

Three Core Points to Make About 'Right to Work'

There are three core points that must be used when talking about “right to work.” We must discuss the motives of the people pushing right to work, talk about the impact that right to work would have on people and offer an alternative vision for what politicians should be doing instead.

1. Name the groups and individuals who are pushing right to work and discredit their motives. Personalize the groups and individuals and inject doubt by indicating right to work is an attempt to mislead. Use statements like the following:

- Right to work isn't what it seems. Out-of-touch CEOs pushing this bill don't care about middle-class workers, they care about their profits and big bonuses. They want us to think right to work is for our benefit, but it's really for theirs. Don't be fooled. Right to work is a power grab by CEOs to make it easier to move us into part-time positions, to offshore our jobs to low-wage countries, to cut back on our health and safety protections, and to pay us less.

2. Describe and personalize the impact on the people you are talking to.

Demonstrate the harm that right to work will inflict on people in a personal, relevant and understandable way. Use statements like the following:

- Right to work will make it easier for CEOs to put profits over people like us by shifting more of our work into part-time positions, offshoring profits, shipping our jobs to countries with horrible working conditions, and eroding our health and safety laws, making our workplaces more dangerous.
- Unions work to ensure enforcement of safety standards that reduce workplace deaths and injuries, but right to work will make our workplaces less safe. Right to work will make it easier for CEOs to eliminate protections for workers who protect our food safety and our environment, or expose waste, fraud and abuse of our tax dollars. In right to work states, the workplace death rate is 44% higher. (AFL-CIO, Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect, April 2015)
- Right to work makes it harder for workers to form unions and collectively bargain for better wages and benefits. The average worker makes about \$6,000 less in right to work states. Eleven of the 15 states with the worst pay gaps between men and women are right to work states. All of the seven states that have either a minimum wage lower than the federal rate or no state minimum wage are right to work states. If we don't stop these attacks, the middle class will continue to shrink. (United States Department of Labor; American Association of University Women)
- Right to work limits collective bargaining rights and hurts everyday heroes we count on, like firefighters, nurses and teachers. By making it harder for workers to join together to collectively bargain for needed emergency equipment, safe patient staffing ratios in hospitals, smaller class sizes and school safety, our communities suffer. Of the 20 states

spending the least on education per student, 19 are right to work states. (National Education Association, Rankings & Estimates—Rankings of the States 2013 and Estimates of School Statistics 2014)

- Right to work lowers the quality of life for women and families. The wage gap between men and women is worse in right to work states. These states spend less per student on public education and have a higher proportion of low-wage workers than non-right to work states. These states also spend less on public services, per resident, than states without these laws—21% less in Fiscal Year 2013. Altogether, this puts tremendous pressure on poverty programs and the social safety net, putting families at risk. (Corporation for Enterprise Development, Asset and Opportunity Scorecard; Kaiser Family Foundation, statehealthfacts.org; National Education Association)

3. Redirect to an alternative vision of what we stand for, and what politicians should be working toward. Offer people an alternative choice. Use statements like the following:

- It's middle-class people like us who make this country work. Our work helps our communities, drives our economy and shapes the future. But too many of us are struggling, worrying about retirement, worrying about our jobs, wishing we had time for the things that matter. We need politicians focused on our needs, not the needs of CEOs who only care about their profits and bonuses.
- Right to work is political overreach at its worst. Politicians shouldn't meddle or interfere with the agreements made between employers and their employees. Instead, politicians should respect those agreements and focus on real priorities like creating good jobs and investing in education and infrastructure.
- Middle-class people like us deserve real rights and real freedom, not laws like this. Real freedom is about being able to balance life with work, to attend a parent-teacher conference or help a loved one get to a medical appointment. This is what we need to work toward, not laws like these.
- We already are free to work wherever we want and to join a union if we want. That's already protected by law. We need the freedom to have a voice at work, to be able to speak out and have our opinions heard and acted upon without fear of retaliation. And we want to protect our right to decide how we come together to make our voices heard.