



Legislation Text

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Preconsidered Res. No. 1445

Resolution urging Congress to vote against proposed “right-to-work” legislation

By Council Members Miller, Dromm, Kallos, Koslowitz, Chin and Treyger

Whereas, Twenty-seven states currently have “right-to-work” (RTW) laws, including rust-belt states such as Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan; and

Whereas, No worker can be forced to become a dues-paying member of a union, but he or she can be compelled to pay “agency fees,” which partially cover the costs of collective bargaining; and

Whereas, RTW laws make agency fees optional, thereby creating a downward spiral for unions, which exist to secure higher wages and safe working conditions for their members; and

Whereas, Although federal law requires unions to bargain on behalf of all employees irrespective of membership, RTW laws allow individuals to avoid agency fees while they continue to receive the wage premiums and pension contributions for which unions have negotiated; and

Whereas, As workers are incentivized to leave, it becomes harder for unions to survive; and

Whereas, Union membership has plummeted in a number of states following the passage of RTW legislation; and

Whereas, According to the Wisconsin State Journal, union membership fell in that state by nearly 40 percent between 2010, before the passage of RTW legislation, and 2016; and

Whereas, Michigan followed a similar pattern; and

Whereas, The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) found that union membership dropped from 633,000 Michigan workers to 585,000 in 2014, a decline of 7.5 percent in the first full year under the new law; and

Whereas, Statistics from BLS also indicate that, nationwide, union membership has fallen from 20.1 percent of wage and salary workers in 1983 to 10.7 percent in 2016; and

Whereas, According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), as unionization has declined, so has the share of income earned by the middle 60 percent of families; and

Whereas, There is little evidence to suggest that RTW laws produce superior economic conditions or increase wages; and

Whereas, In 2016, RTW states had three of the five highest state unemployment rates; and

Whereas, Additionally, according to the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), nine out of the bottom 10 states in terms of per-capita income do not have collective bargaining in the public sector; and

Whereas, Several academic studies, including one authored by Lawrence Mishel, a University of Wisconsin economist, have found that deunionization causes at least 20 percent of wage inequality and that unionization increases wages and benefits, by roughly 28 percent; and

Whereas, A 2015 EPI report found that wages in RTW states are 3.2 percent lower per year on average than wages in other states; and

Whereas, Despite this negative impact on wages, proposed legislation in both the House of Representatives (H.R. 785) and the Senate (S.545) would establish RTW nationwide; and

Whereas, RTW hurts the workers it purports to help by compromising their ability to collectively bargain, and it has not improved macroeconomic conditions; and

Whereas, Implementing it nationally would jeopardize the economic security of millions of Americans; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges Congress to vote against proposed “right to work” legislation

4/7/17

MK