

GOP “Right-to-Work” Bill is Wrong for Wisconsin

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GOP State House Leaders are considering so-called "open shop" legislation to prohibit employers from striking deals with private-sector unions to require workers to pay dues. The move, called "right-to-work" legislation, reopens the public sector Act 10 confrontation of 2011.

MADISON – In a complete shift from the general election rhetoric of then candidate Scott Walker and state Republicans in recent months, who have said that the issue is a distraction and not a priority, the top leader in the state Senate made clear Thursday that lawmakers in his house would debate the issue of so-called "right-to-work" legislation within weeks and bring the volatile issue of union law back into the statehouse.

According to a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [report](#) today, Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) told conservative talk radio host Charlie Sykes of WTMJ-AM (620) Milwaukee that he was considering so-called "open shop" legislation to prohibit employers from striking deals with private-sector unions to require workers to pay dues. He said he was considering making Wisconsin the first state in the nation to attempt to exempt certain private workers such as the operators of earth movers who have supported Wisconsin Republicans in recent years.

His comments come as conservative state Rep. Chris Kapenga (R-Delafield), a longtime activist in the state with ties to national groups that have started an organization to promote the legislation, vowed this week to introduce a bill to do just that.

As recently as Wednesday, Walker said in a stop in Milwaukee that he did not want to take up a “right-to-work” bill at this time.

"As I said before the election and have said repeatedly over the last few years, I just think right-to-work legislation right now, as well as reopening Act 10 to make any other adjustments, would be a distraction from the work that we're trying to do," Walker said, [according to Wisconsin Public Radio](#)

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But as with other election promises like creating 250,000 new jobs, it appears times have changed.

Gov. Scott Walker and GOP lawmakers already banned such requirements for most public employees in Wisconsin, but their 2011 law known as Act 10 didn't affect private-sector unions or police and firefighters. Tens of thousands of workers protested for weeks and Walker later became the first governor in the nation to win a recall election because of it.

After the Republicans in Madison stuck it to the public sector workers, their counterparts in the private sector did little to come to their aid. Now it appears to be their turn, as many Democrats said at the time.



According to Assistant Senate Democratic Leader Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) in a statement released today:

“Despite the Governor denouncing Rep. Kapenga’s legislation as a distraction he does not want, legislative Republicans appear poised to fast-track this extremely divisive and controversial legislation at a time when our economy is still reeling from the harmful effects of their Tea Party agenda.

“This legislation isn’t about protecting anyone’s rights or freedom. Real freedom is about having a workplace that allows people to balance their work with those things that are important in their lives like being able to make time for their children, spend time with their spouse or take a

parent to the doctor. Their idea of right-to-work is nothing more than a way to stack the deck against the workers who actually create the profits so CEOs can get bigger bonuses and line the pockets of their shareholders.

“Not only is this legislation harmful to the economic freedom and wellbeing of Wisconsin families everywhere, it violates the rights of employers to decide how to run their business. It is anti-American and wrong for Wisconsin.

“Governor Walker is correct when he says this is a distraction we cannot afford. Unfortunately, by not stating publicly that he will veto this legislation, Governor Walker himself is creating the very distraction he said he wants to avoid. If he truly does not support this attack on Wisconsin families he needs to state publicly that he will veto it.”

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