



PROTECT OHIO'S MIDDLE CLASS

1. What is “right to work”?

Some business and employer groups are promoting the adoption “right to work” in Ohio, to financially weaken unions and their ability to effectively bargain with employers

2. Why is this “right to work” wrong for Ohio?

“Right to work” pits those employers trying to force down employee wages and benefits against middle-class employees trying to support their families in Ohio’s struggling economy. Especially in rough economic times, employers and employees need to cooperate to improve worker efficiency and productivity to bring Ohio’s economy back. This proposal discourages that vital cooperation.

3. Who is behind “right to work”?

“Right to work” wasn’t put forth by workers. Instead, some business and employer groups that want to increase corporate profits by cutting the wages of their employees are behind the measure. As demonstrated in other states where mislabeled “right-to-work” laws have been adopted, such laws result in lower wages for all employees, union and non-union alike.

4. How would “right to work” impact Ohio’s economy?

Rather than improve a state's economy, most studies have found that right-to-work laws have little effect on economic development. In fact, some studies have shown that states that adopt right-to-work laws actually experience slower economic growth after adopting the law.

5. How would “right to work” impact wages?

Numerous scientific studies have confirmed that so-called “right-to-work” laws have a negative impact on wages for all workers, union and non-union alike, and even a greater negative impact on the wages of women and minorities. Data collected by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the average annual pay for workers in non-right-to work states, both union and non-union, was 14.1 percent higher than those for workers with right-to-work laws like the “workplace freedom amendment.” In real dollars, that means that the average worker in right-to-work states makes about \$5,000 less than those without such laws.

6. How would “right to work” impact worker benefits?

Employees in right-to-work states enjoy a lower level of employer-provided benefits than those in non-right-to-work states. Data compiled by United States Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that 4.5% more of the workforce in non-right to work states is covered by employer-provided health insurance than in right-to-work states. That data also showed that 4.5% more of the workforce in non-right to work states receives an employer-provided pension than in right-to-work states.

7. How else would it impact workers?

Lower wages and benefits are not the only adverse effects of right-to-work laws like the “right to work.” Because such laws are designed to weaken unions, and one of the primary responsibilities of unions is to monitor workplace safety, right-to-work laws result in less-safe workplaces. Indeed, at least one scientific study has examined the data and confirmed that construction occupation fatalities are higher in states with right-to-work laws. The author of that study concluded that passing a right-to-work law may, therefore, have the unintended consequence of elevating workplace fatalities.

8. Would “right to work” just impact unions?

No. Scientific studies show that all workers, both union and non-union, suffer in states with right-to-work laws. Wages and employer-provided benefits such as health insurance and pensions are lower for all workers in right-to-work states than those in non-right-to-work states.

9. How have similar measures impacted other states?

No state that has recently adopted a right-to-work law has seen significant job growth following the adoption of the law. In fact, despite wild promises of increased job opportunities, Oklahoma, which adopted a right-to-work law in 2001, actually saw employment significantly *decrease* relative to employment in its neighboring states in the years *after* its right-work-law was adopted.

10. Are workers currently forced to join unions?

No. The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly held that no individual can be required to "join" a union. The most that can be required is the payment of "fair share" or "agency" fees to support the union's collective bargaining, contract administration, and grievance adjustment functions, and only if the payment of such fees is required by a freely-negotiated contract between a union and an employer. While federal law guarantees unions and employers the right to freely bargain over the payment of fair share fees by all employees benefiting from collective bargaining, no employer is required to agree to such clauses, and such clauses can only go into effect if a majority of the employees favor it by ratifying the negotiated agreement. Moreover, federal labor law prohibits a union from expending the agency fees of nonmembers on political causes over their objection.

11. Why is it called “right to work”?

The name “right to work” is purposely deceptive. The United States Supreme Court has already held that no individual can be required to "join" a union. What the proposal does do is outlaw contracts that require the payment of fair share fees to support the union’s collective bargaining, contract administration, and grievance adjustment functions. Federal labor law already prohibits a union from expending the agency fees of nonmembers on political causes over their objection. As with every organization supported by dues, a certain percentage of potential members would prefer to take advantage of the benefits of membership without contributing financial support to the efforts to secure those benefits. Thus, supporters acknowledge that the real purpose behind such measures is not the “right to work,” but rather to allow "free riders" and weaken unions financially so that employers will once again enjoy a huge advantage over their employees in terms of bargaining power. The inequality of bargaining strength will allow employers to force down middle-class wages in an already struggling economy.

12. Who opposes “right to work”?

All employees, union and non-union alike, are uniting to oppose the imposition of “right to work” laws in Ohio because they recognize that they will all suffer if such as law is enacted. Responsible business owners also oppose the “right to work” because they recognize that their businesses, and Ohio’s economy in general, cannot thrive in an atmosphere in which middle-class wages and benefits are so drastically reduced.