

'Right to Work' for Less

Compare Minnesota with states that have so-called "right to work" laws. You'll see why we're better off without one.

Anti-worker and business-backed groups are pushing to pass a so-called "right to work" law here in Minnesota. Supporters claim these laws create economic prosperity, but many different measures show that Minnesota's working families are better off than working families in states with "right to work" for less laws.

Wages and Income

- Manufacturing workers in 16 of the 22 states with these laws earn less, on average, than manufacturing workers here in Minnesota. In 2009, the average manufacturing worker in Minnesota was paid \$18.60 per hour, \$1.80 more than the average manufacturing worker in "right to work" states.
- The average manufacturing worker here in Minnesota earns significantly more than the average manufacturing workers in some states with these laws, such as Arkansas (\$4.53 more), Mississippi (\$3.96 more), Oklahoma (\$3.84 more), Tennessee (\$3.87 more) and South Dakota (\$3.78 more).
- Here in Minnesota, we also have higher pay than people in 20 of the 22 "right to work" states. On average, we earned \$6,150 more in 2009 than workers in states with these laws.
- We earned \$10,000 more than people in some "right to work" states, including South Dakota and Mississippi.
- Median income here in Minnesota is \$9,762 higher than the average median income in states with "right to work" for less laws.
- In Minnesota, we also have a larger share of good jobs that pay well than states with these laws. Jobs in "right to work" states are 84 percent more likely to be in low-wage occupations than jobs in our state.

Poverty and Infant Mortality

- Poverty is higher in states with "right to work" for less laws. In 2009, the overall and child poverty rates in our state were 11.1 percent and 17.4 percent, respectively, compared with a 14.5 percent overall poverty rate and 20.3 percent child poverty rate in "right to work" states.
- The "right to work" state Arizona has an overall poverty rate of 21.2 percent and a child poverty rate of 31.3 percent. Fellow "right to work" state Mississippi has an overall poverty rate of 23.1 percent and a child poverty rate of 31.9 percent.
- The average infant mortality rate for states with these laws is 50.2 percent higher than the infant mortality rate for our state.

Safety and Health

- Workplaces in "right to work" states are more dangerous. Workers in "right to work" states also are more than twice as likely to be killed on the job as workers here in Minnesota. In 2008, the fatal occupational injury rate for our state was 2.4 (per every 100,000 workers), compared with an average of 5.4 in states with "right to work" for less laws.
- When workers do get hurt on the job in "right to work" states, the average maximum weekly benefit is \$163 (21.7 percent) lower than in Minnesota.

Unemployment

- When workers are laid off here in Minnesota, they can receive much higher unemployment benefits than unemployed workers in states with "right to work" for less laws. In Minnesota, unemployed workers can

receive a weekly maximum benefit of \$585, compared with an average maximum benefit of only \$363 per week in “right to work” states.

Health Care

- People in “right to work” states are more likely to lack health insurance than here in Minnesota. On average, people in states with these laws were 89.5 percent more likely to be uninsured in 2009 than we were.
- 8.8 percent of Minnesotans were uninsured in 2009, compared with an average of 16.7 percent of “right to work” for less state residents. In the “right to work” state of Florida, 22.4 percent of people are uninsured. And 26.1 percent of people are uninsured in fellow “right to work” state Texas.
- Children in “right to work” states are 88.4 percent more likely to be uninsured than our children. On average, 10.4 percent of children are uninsured in states with “right to work” for less laws, compared with 5.5 percent here in Minnesota.
- We are also 14.4 percent more likely to have job-based health insurance than people in states with “right to work” for less laws.

Pensions

- We are more likely to have pensions from our employers here in Minnesota compared with workers in states with “right to work” for less laws. On average, 43 percent of private-sector workers have employer-

provided pension coverage in “right to work” states, vs. 53.6 percent in Minnesota.

Education

- States with these laws spend less to educate their children than we do here in Minnesota. During the 2008–2009 school year, “right to work” states spent only \$9,005 per student, compared with \$10,996 spent by Minnesota.
- Minnesota invests more per student on education than 20 of the 22 states with “right to work” for less laws. Two “right to work” states spend less than \$6,000 per student (Arizona spends \$5,932 and Utah spends \$5,912.).
- Students in Minnesota are more likely than students in states with “right to work” for less laws to be at grade level in math and reading. In Minnesota, 43.1 percent of 8th grade students are proficient in math (compared with 29.6 percent of students in “right to work” states) and 36.6 percent are proficient in reading (compared with 28.1 percent in “right to work” states).
- People in Minnesota also are more likely than people in “right to work” states to have graduated from high school and college. In Minnesota, 91.1 percent of people 25 or older have graduated from high school, compared with 84.9 percent of people in states with “right to work” for less laws. And 31.1 percent of Minnesotans 25 or older have graduated from college, compared with 24.5 percent of people in “right to work” states.

SOURCES: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Corporation for Enterprise Development; 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; Economic Policy Institute, Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts.org; U.S. House Ways and Means Committee; U.S. Census Bureau.

Job-based health insurance coverage is for people younger than 65 and for 2008–2009. Pension coverage is for workers ages 18 to 64 who worked at least 20 hours per week and 26 weeks per year. The time period covered is a 2006–2008 three-year moving average.