

District 8

Ernest R. "Billy" Thompson
District Director

James Strong
Assistant to the Director

HB 163

HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTER

LABOR ORGANIZATION RIGHT TO WORK

OPPOSITION TESTIMONY

To the Honorable Chairman Derek E. Davis and distinguished members of the committee, on behalf of the United Steelworkers International Union, I thank you for this opportunity to testify at today's hearing in opposition to HB 163, *Labor Organization Right to Work*. My name is Jim Strong, Maryland Assistant to the Director, District 8. The United Steelworkers is the largest manufacturing union in North America representing over 850,000 workers.

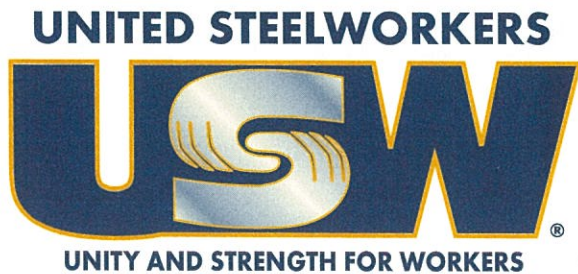
So called "Right to Work" legislation is a well thought out slogan designed to trick workers into believing that it protects a workers right to a job. Nothing could be further from the truth. So called "Right to Work" legislation does not guarantee a worker a job, it does not protect a worker against employer bias or retaliation. "Right to Work" legislation undermines fair wages and benefits. The sole purpose of "Right to Work" legislation is to undermine the ability to collectively bargain for fair wages, benefits, safe working conditions and other employee rights in the work place.

**The Myth of Forced Unionism
and the
Freedom of Association**

The drive for "Right to Work" laws began in 1947 with the Taft-Hartley Act, Section 7 of the NLRB expressly states that employees shall have the right to refrain from joining a union.

Further, there are two (2) U.S. Supreme Court cases that supporters of so-called "Right to Work" tend to overlook. In the 1988 Communication Workers vs. Beck (487 U.S. 735) case, the court ruled that workers could not be forced to pay the portion of their union dues that went to political purposes with which they did not agree.

What "Right to Work" laws do, is allow some workers to receive a "free ride" getting the advantage of a collective bargaining agreement, such as wages, benefits, seniority and protection against arbitrary discipline **without** paying any cost.



District 8

Ernest R. "Billy" Thompson
District Director

James Strong
Assistant to the Director

**Wages Benefits
and other Conditions**

Union dues provide the financial resources it takes to empower workers on the job. It allows for things like training in collective bargaining, grievance handling, and safety and health. Even with "Right to Work" Laws, unions, must represent every employee whether or not he or she pays dues, if not the union would violate its duty to fair representation and could be held financially liable to that employee. That's unfair, and it hurt the union's ability to secure a good contract and provide a good working environment.

According to the Bureau of Labor statistic, workers in states with "Right to Work" laws make five thousand nine hundred seventy one (\$5971.00) dollars less on average annually compared to workers in other states. Union density will also impact the wages and benefits of nonunion workers by setting standards that gradually become norms throughout the various industries.

Union provide the checks and balances that grow the standard of living for all workers. It is no accident that the wage inequity has grown larger with declining union membership. "Right to Work" legislation laws are designed to weaken unions, which in turns, destroys the Middle Class

We ask that this committee give HB 163 an unfavorable report.

James Strong
USW, Assistant to the Director, District 8