Our Jobs are on the Line

The next 60 days – our state legislative session – will be the most challenging of any we have had to date.

Last session was difficult and many members of the trades made a difference by showing up at the Capitol, writing letters, making phone calls and sending emails.

Because of that effort we succeeded in saving our state prevailing wage law, although some tough changes were made.

This year we must do more. Republican leaders have openly and repeatedly stated they will pass the so-called right to work law. If you haven’t figured it out yet, right to work gives you no rights or work – instead it is designed to decrease your bargaining power and drive down wages.

If prevailing wage is repealed and right to work passed, it is clear wages will go down, benefits will be in trouble, and workers from outside our area will have the upper hand to take our jobs.

This special issue of the ACT Report is designed to give you information on your elected representatives. We urge you, and your family members, to contact these state senators and delegates to let them know your thoughts on both prevailing wage and the so-called right to work law.

You must be courteous, yelling or cursing will not help our cause, and you must be direct. A simple message is best: “Prevailing wage helps me make a living, pay my bills, and keep my job. – I hope you support keeping our prevailing wage law.”

Let legislators know you live in their district, and that you and your family members vote. Contact them often, ask others to do the same.

We are working closely with our contractors to save our industry, our jobs and our paychecks – and we have solid facts on our side. Our industry provides great value to taxpayers, prevailing wage does not cost taxpayers more! And as highly skilled, drug free local workers we pull our own weight in our communities. So-called right to work is a wage killer not a job creator.

These messages will not be effective if we don’t insist politicians listen.

Thank you for all that you have done and please make the extra effort during these coming weeks.

Visit WestVirginiaPrevails.org, SupportWVLocalBusinesses.com, StopWVPaycuts.com for more information.
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Call or Write Your Legislator

Please note: All addresses after Room/Building are State Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25304
Get Involved!

Below are some sample letters on the critical issues of right to work and prevailing wage. Simple rules to follow are 1) always be courteous and don’t use foul language; 2) don’t stray from your main reason for writing – to support prevailing wage and/or to oppose right to work; and 3) give them your contact information.

Sample Right to Work letter:

Dear Delegate Lastname,

I am a voter and taxpayer in your district who strongly opposes any right to work legislation. Right to work has been proven to drive down wages and make workplaces less safe. While the effects likely won’t be felt immediately, it could mean the difference between my children having good jobs here in West Virginia or being forced to take a couple of low paying jobs.

(Pick out information from any of the bullet points.)

Thank you for your time. I will remember your vote on this important issue when I cast my vote this year.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Sample Prevailing Wage letter:

Dear Senator Lastname,

I’m a voter and taxpayer who lives in your district. Please support prevailing wage because it helps me pay my bills (pay my mortgage/support my family/send my kids to college/take care of my aging parents whatever your circumstance).

Thank you for your time. I will remember your vote on this important issue when I cast my vote this year.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Prevailing Wage: 10 reasons against repeal!

1. Contractor, Subcontractor, Supplier Default
Many locally owned and operated construction companies without a level playing field will be hurt and some will be forced to close down.

2. Job and Wage Loss
Local contractors create local jobs for construction workers. Repeal will result in lost job opportunities and wages for local workers estimated at $51.3 to $77.3 million annually.

3. Significant Losses in Taxes
State income taxes will fall $3.1 to $4.6 million annually; State sales tax collections would decrease $1.4 to $2.1 million each year.

4. Payments from Benefit Funds will Decline
Construction related health funds pay approximately $60 million per year to local hospitals. An equal amount goes to local doctors. Repeal of prevailing wage means hospitals and health care professionals will be hurt. A 20% drop in hours to local retirement funds may push these funds, already struggling with a poor economy, to insolvency.

5. Training
Prevailing wage supports training programs and saves taxpayers millions each year.

6. Advantage Goes to Out-of-Area Companies
Companies that take the place of local contractors will likely be from out of the area and import their workers.

7. No Savings
Claims of great savings have been repeatedly debunked. A comparison of surrounding states revealed we build schools on a per-square foot cost less than non-PW states like North Carolina and Virginia.

8. Safety
States without PW have more workplace fatalities. Skilled workers leave the industry or the area and unskilled people, without access to quality training programs take their place.

9. Drug and Alcohol Programs Squeezed
Long standing programs to address drug and alcohol abuse will be cut due to lower standards and competitive forces.

10. Changes Made Last Year
Significant changes were made last year; there is no need for another bill this year.

So-called RTW wrong for West Virginia

1. Lower Wages
Workers in right to work states earn up to $6,000 less and have fewer benefits than those in free bargaining states. While the decrease won’t happen overnight, the gradual decline in wages and benefits will mean a significant decline in family income. Proponents of right to work defend the lower wages saying more jobs will be created. But in order to earn the same wages, some people will have to work two or three jobs.

2. Safety Decline
According to statistics from the federal Department of Labor, in the right to work states the average fatality rate was 54 percent greater than the average fatality rate in the free bargaining states. Why? Employers care less about employees when there’s less of a chance they may join a union.

3. Government Intrusion
Right to work forces companies to remove clauses in the employee agreements relating to dues for services. A union must still provide services to all workers but cannot require any dues or fees for those services. Government interference in worker contracts is unnecessary.

4. Freeloaders
The real intent of right to work is to force union members to pay for freeloaders.

5. No Economic Benefit
Plenty of quality studies show right to work doesn’t create jobs. Proponents cannot point to any company that will locate in the state if it passes. They also cannot explain why companies like Proctor & Gamble and Macy’s – two recent large investors in the state – located here regardless of the non-RTW status.

6. Anti-Democratic
Right to work is an anti-democratic measure as it removes the majority rule in union workplaces. Workers are never required to join a union but they must pay for services received.

7. Hurts Unions
The goal of right to work is to put labor unions out of business. Labor unions are key to a middle class, to making a safer workplace and to making sure workers have a voice.

8. False Promises
The slogan, created by a Texas conservative extremist who hated unions, child labor laws, integration, women’s rights and FDR’s New Deal programs, misleads people into wrongly thinking there will be new “rights” and new “work.”

9. Billionaires’ Agenda
Right to work legislation is being pushed by out-of-state billionaires intent on eliminating labor unions.

10. Wrong Priorities
The West Virginia Legislature must focus on critical issues facing our state, issues that prevent economic growth. More jobs will be created by addressing the problem of drug abuse, repairing our crumbling infrastructure, promoting the energy sector and focusing on workforce preparation than any right to work legislation.