

Poll finds that West Virginians prefer strong unions

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Polling conducted in the last several days by nationally recognized firm Public Policy Polling clearly shows that most West Virginians hold unions in very high regard and do not want lawmakers to pass legislation that would weaken them.

“Time and again, we’ve provided the facts that show ‘Right to Work’ lowers wages, leads to more workplace deaths, does nothing to attract quality jobs and inserts government in private employer/employee negotiation -- and the underlying reason for those outcomes is ‘Right to Work’ weakens unions,” West Virginia AFL-CIO President Kenny Perdue said. “That’s the sole purpose behind the legislation. And that’s why these big companies, the Chamber of Commerce, and these wealthy out-of-state interests want it.”

Public Policy Polling surveyed voters in the southern, north central and northern House districts, and found unions to be “wildly popular” – polling favorably by 70 percent, 69 percent and 67 percent, respectively. A large majority in each region, both Democrat and Republican, also said West Virginia would be worse off with lower union membership, and a majority say they would be less likely to vote for an elected official who supported legislation that resulted in less of the state’s workforce being represented by a union (see attached pdf for details).

While the Republican-led effort to pass “Right to Work” is a no-holds-barred effort to weaken unions, union members are by no stretch of the imagination the only ones who will be affected, Perdue noted.

“When the billionaire, mega corporations get their way, wages for everyone will diminish,” he said. “Unions are a last stand against the profoundly unfair disparity between the richest 1 percent and people who are working hard to support their families, send their kids to college, and make car payments – those who are pursuing the American dream, and finding it very difficult.

“As go the unions, so goes the middle class. The vast majority of folks in West Virginia know this, and they don’t support ‘Right to Work.’ ”

The West Virginia AFL-CIO, an umbrella group for many different unions in the state with 140,000 active and retired members, continues to fight against Senate Bill 1, the “Right to Work” legislation, which could be considered by the full House of Delegates as early as Thursday. To find out more, visit the web site at www.wvafclcio.org.