

Key Facts about Right-to-Work

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September 2014*

1. Studies show that states with right-to-work laws attract more new business than states without such laws. Right-to-work states typically have a better business climate than non-right-to-work states, with lower unemployment.
2. The cost of living is typically lower in right-to-work states. Once cost of living is accounted for, workers in right-to-work states enjoy higher real, spendable income than workers in non-right-to-work states.
3. Federal law does not obligate unions to represent non-members; unions are allowed to bargain solely for their own dues-paying members under a “members-only” contract. Unions are only required to represent every worker if they choose to invoke federal law giving them the privilege of “exclusive bargaining representation.”
4. Union membership has been declining nationally for three decades. That union membership has declined in right-to-work states because of right-to-work laws is questionable, since union membership is declining in most states as part of a long-term national trend.
5. As private sector union membership continues to decline, public support for labor unions appears to be fading. The emergence of right-to-work legislation in several states is evidence that policymakers and voters are rethinking the role of labor unions in today’s modern workplace.
6. Right-to-work laws do not ban unions or prevent them from serving the interests of their members. Right-to-work laws do not force unions to represent non-paying “free riders” who take advantage of a union’s representation but do not pay their share. Rather, right-to-work laws require unions to give workers a choice about financially supporting those efforts.
7. Recent decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Harris v. Quinn* and *Knox v. SEIU* indicate the Court may be willing to overturn a previous decision (*Abood*) that requires government employees to pay union dues or agency fees, even if they do not want union representation. Such a ruling would likely lead to the same rights for private sector workers.

These are the key findings from WPC’s in-depth study: “Right-to-Work: What it is and how it works” which is available on our website at www.washingtonpolicy.org along with other related publications.