

# Right to Work

Extremist groups, right-wing politicians and their corporate backers want to weaken the power of workers and their unions through "right to work" laws. Their efforts are a partisan political ploy that undermines the basic rights of workers. By making unions weaker, these laws lower wages and living standards for all workers in the state. In fact, workers in states with these laws earn an average of \$5,971 less a year than workers in other states. Because of the higher wages, working families in states without these laws also benefit from healthier tax bases that improve their quality of life.

## States with Right to Work Laws Have:<sup>1</sup>

### Lower Wages and Incomes

- The average worker in states with right to work laws makes \$5,971 (12.2 percent) less annually than workers in states without right to when all other factors are removed than workers in other states.<sup>2</sup>
- Median household income in states with these laws is \$6,568 (11.8 percent) less than in other states (\$49,220 vs. \$55,788).<sup>3</sup>
- In states with right to work laws, 25.9 percent of jobs are in low-wage occupations, compared with 18.0 percent of jobs in other states.<sup>4</sup>

### Lower Rates of Health Insurance Coverage

- People under the age of 65 in states with right to work laws are more likely to be uninsured (16.3 percent, compared with 12.4 percent in free-bargaining states).<sup>5</sup>
- They're less likely to have job-based health insurance than people in other states (53.9 percent, compared with 57.1 percent)<sup>6</sup> and pay a larger share of their health insurance premiums (29.9 percent compared with 26.1 percent).<sup>7</sup>
- Only 46.8 percent of private-sector employers in states with these laws offer insurance coverage to their employees, compared with 52.6 percent in other states. That difference is even more pronounced among small employers (with fewer than 50 workers)—only 30.3 percent offer workers health insurance, compared with 38.8 percent of small employers in other states.<sup>8</sup>

### Higher Poverty and Infant Mortality Rates

- Poverty rates are higher in states with right to work laws (14.8 percent overall and 20.2 percent for children), compared with poverty rates of 13.1 percent overall and 18.3 percent for children in states without these laws.<sup>9</sup>
- The infant mortality rate is 14.2 percent higher in states with these laws.<sup>10</sup>

### Less Investment in Education

- States with right to work laws spend 31.3 percent less per pupil on elementary and secondary education than other states.<sup>11</sup>

## Higher Workplace Fatalities

- The rate of workplace deaths is 54.4 percent higher in states with these laws, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.<sup>12</sup>

1 With the exception of the infant mortality rate and low-wage jobs data, the state data included here do not include data from Indiana and Michigan. These states are not included in the 2012 and 2013 data because they passed right to work laws in 2012; the impact of right to work policies on their economies would not have been fully experienced in 2012 and 2013. They have been excluded from the free-bargaining states versus right to work state analysis for the 2012 and 2013 data.

2 Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages, Average Annual Pay for 2013, accessed 12/9/14.

3 U.S. Census Bureau, Table H-8, [Median Household Income by State: 1984 to 2013](#).

4 CFED, Asset and Opportunity Scorecard, [Low Wage Jobs, 2011](#).

5 Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, [Health Insurance Coverage of Nonelderly 0-64, 2012](#).

6 Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, [Percent of Private Sector Establishments That Offer Health Insurance to Employees, 2012](#).

7 CFED, Asset and Opportunity Scorecard, [Employee Share of Premium, 2012](#).

8 Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, [Percent of Private Sector Establishments That Offer Health Insurance to Employees, by Firm Size, 2012](#).

9 U.S. Census Bureau, [POV46: Poverty Status by State: 2013 Below 100% and 50% of Poverty -- People Under 18 Years of Age, WEIGHTED PERSON COUNT](#).

10 Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, [Infant Mortality Rate \(Deaths per 1,000 Live Births\), 2007-2009](#).

11 National Education Association, [Rankings & Estimates--Rankings of the States 2013 and Estimates of School Statistics 2014, H-11, Current Expenditures for Public K-12 Schools per Student in Fall Enrollment, 2012-2013](#), March 2014.

12 AFL-CIO, [Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect](#), April 2014.

