

LARRY KASECAMP
Legislative Director

VACANT
Assistant Director

THOMAS CAHILL
Secretary



ANNAPOLIS OFFICE
176 Conduit St., Suite 206
Annapolis, MD 21401-2597

PH: 301-697-2695
utusldmd@gmail.com

February 4, 2020

The Honorable Chairman Dereck Davis and
Members of the Economic Matters Committee

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RE: OPPOSE HB-163

As Legislative Director in Maryland for the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Worker's (SMART) we urge your committee to **oppose HB-163**, "*Labor and Employment – Labor Organizations – Right to Work.*"

First and foremost, Right to Work (RTW) legislation is a serious attack against the vast majority of working men and women of the state of Maryland who are members of Organized Labor. But it really goes well beyond that. It actually attacks **all** working men and women of the state of Maryland through its attempt to diminish the effectiveness of Organized Labor and ultimately depress the wages of all workers.

As the studies show, in RTW States wages are 3.2% lower than non-RTW states. This is a direct result of the effect of stronger, fully funded labor organizations. When labor organizations negotiate their higher wage packages for their members it results in higher wages for all workers, union and non-union alike, due to the competitive pressure that non-union employers experience.

The exact opposite occurs in RTW States where labor organizations are weakened by the passage of RTW laws. The effect is that a downward pressure is applied on the level of wages paid by employers, which affects **all** workers. Who doesn't experience a downward pressure on their level of income? Of course, it's the business owners; who, if they are successful in advancing this legislation, will experience an increase in their profits.

There are many misconceptions in the public about labor organizations, which are perpetuated by the anti-union factions. One such misconception is that non-RTW States require compulsory membership in the union. Nothing is further from the truth. Nowhere in Maryland law or regulation does this requirement exist. What does exist is the right of labor and management to negotiate in good faith through the collective bargaining process a clause to require all employees to pay their fair share toward the operating costs of their labor organization.

That is the labor organization they chose to represent them through the election process outlined under federal law. The unfettered right to accept or reject such a clause is held by each party to the collective bargaining process.

Another misconception is that labor organizations can spend their members' dues monies on the political campaigns of politicians that their members oppose. This also is not true. Federal law prohibits labor organizations to directly contribute to political campaigns with members' dues monies. Monies that are contributed directly to political campaigns by labor organizations are monies obtained through strictly voluntary contributions by members. In addition, any member has the right under federal law to object to their dues monies being spent on anything other than costs attributed to representation; such as, contract negotiations or grievance handling procedures.

This legislation is part and parcel to the anti-union agenda being espoused by the Republican Party in many states across the nation. From RTW to so-called "paycheck protection" to the elimination of Project Labor Agreements to the elimination of Prevailing Wage Laws to the elimination of Collective Bargaining Rights, their agenda is a direct attack on labor unions.

The resulting uproar around the country over these union busting tactics is a passionate statement by working families, both union and non-union, that they will not be denied the right to freely join unions and collectively bargain for their wages, benefits and working conditions.

The end result if HB-163 were to pass would be to give a free ride to a sector of workers who are represented by a labor organization by allowing them to opt out of paying their fair share toward the expense of operations of their representative organization. This would of course reduce the effectiveness of their Labor Organization by reducing their operational funding thereby weakening them, which is the ultimate goal of the proponents.

Imagine if a small dissident group of anti-tax constituents from around the state had legislation introduced that would allow them to reap the benefits provided to all the citizens of the state through taxation but would allow them to opt out of paying their share of taxes. As legislators you would recognize it for what it was and give the legislation zero consideration. We believe this is the exact amount of consideration you should give HB-163, as it is nothing more than a veiled attempt to weaken Unions and depress the wages of your constituents.

We urge an unfavorable report for HB-163!

Sincerely



Lawrence E. Kasecamp
MD State Legislative Director
 SMART Transportation Division