

Some facts about Right-to-Work

Federal legislation: On Feb. 1, 2017, legislation (H.R. 785- National Right-to-Work Act) was introduced to amend the National Labor Relations Act and Railway Labor Act, preventing unions from collecting “fair share” fees. While this legislation targets private sector workers and their unions, it will significantly weaken the labor movement as a whole. Congress is expected to consider the legislation sometime this year.

What is Right-to-Work?

Right-to-Work sounds like a worker-friendly term, but it actually has little to do with workers or our rights. When Right-to-Work laws are enacted, employees in unionized workplaces are not required to pay for union representation, even though they receive the union benefits, weakening the union’s power.

How many states have Right to Work laws?

As of Feb. 6, 2017, Missouri became the 28th state to enact a Right-to-Work law. Several other states, including Iowa, New Hampshire and Washington, are considering Right-to-Work legislation.

The economics of Right- to-Work

Supporters of Right-to-Work laws claim workers gain by not having to pay for representation, and that Right-to-Work laws boost economic growth. Statistics show that the quality of life is worse in states with Right-to-Work laws.

- **Wages:** Workers in Right-to-Work states make \$6,109 (12.1 percent) less annually than workers in states without this law (\$44,401 vs. \$50,511). (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). The U.S. Census Bureau reports that median household income in states with these laws is \$8,174 (13.9 percent) less than in other states (\$50,712 vs. \$58,886).
- **Workplace safety:** The rate of workplace deaths is 49 percent higher in states with Right-to-Work laws (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- **Health Insurance:** In Right-to-Work states, 13 percent of people under age 65 have no health insurance, as compared with 9.4 percent of people in other states (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation). The foundation also reports that 47 percent of employers in Right-to-Work work states offer insurance to employees, compared with 52.2 percent in other states.
- **Education:** States with Right-to-Work laws spend 32.5 percent less per pupil on elementary and secondary education than other states (National Education Association).
- **Poverty Rates:** In Right-to-Work states, poverty rates stand at 15.3 percent overall (and 21.4 percent for children). In other states, poverty rates total 12.8 percent overall (and 18 percent for children.) (U.S. Census Bureau)