RIGHT TO WORK

“In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as ‘right to work.’ It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone. Wherever these laws have been passed, wages are lower, job opportunities are fewer, and there are no civil rights. We do not intend to let them do this to us. We demand this fraud be stopped. Our weapon is our vote.” — Martin Luther King
“Right-to-Work” is the name for a policy designed to take away rights from working people. Backers of right-to-work laws claim that these laws protect workers against being forced to join a union. The reality is that federal law already makes it illegal to force someone to join a union.

Supporters of ‘Right to Work’ laws don’t want you to know about the concept’s racist origins.

The American Constitution Society names Vance Muse as the main concept designer and chief promoter of ‘right-to-work legislation. Click here to read. His grandson said, “Muse was proud of his roots as a Texan white supremacist, an anti-Semite, and a Communist-baiter, a man who beat on labor unions not on behalf of working people, as he said, but because he was paid to do so.”

The idea for modern Right-to-Work laws did not originate with Muse. It came from William Ruggles, a Dallas Morning News reporter, who, on Labor Day 1941, published an editorial calling for the national prohibition on the closed shop. Muse visited Ruggles soon after that and secured the writer’s blessing for the Christian American Association to launch a campaign to outlaw contracts that required employees to belong to unions. Ruggles even suggested to Muse the name for such legislation calling it, Right-to-Work.

The Christian American Foundation was and is closely associated with the Texas KKK.
Research

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) provides for union elections and bargaining with employers for wages, benefits, and working conditions.

This means unions have the People Power to:

- Increase wages
- Bargain for health insurance
- Create and maintain pensions
- Establish leave policies
- Establish sick policies including the Family Medical Leave Act
- Set overtime pay
- Set shift differential pay
- Set standardized workweek of 40 hours a week.
- Establish safety committees and standards
- Establish non-discrimination policies

When there is no union, these policies are set by the employer and will naturally benefit the employer rather than the employee.

Right to Work laws take away the ability of unions to collect dues but don’t take away the responsibility for unions to represent all workers regardless of their membership status. This means that unions have fewer resources and less bargaining power to maintain safe workplaces and reasonable policies to benefit workers.
Right-to-work states attract businesses who want to pay lower wages. So, while new businesses may come to Right-to-Work states, these same businesses could and do take their companies overseas or to other states to further reduce wages.

Corporate profits soar. Executive compensation skyrockets. The 1% who already do well, do even better, and the economic divide gets wider.

In the 1970s, approximately 33% of workers were union members. Now only 7% are union.

The general population is not stupid. They understand all of the concepts described above. What this means is that economic populism works in the fight against Right-to-Work. People understand that unions increase wages, benefits, and working conditions. Even in red states such as Missouri where the popular vote repealed Right-to-Work recently, it is worthwhile to remind people that their legislator or governor voted to support Right-to-Work legislation. The politicians who support RTW are vulnerable because of that support. If people are reminded at election time that their legislators supported RTW, undermining their place in society, voters from all parties are less likely to vote to support RTW legislators and other elected officials.
Research

Economic Policy Institute (EPI) research has shown that unionized workers in the United States have higher wages and better benefits than non-unionized workers and that states with “right-to-work” (RTW) laws (laws weakening unions financially) have lower wages—for both unionized and non-unionized workers—than states without RTW laws. This new analysis shows that Montana, a non-RTW state that is considering a RTW law, has had a higher unionization rate, faster wage growth, and faster job growth than its RTW neighbors. Despite promises that a RTW law would create jobs, Montana workers would not see employment gains if a RTW law were enacted. Instead, a RTW law would curb their ability to collectively push for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.

- Workers in RTW states earn 12.2% less annually than workers in states without RTW laws
- They have a greater incidence of workplace fatalities
- They are less likely to have health insurance and more likely to pay more out-of-pocket expenses for their insurance
- RTW states have higher poverty rates and infant mortality rates
- They invest less in education

Right-to-Work Laws destroy Unions.

From The Economic Policy Institute, Report by David Cooper and Julia Wolfe, February 26, 2021
National Talking Points

From the National Labor Relations Board

- The amount of dues collected from employees represented by unions is subject to federal and state laws and court rulings. The NLRA allows unions and employers to enter into union security agreements that require dues or equivalents as a condition of employment.

- Federal law allows unions and employers to enter into "union security" agreements which require all employees in a bargaining unit to become union members and begin paying union dues and fees within 30 days of being hired. Employees may choose not to become union members and pay dues or opt to pay only that share of dues used directly for representation, such as collective bargaining and contract administration.

- Known as objectors, they are no longer union members but are still protected by the contract. Unions are obligated to tell all covered employees about this option created by a Supreme Court ruling and is known as the Beck right.

- If you work in a state that bans union-security agreements (27 states), each employee at a workplace must decide whether to join the union and pay dues. All workers are protected by the collective bargaining agreement negotiated by the union. The union is still required to represent all workers regardless of their decision.

- You may object to union membership on religious grounds, but in that case, you must pay an amount equal to dues to a non-religious charitable organization.

- You have a right to be represented by your union fairly, in good faith, and without discrimination.

This duty applies to virtually every action that a union may take in dealing with an employer as your representative, including collective bargaining, handling grievances, and operating exclusive hiring halls.
“Right-to-work” is the name for a policy designed to take away rights from working people. Backers of right-to-work laws claim that these laws protect workers against being forced to join a union. The reality is that federal law already makes it illegal to force someone to join a union.

- Unions form voluntarily when employees are not happy.
- The real purpose of right-to-work law is to tilt the balance toward big corporations and further influence the system at the expense of working families.
- These laws make it harder for working people to form unions and collectively bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.
- Twelve of the 15 states with the worst pay gaps between men and women are “right-to-work” states.
- Just by living in a right-to-work state, the average worker gives up $1,540 in salary every year.
- Across America, states with right-to-work laws have higher unemployment and lower pay. That’s precisely what corporate interests want. They want to use the right-to-work to destroy unions that stand up for workers across the country. They want right-to-work to send more jobs overseas, rig the tax system, and demand more work from employees while treating them with less respect.
- Right-to-work laws eliminate freedoms and flexibility for workers and forfeit job security and benefits in right-to-work states. The right-to-work means more pressure on struggling working-class families, not less.

Follow the Money

The National Right-to-Work Committee was founded in 1955. Right-to-work is supported by ALEC, The American Legislative Exchange Council and the lobbying organization backed by the Koch brothers, chambers of commerce, and “think tanks” like the Mackinac Institute in Michigan, which are funded by billionaires and work to promote propaganda disguised as nonpartisan or “conservative” studies.

Right-to-work is an unfair attack on the working class that strips millions of Americans of their freedoms at work.