



Strengthening the Middle Class Through Labor Law Reform

The WAGE Act (S. 2143 & H.R. 4548) and the Workplace Democracy Act (S. 2810 & H.R. 5728)

Every worker has the fundamental right to organize without unfair and illegal discrimination by employers. We all do better when we work together. When workers can join a union they can negotiate for better wages, hours, and working conditions. Over the past few decades, the laws have not kept up with changes in the economy and employer practices to prevent workers from exercising their rights. For too long, employers have taken advantage of weak labor laws. It's time to change the laws so workers can organize and collectively bargain without fear.

The Workplace Action for a Growing Economy (WAGE) Act would amend the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to provide real monetary penalties like those found in other federal laws (FLSA, OSHA, and EEOC). If employers face real penalties, they will respect workers' rights to organize and promote change in the workplace.

The Workplace Democracy Act would modernize laws to strengthen worker power in organizing and prevent anti-union tactics by employers who are trying to prevent workers from exercising their fundamental rights.

Research shows that the decline in union density has contributed to wage stagnation. Union workers earn better wages, have better health care and retirement plans, and are less likely to be injured at work. The WAGE Act and the Workplace Democracy Act are bills to grow the economy by improving workers' bargaining power.

The WAGE Act would strengthen protections for working people and better protect their fundamental right to join together with their co-workers and advocate for change. It will also put an end to the perverse incentives for employers to interfere with workers' rights by:

- Tripling the back-pay awards when employers are found to have willfully and knowingly broken the law;
- Providing working people with a private right of action to bring lawsuits to recover monetary damages and attorneys' fees in federal district court, just as they can under civil rights laws;
- Providing for federal court injunctions to immediately return fired workers to their jobs;
- Establishing civil penalties up to \$50,000 for employers who commit unfair labor practices and doubled penalties for repeat violations. This would bring the NLRA in line with other workplace laws;
- Giving the NLRB authority to impose penalties on corporate officers for certain employer violators;
- Allowing the NLRB to issue a bargaining order when an employer prevents a free and fair election, provided that a majority of employees signed authorization cards within the previous 12 months; and
- Requiring employers to inform workers of their rights under the NLRA.

The Workplace Democracy Act will modernize and close loopholes in worker organizing laws by:

- Allowing workers to organize through card check;
- Requiring mediation and possibly binding arbitration to ensure that employers cannot prevent organizing a union by denying a first contract;
- Requiring employers to disclose anti-union consultants and information that is shared with workers;
- Requiring more accurate worker contact information be shared with union organizers;
- Allowing for secondary boycotts and picketing; and
- Eliminating state-level Right to Work laws by repealing Section 14(b) of the Taft Hartley Act.

USW urges Senators and Representatives to cosponsor the WAGE Act (S. 2143 & H.R. 4548) and the Workplace Democracy Act (S. 2810 & H.R. 5728).