Senate Bill 1082: NC Right to Work Amendment

Ballot measure to enshrine so-called “right-to-work” laws in the state Constitution

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[Link to S1082]

S1082 Summary: This legislation would bring a ballot measure to the voters in November to enshrine existing “right-to-work” laws in the state Constitution. These laws make it illegal for unionized workers to negotiate collective bargaining agreements that require all workers benefiting from the contract to share the costs of negotiating and enforcing it.

Right-to-work laws are already the law in North Carolina

Right-to-work laws have existed in NC since 1947. These laws are most common across the South and were designed to divide Black and white workers and undermine union power.

Union representation can be costly, so unions typically require all workers who benefit from the contract to pay their fair share to cover these costs. Right-to-work laws make this illegal, creating a free rider problem that allows workers to receive all the benefits of the union without helping to cover the cost. The result is that it is more difficult for workers to come together in a union to negotiate better wages, benefits, and working conditions, and union membership declines.

Right-to-work laws don’t improve outcomes for workers

Looking across states with right-to-work (RTW) laws and without, researchers have found:

- Prime-aged (25-54) workers are employed at the same levels in states with RTW laws and those without them.
- Workers in RTW states earn about 3.2% less on average, roughly $1,700 less per year than similar workers in non-RTW states. That is for all workers, not just those in a union.
- By weakening unions, RTW laws fuel economic inequality, concentrating the share of income going to the top 10 percent and exacerbating the racial wage gap.
- Workers in RTW states have reduced access to health insurance and retirement benefits.

Right-to-work laws raise costs for the state

- When workers don’t have access to health insurance or retirement benefits through their employer, the state government has to cover more of the costs associated with medical needs and aging with dignity.
- When workers are paid low wages and receive less of the value that they create, fewer dollars are spent in the local economy, reducing economic activity, increasing hardship, and leaving governments to have to step in.

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