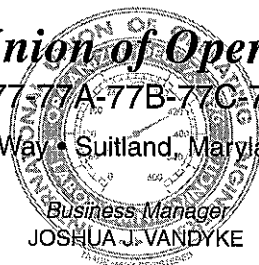


International Union of Operating Engineers

LOCAL 77-77A-77B-77C-77D-77RA

4546 Britannia Way • Suitland, Maryland 20746-4274



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February 1, 2020

Maryland House Economic Matters Committee

Chair: Hon. Dereck Davis

House Bill 163 - OPPOSE

Mr. Chairman, the so called "Right to work" advocates are not interested in the rights of workers when they advance "right to work" laws, they are only interested in financially crippling unions.

The rallying cry of these advocates is that people should not have to pay union dues in order to have a job. Construction unions provide portable health insurance, pensions and training programs for members working for signatory employers. Our contracts require us to represent our members in any alleged violation or breach of the agreement between the union and the employers. In addition, the union provides skilled trained workers through a hiring hall and those workers are capable of operating whatever equipment the employer is using on their job. There is no charge for these services. Members pay union dues to defray the cost of these services. Contracts are negotiated between employers and the workers representative (the union) and a clause providing for union security (union membership as a condition for continued employment) is voluntarily entered into by the employer.

The International Union of Operating Engineers Local 77 is a democratic organization that is required by Federal Law to hold direct votes by the union's membership when setting our union dues. The "Right to Work" advocates want all those services we provide to continue but believe that the workers benefitting should not be required to pay unless they want to do so.

Imagine how the State of Maryland would fare if the citizens who live in the state only have to pay taxes if they want to – but everyone will receive all the services the State provides regardless. Politicians are acutely aware of the constraints placed on organizations and government when they are not adequately funded. Right to work laws are only about lessening the ability of a union to bargain and represent their member's interests and have nothing to do with workers "rights".

Local 77 holds direct votes of its membership when setting dues rates. In the State of Maryland we vote for our representatives who then vote on setting state taxes or dues. My contention is the Union model is more democratic than the State version.

In the construction industry, most people want to work for union contractors. Union contractors pay, on average, 30% higher wages than non-union contractors. Union members have health care and pension benefits that travel from signatory employer to signatory employer allowing the members to have continuous coverage.

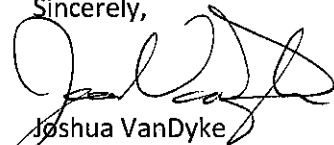
People choose to work for union contractors because they pay more and have better conditions and benefits. These democratically run unions and their members vote on its collective bargaining agreements and the union dues provided for in them that allow for the enforcement of these agreements. The actions of these democratically run unions and their negotiations with their signatory contractors should be respected and not disturbed by the government.

I have heard some politicians disparage unions as making workers' pay for an organization whose leaders they didn't vote for and whose ideals they don't support. The hallmark of our nation, our state and our unions is our democracy. Elections and votes have consequences and unless a vote is unanimous there are going to be those who are disappointed by the outcome. For elected leaders in the State of Maryland not to understand this is a byproduct of a democratic system is disingenuous. We don't get to only pay taxes if the President, Governor or county executive we voted for is elected and Unions do not and shouldn't have to operate in this environment either.

For any elected leader who is in favor of the union's working in a "right to work" environment I would ask them to do the same for the citizens of Maryland and pass a "right to live" law in Maryland. This law would provide that if a Maryland resident has objection to the taxes of Maryland they can choose not to pay them. Maryland would not do this as they know what the effect would be.

I ask you to allow unions to continue to preserve workers' rights in Maryland and not have to rely on donations to do so. I ask for you not to support HB 163. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Joshua VanDyke
Business Manger
IUOE Local 77