

No one should have to pay dues to get or keep a job -- unless they want to. That is what Right-to-Work means. Missouri's recent enactment of Right-to-Work legislation (pursuant to the individual State opt in provisions of Section 14B of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947) will prohibit unions (and employers) from mandating union membership and forced dues in union represented workplaces. For decades, anyone in Missouri wanting to work in a union facility had to join the union and pay dues. No join—no job. Right-to-Work will now give employees the choice to join a union and pay dues – or not.

Unions often argue that “it’s not fair” if some don’t have to pay dues in a union workplace and they accuse the non-payers of being “free riders”. In fact, unions don’t have to represent everyone and certainly not the non-dues paying employees. (In a 2007 legal brief file with the National Labor Relations Board the United Steelworkers of America and six other large, AFL-CIO-affiliated unions openly acknowledged that “members-only” bargaining has been permissible under federal law for decades.¹) The unions’ real concern with Right-to-Work is *money*. What unions know is that Right-to-Work impacts the unions’ ability to maximize their revenue by extracting dues. More dues-paying members means more dues. And more dues means more money for unions to pay their leadership, more money to fund union organizing, and most important: more money for political contributions to politicians who support the union agendas. The only ones who really benefit from the union mandated dues are the union bosses who then are able to pay themselves much more than the workers they represent; and then spend union dues money on politicians that many of the dues-paying workers do not support. For the unions it’s all about the dues – and without Right-to-Work, the unions can force workers to pay dues. And that is how it has been in Missouri for about 80 years.

Unions also claim that wages in Right-To-Work states are lower than in forced dues states. However, studies have proved that not to be the case when correctly taking into account cost of living disparities from state to state. (For example, there are obvious differences in the cost of living in New York versus Tennessee). A 2005 study by University of Colorado Professor Dr. Barry Poulson found that metropolitan area residents in Right-to-Work states had an average after-tax purchasing power nearly \$4,300 greater than their counterparts in non-Right-to-Work states. And according to Ohio University economist Richard Vedder in his 2014 study², per capita income rose 23% faster in Right-to-Work states than forced union states between 1977 and 2007. From 1970 to 2013, real personal income in Right-to-Work states rose twice as fast than in forced union states.

When Missouri becomes the 28th Right-to-Work state with the law taking effect on August 28 of this year, Missouri union members will be given a choice: to remain in their union and pay dues or to drop out of their union and no longer pay dues. I think that people should be able to choose to keep their hard-earned money if they want to or, on the other hand to freely choose to pay dues and be part of a union. Bottom line, paying dues should be a choice not a job requirement.

My support of Right-to-Work is philosophical as TAMKO, with no union at any of our locations, has no financial stake in the passage of Right-to-Work legislation. We believe that no one should be forced to join or contribute or pay dues to any organization that they do not wish to belong to whether it’s a church, the Girl Scouts, or a labor union. And if it’s a good thing to have government protect people’s freedom to be a member of a labor union then it’s also equally fair to have government protect people’s freedom not to be a member of a labor union.

¹ See August 13, 2007 brief filed by USW at http://alfoiafiles.com/images/e/e4/12.29.11_NLRB_final_responsive_docs.pdf

² See <http://cei.org/sites/default/files/Richard%20Vedder%20and%20Jonathan%20Robe%20-%20An%20Interstate%20Analysis%20of%20Right%20to%20Work%20Laws.pdf>

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