

Proposed National “Right-to-Work” Legislation Threatens Rails Too

On February 1st, Republican lawmakers introduced HR #785, the National Right-to-Work Act. If adopted and signed into law by the President, it would outlaw the union and agency shop nationwide. Workers - including railroad workers - would then no longer be required to join a union or pay dues or “agency” fees, potentially decimating the ranks of what is left of organized labor in the private sector and basic industry.

Advocates of the bill state that no one should be coerced to join a labor organization. Yet right-to-work legislation since 1947 has always demanded that the union represent *all* workers in the “bargaining unit” whether they be union members or not. In addition, *all* workers are required to receive the same wages, benefits and conditions of employment that the union wins for its members. “Right-to-work” creates a situation where it is tough for unions to thrive, since the material incentive for a worker to join the union is taken away. A classic “free rider” problem results, as workers are lured into quitting the organization while letting others pay for the benefits that they know they will receive regardless.

All union members are encouraged to contact their elected representatives and demand that they not support this anti-union, anti-worker legislation. RWU urges the rail unions and all unions to brace for the coming struggle, prepared to use the organized power of the rank & file to take industrial action in defense of our hard fought for rights. We urge all railroad workers and their locals, divisions and lodges to organize immediately to retain their respective membership in the event that such a law is passed by Congress and signed into law.



Workers rally against so called “right-to-work.” If proposed legislation is adopted, unions - along with workplace conditions - could deteriorate across the country. Railroad workers are encouraged to “Take the Pledge” to remain in the union regardless.

Railroad Workers United has adopted a resolution on the question at our April Steering Committee meeting. We are also circulating a “Pledge of Honor to be a Loyal Union Member” for rail locals around the country to make use as a template in an effort to organize the local’s membership prior to any legislation being enacted. Should such a national bill become law, we want to be ready for it, and have all unions members committed to stick with the union and vow to have each others’ backs. Both documents are available for download on our website at www.railroadworkersunited.org.