

Gazette editorial: Legislative incompetence?

Conservatives in the 2016 Legislature may have stampeded too quickly — borrowing language from other states — and thus botched the right-to-work law that was the prize achievement of Republican lawmakers.

That's the legal argument of the state AFL-CIO, which plans a court challenge against the law designed to break labor unions.

AFL-CIO officials told business writer Andrew Brown the GOP law is unconstitutional for two reasons:

| It's an illegal taking of property because it forces unions to represent nonunion workers without receiving fees from them.

| It applies only to state government employees — not private-sector workers — because bill-drafters clumsily copied language from Indiana and elsewhere in such a way that seems to exempt commercial businesses.

“If this was their top legislative priority, they didn't do a very good job ...” AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Josh Sword said.

So far, Republicans who control the Legislature have shown an inability to govern, because they can't raise enough revenue to keep the state government solvent. It will be ironic if another botch mars their foremost accomplishment.

The question raised over this law imported from other states is a symptom of a larger problem. For decades now it has been fashionable to denigrate the role of government. A steady stream of people get elected to carry out the duties of government, all while running down government as illegitimate or unnecessary. But government by the people is more than a slogan. Communities, states and the nation create government to carry out the people's common wishes, to see to their shared needs.

Like medicine or law or running a business, there is an art and craft to governing. Experience, competence and accuracy all matter.