

# AFL-CIO

## LEGISLATIVE ALERT

September 23, 2019

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I urge you to support the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, H.R. 2474, and to oppose weakening amendments when the Education and Labor Committee considers the bill this week. The PRO Act will give working people a voice on the job so they can negotiate for higher wages, better benefits, a more secure retirement and protection from discrimination.

For too long, employers have been able to violate the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) with impunity, routinely denying workers our basic right to join with coworkers for fairness on the job. As a result, the collective strength of workers to negotiate for better pay and benefits has eroded and income inequality has reached levels that predate the Great Depression.

The PRO Act would modernize the NLRA by bringing its remedies in line with other workplace laws. In addition to imposing financial penalties on companies and individual corporate officers who violate the law, the bill would give workers the option of bringing their case to federal court. The bill would make elections fairer by prohibiting employers from requiring their employees to attend “captive audience” meetings whose sole purpose is to convince workers to vote against the union.

Under the bill, once workers vote to form a union, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) would be authorized to order that the employer commence bargaining a first contract. These orders would be enforced in district courts to ensure swift justice. In addition, the bill would ensure that employees are not deprived of their right to a union because an employer deliberately misclassifies them as supervisors or independent contractors.

Too often, when workers choose to form a union, employers stall the bargaining process to avoid reaching an agreement. The PRO Act would establish a process for mediation and arbitration to help the parties achieve a first contract. This important change would make the freedom to negotiate a reality for countless workers who form unions but never get to enjoy the benefits of a collective bargaining agreement.

The PRO Act recognizes that employees need the freedom to picket or withhold our labor in order to push for the workplace changes we seek. The bill protects employees’ right to strike by preventing employers from hiring permanent replacement workers. It also allows unrepresented employees to engage in collective action or class action lawsuits to enforce basic workplace rights, rather than being forced to arbitrate such claims alone.

Finally, the bill would eliminate right to work laws. These laws have been promoted by a network of billionaires and special interest groups to give more power to corporations at the

expense of workers, and have had the effect of lowering wages and eroding pensions and health care coverage in states where they have been adopted.

Restoring our middle class is dependent on strengthening the collective power of workers to negotiate for better pay and working conditions. That is why public support for unions is the highest it has been in decades. We urge you to support the PRO Act and help us build an economy that works for all working families.

Sincerely,



William Samuel  
Director, Government Affairs

CC: House Committee on Education and Labor

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**American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations**

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