

# Eight ways that ALEC is targeting working families

By **KENNETH QUINNELL**  
AFL-CIO Now blog

Information about the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) working in secret to push state-level policy to more extreme levels is coming to light more and more, and America's working families are starting to stand up to the group's corporate-driven agenda.

While ALEC's agenda is all over the policy map, the organization has a particular focus on pushing new laws that attack working families and undercut the rights of workers, both in the workplace and in retirement. Here are eight of the most dangerous and most widespread ways that ALEC is targeting workers and their right to a voice on the job.

**8. Voter ID Act:** Laws directly based on or similar to ALEC's Voter ID

Act have been introduced in recent years in nearly every state, with more than a dozen states passing or strengthening such laws in the past three years. These laws disproportionately affect working families, senior citizens, people of color and residents of rural areas, and help elect legislators who vote against the rights and needs of workers.

**7. Paycheck Protection Bills:** ALEC has at least four different versions of this legislation, each one more extreme than the last, that were introduced 20 times in various states in 2013. These bills range from requiring that each employee sign an annual form authorizing that their union dues be allowed to be used for political purposes from being used for union dues. These bills provide no additional rights to workers and do nothing more than

weaken the ability of workers to collectively bargain by depriving unions of the funds they need to fight on behalf of their members.

**6. Direct Union Assaults:** Through model legislation such as the Election Accountability for Municipal Employee Union Representatives Act and the Decertification Elections Act, introduced in Idaho and Arizona, respectively, ALEC is seeking to make public employees vote over and over again to retain their union status, giving ALEC and other groups the opportunity to flood workers with anti-union propaganda.

**5. Public Employees' Portable Retirement Option Act:** Through this and similar bills, 10 states have attempted to weaken or eliminate defined-benefit pension plans and replace them with defined-contribution plans, i.e. 401(k), which make retirees depend on the market for how much money they have for retirement and health care.

**4. Council on Efficient Government Act:** As Orwellian a name as any in the ALEC arsenal, this legislation does nothing but use government money to create a commission to figure out ways to privatize government services. In other words, yet another example of ALEC attempting to get taxpayer money into the hands of pri-

vate corporations without any accountability or taxpayer recourse.

**3. Right to Work Act:** This incredibly misleadingly titled legislation gives no one any new rights and does nothing but prevent employees from paying for the benefits that unions earn on their behalf. So-called "right to work" for less states end up paying their workers a lot less than states that don't have such laws. In 2013, 15 states introduced this legislation.

**2. Parent Trigger Act:** These laws give parents the option, once a majority of parents sign a petition, to change a public school into a charter school, give students vouchers or close the school. Seven states have passed parent trigger laws similar to the ALEC bill. Parent Trigger laws force parents to make a bad choice — either stick with a poorly performing school, or take drastic actions that are likely to make things worse, do little to help students and are a boon for corporate groups that run private schools. Meanwhile one of the best tools for helping working families reach the middle class — public education — gets less and less funding.

**1. Wage Protections:** In 14 states, ALEC model legislation attacking wage protections were introduced. The bills sought to weaken or eliminate laws that require prevailing wages, living wages or minimum wages. Big cor-

porations heavily support these efforts, which would only serve to lower wages for workers.

On Aug. 8, unions and other opponents of the ALEC agenda rallied at the conservative group's convention in Chicago.

*(Editor's Note: This is a partial list of Oregon politicians that are known to be involved in, or previously involved in ALEC.*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:** Rep. Kevin Cameron (R-Salem); Rep. Jason Conger (R-Bend); Rep. Sal Esquivel (R-Medford); Rep. Tim Freeman (R-Roseburg); Rep. Bruce Hanna (R-Roseburg); Rep. Wally Hicks (R-Grants Pass); Rep. John Huffman (R-The Dalles); Rep. Mark Johnson (R-Hood River); Rep. Bill Kennemer (R-Oregon City); Rep. Michael R. McLane (R-Powell Butte); Rep. Dennis Richardson (R-Central Point); Rep. Sherrie Sprenger (R-Scio); Rep. Kim Thatcher (R-Keizer); Rep. Jim Thompson (R-Dallas); Rep. C. Gene Whisnant (R-Sunriver).

**SENATE:** Sen. Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day); Sen. Larry George (R-Sherwood); Sen. Fred Girod (R-Stayton).

**FORMER REPS:** Katerina Brewer (R-Hillsboro); Shawn Lindsay (R-Hillsboro); Matthew Wand (R-Troutdale); Matt Wingard (R-Wilsonville).

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