting)

Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation

312 Central Ave., Second Floor

Minneapolis, MN

Please attend ONE of the following TWO briefings;
both will be held at the same time at the MRLF.

Briefing 1-- Right to Work 101:

What It Is, How It Affects You, and How We're Fighting It

or

Briefing 2-- Leading on Right to Work:

Learn How to Speak Effectively about Right to Work with
Brothers and Sisters

RSVP to Adam at adam@minneapolisunions.org or 612-222-5500

Bring your union brothers and sisters!



Frequently Asked Questions about Right to Work

Right to Work – Wrong for the Middle Class

What is Right to Work?

This anti-middle class amendment makes it harder for workers to join together to work for better wages, benefits and workplaces. It's being pushed nationally, not by workers, but by big political donors that put corporate interests before working people and the middle class.

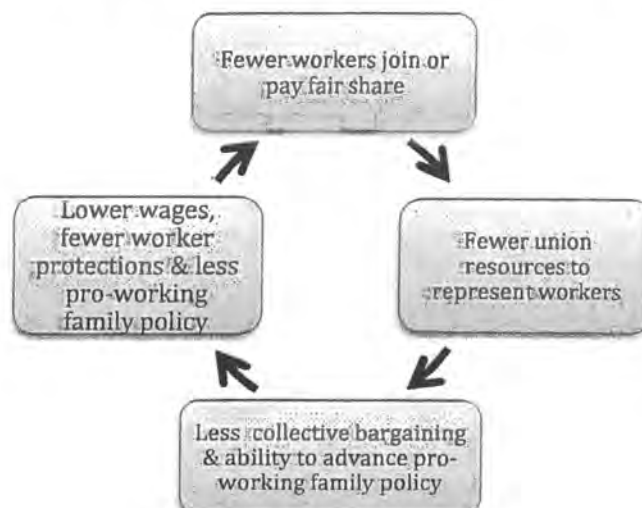
Specifically, right to work laws (allowed by the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947) prevent employers and employees from negotiating a type of agreement called a union security clause. A union security clause says that if the union represents you, you have to pay your share of the costs they incur. So, what banning that type of agreement means is that if someone gets a job in a unionized workplace, the union has to represent them, but the worker has no responsibility to the union. They get the wages and benefits negotiated, however improved those may be (union members earn, on average, 28% more than non-members), and don't contribute to the costs of negotiating. If they're fired illegally, the union must represent them for free, no matter how much staff time and resources go into defending them. And if they feel like the union didn't do well enough representing them for free, they can sue.

Why pass right to work laws?

Researchers and commentators from the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation to the *New York Times* editorial board agree – right to work laws have the single goal of reducing unions' power to advocate for good working family policy and silencing the collective voice of organized workers.

What are the effects of right to work laws on unions?

Right to work laws financially weaken and eventually cripple unions by requiring them and their members to pay for the representation of those who opt out of paying dues, but still benefit from the union's representation. As you can see in the chart below, it's a vicious cycle that ultimately leaves the union with very few resources to protect workers, negotiate contracts, enforce collective bargaining agreements and advance pro-working family policies.





Frequently Asked Questions about Right to Work

Right to Work – Wrong for the Middle Class

Do right to work laws have any effect beyond harming unions?

Yes! Union membership in right to work states is less than half that in free-bargaining states. As a result, median family income is lower, more people are uninsured, the wage gap for women and people of color is greater, schools spend less per pupil and perform less well, and infant mortality is higher.

Right to work laws also hurt economic development. Some examples:

- **Wages for all workers are driven down.** Both union and non-union workers in states with these laws make an average of \$5,538 less per year than those living in states without the law.
- **Local jobs are lost.** Not only do right to work laws not create more jobs, but they actually cause local economies to lose them. While there are many ways jobs are lost due to RTW, one statistic from the Economic Policy Institute is especially frightening – every \$1 million in wage cuts, results in six jobs lost in the local economy. Doing the math including just Minnesota’s 300,000 union members, our state would lose nearly 10,000 jobs!
- **Benefits are reduced.** Employers in right to work states are less likely to offer benefits and workers are currently losing health insurance coverage 70 percent faster than in non-right to work states.
- **Workplace safety suffers.** According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rate of workplace deaths is 50 percent higher in right to work states.
- **Less investment in schools.** Right to work means lower school funding, more layoffs and larger class sizes. For example, during the 2008 – 2009 school year, right to work states spent only \$9,005 per student, compared to \$10,966 in Minnesota.

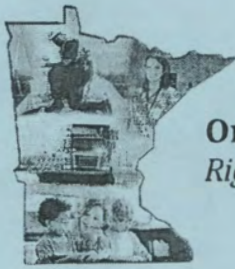
Seven of the 10 poorest states are right work states. However, in states like Minnesota where a high percentage of residents belong to unions, the quality of life is better:

Measure of quality of life	Weak union states	Strong union states	Union advantage
Poverty	13.3%	10.6%	2.7% less poverty
Household income	\$38,854	\$46,378	\$7,542 more income
Residents with no healthcare	15.1%	11.8%	3.3% fewer uninsured

Sources: 2010 Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics and National Center for Education Statistics

Go to www.MiddleClassMN.org to pledge to take action to stop the Right to Work Constitutional Amendment and sign up for action alerts!

Sources: Elise Gould, Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance Erosion Accelerates in the Recession—Public Safety Net Catches Kids but Fails to Adequately Insure Adults, Economic Policy Institute, Nov. 16, 2010; Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts.org; National Education Association, Rankings and Estimates—Rankings of the States 2009 and Estimates of School Statistics 2010, December 2009; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Highlights of Women’s Earnings in 2009, June 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2010.



One-on-One Worksite Conversation

Right to Work – Wrong for the Middle Class

Informing your co-workers about the potential Right to Work Constitutional Amendment and asking them to get involved by taking action or learning more is a critical part of stopping this anti-middle class amendment.

Elements of a Strong One-on-One Conversation with a Hard Ask

1. Know your audience: Tailor your conversation and ask to the person you're talking to.
2. Build urgency: Give enough context to make stopping the Right to Work Constitutional Amendment important. Answer the question, "Why is this so important NOW?" before they ask it.
3. AAR! Listen to what the other person is saying. If you don't agree, affirm the sentiment, answer with your perspective and redirect the conversation back to what you want to talk about.
4. Use strong language: Don't use binary (yes/no) language. Instead of asking yes/no questions, ask either/or questions – they're a lot more effective!
5. Ask for something specific: Specificity increases the chance of a positive response and limits the odds of getting a NO response.
6. Ask and be quiet: Deliver a reasonable and clear ask; then, wait for a response.
7. Reflect! After each conversation think about what went well and what you could do better next time.

Sample One-on-One Conversation

You: Hi Marshall, how are you doing today?

Marshall: Oh, I'm good – you?

Give context
and convey
urgency

You: I'm pretty good. Hey, Marshall, have you heard that they might pass a Right to Work Constitutional Amendment this legislative session?

Marshall: No, I didn't know that. What exactly is right to work?

You: I didn't know much about it either, but I just went to this training yesterday and learned about it. It sounds like a total wolf wrapped in sheep's clothing. Basically, it'll make it illegal for unions to collect fair share dues which essentially puts them out of business – the real goal.

Marshall: Well, that doesn't sound so bad – no one should be forced to join a union.

Ask for
something
specific using
Either/Or

You: Yeah, I hear that – no one should be forced, and it's actually already illegal. That's the trick of it all – big business-backed politicians are pushing these laws all over the country to silence the voice of organized workers. They gave me a great *NY Times* editorial at the training I went to – will you read it and let me know what you think? Or, would you be interested in going to the next training?

Affirm,
Answer,
Redirect!

Marshall: Sure, I could read the article.

You: Awesome! Thanks, Marshall! I look forward to hearing what you think about it.

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January 7, 2012

Continuing Assault on Unions

Along with their shameful campaign to curb the collective bargaining rights of public sector workers in Wisconsin and Ohio last year, Republicans in statehouses around the country are taking aim at private sector unions.

Twenty-two states, mainly in the South and the West, have long had "right to work" laws forbidding contracts that require workers to pay union dues. After a decade in which business has ignored the issue, Republicans in more than 10 states over the last year have begun pushing similar laws. Indiana's Legislature is expected to approve the antiunion legislation as early as next month.

Many Republican leaders are adopting model legislation proposed by the American Legislative Exchange Council, a national corporate-financed conservative organization that is also assisting the Republican push to require voter identification cards to suppress the vote of minorities, young people and other constituencies that tend to favor the Democratic Party.

There is little doubt that politics is also behind the Republicans' push for right-to-work laws: they see an opportunity to further weaken unions, which are far more likely to support Democrats — as well as health care reform and a higher minimum wage — by slashing their funding and their donating power.

The G.O.P. and its allies, like the Chamber of Commerce and brethren organizations, are trotting out the charge that unions reduce economic growth and jobs.

It stands to reason that a union will reduce a company's profits somewhat, by obtaining a higher share for workers. But over the last three decades, economists have found that unionization has a minimal impact on growth and employment in an entire state or country. In fact, six of the 10 states with the highest unemployment have right-to-work laws. North Carolina, a right-to-work state, has a private sector unionization rate of 1.8 percent, the lowest in the nation. It also has the sixth highest unemployment rate: 10 percent.

Unionized workers earn more and get more generous benefits. In 2010, wages of workers in unionized manufacturing companies in Indiana were 16 percent higher than in nonunion plants. One study concluded that the decline in unionization since the 1970s is responsible for one-fifth to one-third of the growth in inequality in this country. Voters, unionized or not, should recognize the new “right to work” push for what it is: bad economics and cynical politics.

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