

GOP Lawmakers Pushing Bill to Repeal the State Prevailing Wage Law

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Republicans push for lower pay and less skill for Wisconsin workers and their families.

MADISON - On Tuesday, Republican leaders in the Wisconsin legislature held a hearing on the repeal of our prevailing wage law.

After hours of testimony, it is crystal clear Wisconsin workers and businesses do not support dismantling yet another protection for Wisconsin's middle class, our prevailing wage law, which has been critical in creating a top-notch construction industry in our state since the 1930s. This system is effective in delivering quality work, by a well-trained Wisconsin workforce, at a price that is mindful of our shared, public investments.

Hardworking Wisconsinites are already struggling under the failed policies of the governor and his Republican allies in the Legislature. Recently, it was unveiled that Wisconsin ranks the worst among all 50 states in terms of a shrinking middle class. Instead of facing this reality, we are talking about repealing a law that helps ensure jobs go to local workers whose families shop in local businesses, thus strengthening local communities. At the same time, just down the hall from the hearing, legislators on the Joint Finance Committee are discussing a budget that spends and borrows more money than at any point in state history.

In addition to workers, we heard from an expert who has studied the construction industry for over 20 years, Dr. Peter Philips. Dr. Philip's posed a crucial question to lawmakers: 'Do you want this to be a high-wage, high-skill industry or a low-wage, low-skill industry?'

The facts from other states show, repealing prevailing wage will drive down wages, promote the outsourcing of workers, lower productivity levels, decrease workplace safety, and restrict access to health care. It will ultimately prevent people from being part of the middle class and reaching the American Dream – an already increasingly rare commodity in our state.

Prevailing wage laws ensure we have well-trained, skilled workers, who give the taxpayers the best deal by doing high-quality work, efficiently. In fact, under the prevailing wage law, Wisconsin is the third most productive in the country and even the best in the Midwest in terms of our workers getting things done right and on time. Pulling prevailing wage out by the roots is morally and economically the wrong direction for Wisconsin. As one person who testified put it: 'this is the kind of bill that will make those who build our bridges, end up living underneath them.'

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