**Understanding what “Right to Work” really means.**

Everyone has a “Right to Work” whether you belong to a union or not. A union by definition is just a group of people getting together who want to make a good wage and work with dignity and respect. You can take it further by negotiating for a health and pension benefit. Generally you bargain for a dollar amount. For example, a $2.00 per hour increase over a period of two to three years with that $2.00 allocated between wages, health benefits and retirement. People pay union dues to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement on behalf of the workers. The dues also pay for the apprenticeship program and trade schools. Most trades have a four to five year apprenticeship program. Essentially, the same time it would take to earn a college degree. This provides the skilled trades necessary to build our very complex world of hospitals, factories, powerhouses and all other commercial buildings now and in the future.

The “right to work” proponents want to make the paying of union dues optional. The people that don’t pay the dues reap the benefits of the collective bargaining agreement without paying anything. They also don’t contribute to the education of the future skilled workers. Paying union dues is about more than just negotiating your own salary. There is a greater good involved that benefits everyone. Wouldn’t we all like a free ride?

I would like to conclude that unions are not for everyone. If you pay your workers a good salary and benefits and treat them with dignity and respect; a person could ask for no more than that. Quite frankly, that doesn’t always happen. Sometimes people have to stand up for themselves, they can’t always do it alone. The union wages set the bar. Make no mistake about it. “Right to work” is not about giving choice. It’s about paying lower wages and cutting benefits. It’s a race to bottom.

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