



## 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.

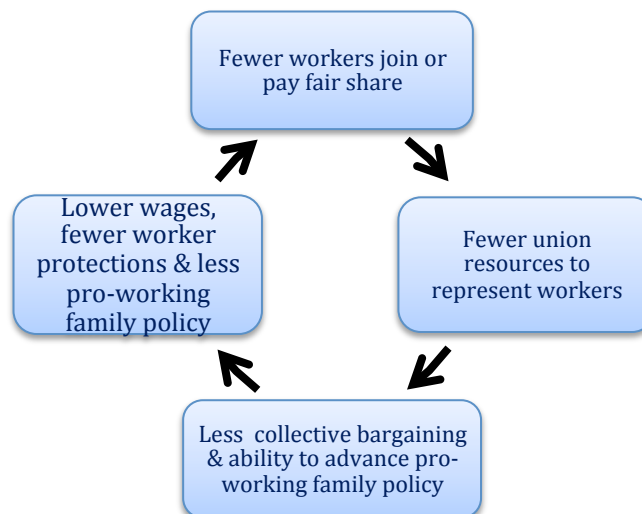
Specifically, right to work laws (allowed by the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947) prevent employers and employees from negotiating a type of agreement called a union security clause. A union security clause says that if the union represents you, you have to pay your share of the costs they incur. So, what banning 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.





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#### 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](http://www.MiddleClassMN.org) to pledge to take action to stop the Right to Work Constitutional Amendment and sign up for action alerts!**

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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.