

GOP "Right-to-Work" Show Moves On to Assembly Hearing

Posted on Mar 03, Posted by [Bob Kiefert, Green Bay Progressive](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



The Republican fast tracked bill would ban any requirement that nonunion members in the private sector pay union dues. The majority of those speaking Monday were against the measure, viewed as a distraction from Governor Walker's harmful budget.

MADISON - Six days after the Senate Labor Committee held it's controversial public hearing on the same subject, the Assembly Labor Committee heard testimony into the night on Monday on Assembly Bill 61 – the so-called “Right to Work” bill. The bill would ban any requirement that nonunion members in the private sector pay union dues.

Just like last week's Senate hearing, where opponents vastly outnumbered supporters, the majority of those speaking Monday at the Assembly Labor Committee were also against the measure.

The few supporters, including the state chamber of commerce, said they represented many other people who were reluctant to speak publicly. Backers argue that the change will make Wisconsin more competitive with other states, in particular Indiana and Michigan, and allow workers to decide whether they want to pay union dues rather than have them deducted automatically.

Union members, construction contractors, and other opponents reiterated their arguments that the measure would weaken unions, leading to lower wages and unsafe workplaces. They also questioned who really wanted the law, given that coalitions representing hundreds of contractors and other businesses had formed in opposition, and said it was wrong to rush the bill through in less than two weeks.



In a statement released after the hearing, Assembly Democratic Leader Peter Barca (D-Kenosha) said:

"We just heard hours of thoughtful, compelling testimony from business owners, workers, researchers and everyday citizens who agree that 'Right to Work' is wrong for Wisconsin and recognize that it will drive down wages and hurt our middle class. I want to thank everyone who came out today – including those who drove hundreds of miles and waited hours to testify – against this destructive legislation.

"'Right to Work' is a distraction from Governor Walker's harmful budget and it will keep pushing Wisconsin's economy in the wrong direction. Even the governor himself has said private-sector unions are important partners in economic development efforts that put people to work – efforts the governor and Republican legislators are undermining with this bill.

"We as elected officials must be doing everything we can to restore economic opportunity for our citizens, not tear it down. As Professor Chowdhury from Marquette testified today, this bill would take \$3.89 billion a year out of the Wisconsin economy.

"Democrats stand ready to debate this harmful legislation on the Assembly floor and continuing to work toward a stronger economy for Wisconsin."

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