

The Professionals Guild of Ohio



PGO UNION NEWS

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PGO Officers:

President

Eric Kanthak

Vice President

Joe DeStazio

Secretary

Lynn Pinkelman

Treasurer

Dan Rice

Executive Director

Chauncey M. Mason

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Professionals Guild
of Ohio

P.O. Box 7139

Columbus, Ohio 43205

Questions or comments can
be directed to the Executive
Director.

E-Mail:

cmason@professionalsguild.org

Website:

www.professionalsguild.org

Phone:

614-258-4401 or
800-331-5428



@GuildOhio



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Right to Work Wave Fizzles in Missouri

By a 2-to-1 margin, voters in Missouri rejected a state law banning Fair Share Fees. Proposition A, which would have allowed the so-called “right to work” (RTW) law enacted last year to go into effect, lost by almost 500,000 votes out of 1.4 million cast. The measure, which would have let employees refuse to join or pay Fair Share Fees to the union representing them, got only 32.5 percent of the vote.

The repeal vote stops the wave of RTW laws that has swept over the Midwest and Ohio Valley in the past seven years, with Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia enacting them. The margin was significantly larger than when Missouri voters rejected a constitutional amendment to impose RTW in 1978.

Opposition to the proposition was strongest in urban areas. It lost by 88-12 percent in the city of St. Louis, 73-27 percent in its more populous immediate suburbs, and 83-17 percent in Kansas City. But many rural areas also voted no by margins of 2-1 or higher. The measure carried only 14 of the state’s 114 counties, most in rural areas along the Arkansas border.

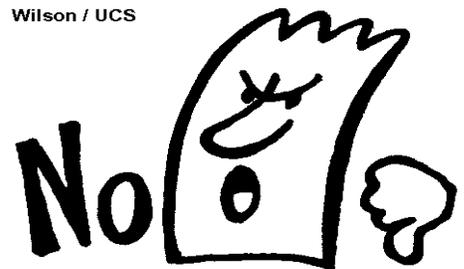
National AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka said “the defeat of this poisonous anti-worker legislation” was “the latest sign of a true groundswell.”

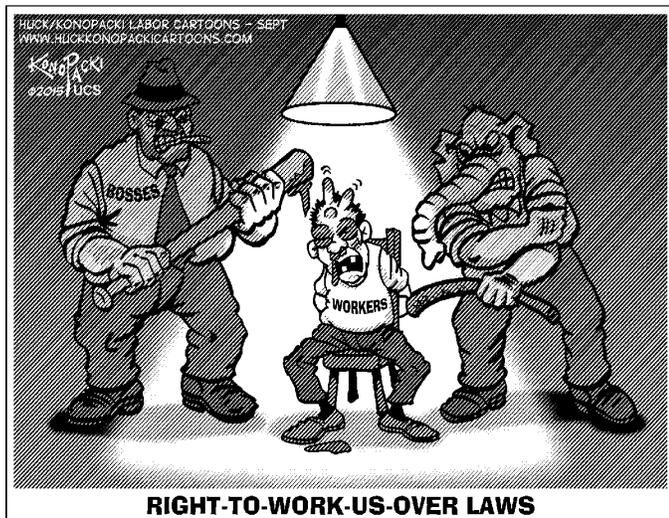
“It’s a truly historic moment,” Missouri AFL-CIO President Mike Louis said in a statement. He credited the “thousands of hardworking men and women” who “knocked on more than 800,000 doors, made more than 1 million phone calls, and talked to working people on more than 1,000 different job sites.”

“In every corner of the state, voters rebuked the efforts of powerful, out-of-state corporate interests and dark money to control the future of Missouri’s economy,” the We Are Missouri coalition said in a statement.

Former Governor Eric Greitens, who resigned in May after being accused of sexual assault and blackmail by a woman he’d had an affair with, made banning RTW a top priority in his 2016 campaign. He pushed the

Wilson / UCS





bill through the overwhelmingly Republican legislature within five weeks after he took office. A union-led coalition responded by collecting more than 310,000 petition signatures, about three times the amount needed, to put repeal on the ballot. That also prevented the law from going into effect last August.

“We know from the experiences of 27 states, including many of Missouri’s neighbors, that ‘right to work’ laws don’t spur investment or create jobs,” the Economic Policy Institute said in a statement. “They do, however, undercut unions, lower wages, and weaken workers’ bargaining power. In fact, that is the whole reason for the enormous corporate interest in ‘right to work’.... By letting people get the benefits of union representation at no cost, ‘right to work’ undercuts unions’ ability to negotiate for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.”

The Labor Roots of Labor Day

Labor Day has roots in the Union. Today we might take a 40-hour work week and overtime laws for granted, but for our recent forebears, it was not the standard. At the turn of the century, factory workers were clocking at least 70 hours a week, sometimes in difficult and very dangerous conditions. At the height of the Industrial Revolution in the United States, the average American worker put in 12 hours a day, seven days a week. There was barely any time left over for family or rest, let alone leisure activities. Children as young as five were sent to work in factories with no restrictions. Immigrants and people of color had even less deference

and rights in any work setting, and many worked for dismal wages. Enter the labor unions.

As a direct result of the unsafe and impractical working conditions, labor unions began to appear in the late 18th century and began to organize strikes to protest poor working conditions. Unions also appealed to employers to negotiate better hours and pay with workers. It all eventually paid off with 8-hour workdays, better safety regulations and child labor laws.

The first Labor Day was celebrated on September 5, 1882 in New York City with the help of the Central Labor Union. On this day, 10,000 workers took unpaid time off to march from City Hall to Union Square- the first Labor Day parade. In 1894, the day became a federal holiday, traditionally observed on the first Monday of September.

Labor Day is more than barbeques and a long weekend. It is a day intended to celebrate the creation of the labor movement and the achievements of American workers. We should take the day as an opportunity to recognize that we have come a long way, and there is still a lot of progress to be made.

Affordable Healthcare?

All Americans should have access to healthcare, period. Sadly though, the prospect of healthcare insurance for all appears to be out of reach, signaling a bleak outlook for the future of healthcare. It seems as if our current administration and many employers



“Whatever he can’t take out of my hide, he hides out of my take.”



"Big changes in our severances once new management took over."

view access to care as a luxury and not a basic life necessity.

An urban institute study found that nearly 40 percent of adults said their families struggled to meet at least one basic need for food, healthcare, housing, or utilities last year. About 18 percent of adults responded that they did not receive medical care due to its cost. These struggles disproportionately affect people of lower income and people with fair or poor health, including those people with chronic conditions, and adults living with children.

Access to adequate healthcare does not just affect people who are unemployed. In Ohio alone, sixty percent of uninsured people have jobs. An uninsured employed individual is the result of employers not offering healthcare insurance to part-time or temporary employees. In efforts to cut costs, the offering of part-time positions is on the rise. Only 15 percent of employees with part-time status are eligible for employer-backed healthcare. Many businesses create these positions instead of posting full-time work along with the benefits that come with that status. To add to the lack of benefits offered to certain employees, the industries of retail, food service, and hospitality are the ones least likely to provide any sort of health benefits and lower-wage earners are less likely to sign up for coverage.

If you happen to be one of the lucky individuals who are offered healthcare benefits with your position, there are still obstacles to access. When a person begins a new job, there might be a waiting period before their benefits kick in, causing a lapse in coverage. Further, the cost of insurance is increas-

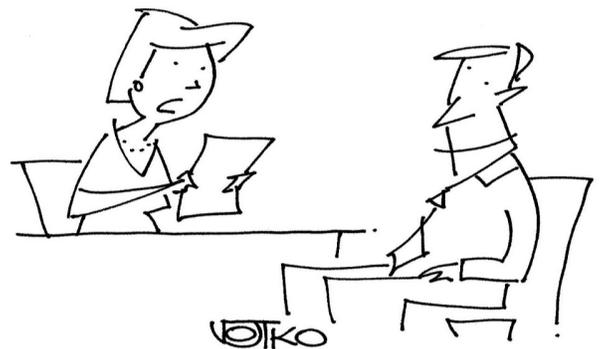
ing, coinciding with an expectation that the individual contribute more to their healthcare- up to 25 percent of their earnings. Higher expected contributions coupled with sky-high and ever increasing deductible and co-pay costs render healthcare unaffordable for both the employed and under-employed.

When the teachers in West Virginia decided to strike, wages were definitely a big factor in that decision. The other major point of contention, however, was the large increase in their state health plan and the state's refusal to recognize a corresponding increase in salary. The issues in West Virginia are indicative of a nationwide problem with employer sponsored health insurance and the individual's difficulty to pay.

Those who do not have any access to employer backed health insurance may be eligible for Medicare or Medicaid. As a result of the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion in 2014, the number of uninsured people in Ohio declined by almost half. There are still a huge number of people that remain uninsured and lots of legislators that strongly oppose more Medicaid expansions which would help those who cannot afford health insurance otherwise.

The various and expanding barriers to health care should not exist. We should hold employers responsible for offering reasonable and affordable benefits to the people that work for them and stop letting them find ways to cut corners and line make themselves richer. We also need to elect and support our local officials who believe that access to healthcare is a right for all.

PERSONNEL



"I see you got perfect attendance in 3rd grade 2 years in a row."



"Don't worry about your work piling up at the office. It'll be there when you get back."

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act

So you've decided to start a family, now what? Many women in the United States are still unfamiliar with some of the rights and protections that are afforded to them when they become pregnant while working.

If you work for an employer with 15 or more employees, then you are covered by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 (PDA). The PDA prohibits discrimination on the basis of pregnancy. The PDA prohibits discrimination in all aspects of employment, including, hiring, firing, promotion, pay, and employment benefits.

In 2008, employers subject to the PDA were required to provide accommodations for pregnant employees. In other words, pregnancy is considered a temporary disability by law, and accordingly, pregnant individuals have the same rights and protections as disabled employees under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) if they have impairments related to their pregnancy.

Once an employee takes leave due to pregnancy, an employer must hold their job open for the same amount of time a position would be left open for an employee who is on leave because of sickness or disability. This sometimes coincides with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which requires that certain employers allow up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for qualifying employees.

Some additional considerations under the PDA:

- The law also covers past and future pregnancies - you cannot be fired at the end of your maternity leave, and the employer must accommodate any pregnancy-related needs such as breastfeeding.
- Employers cannot refuse to hire someone because she is pregnant or has a medical condition related to her pregnancy.
- Employer health insurance plans must treat pregnancy-related conditions the same way as other medical conditions and pregnant employees are entitled to the same benefits they received before their pregnancy.
- Employers must provide reasonable accommodations for women who need it because of any pregnancy-related disability.

There are still many employers that disregard or flat out refuse to comply with the law, and many are able to get away with it when their workforce is not informed. If you suspect that your rights have been violated under the PDA, contact your Union representative.

Going Through Changes? Let Us Know

Has your name changed? Have you moved? Do you have a new telephone number? If so, please let our office know. Help us maintain accurate membership files by contacting the PGO office to update your personal contact information. Keeping us informed will allow us to serve you better.



"He's been doing this ever since he saw you at work during career day."