

Right-to-work proposal would mean weaker unions, fewer rights, benefits for workers

One of the newest initiatives among the threats aimed at public employees is a so-called "right-to-work" initiative.

Like all "right-to-work" initiatives, this one is a misnomer: It's a right to work for less. What it really does is weaken the ability of unions to negotiate competitive wages and benefits. Currently, according to the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics most recent figures, union workers increased their advantage in weekly earnings to 35% over non-union workers. That amounts to an advantage of \$149 per week.

The initiative prohibits union security clauses that strengthen the union and describe its rights in the workplace, it bans payroll deduction of wages, limits union membership to one year at a time and requires notice of an option not to renew at the time the renewal is sent, requires telling union members of all use of dues for politics, and permits members the option of not paying that portion of dues or directing that portion of the dues as they choose.

OPEU/SEIU Local 503 has filed a challenge at the state Supreme Court to this initiative because it violates provisions of the initiative law.

It's thought to be the first right-

Davis-Bacon attack threatens family wages, benefits for all workers

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private sector workers are used as an argument to reduce public sector pay and benefits, this measure will have only one outcome — to reduce private sector wages and benefits.

- The "little" Davis-Bacon law assures fair, reasonable, and comparable wages to what others doing the same work are receiving.

- The current law provides for health care benefits and other things Oregon families want and need.

to-work initiative in at least the past 30 years. It was filed by two employees of the Oregon Department of Transportation, one of whom has had financial backing from the national Right-To-Work Committee in previous action he has taken against OPEU.

This initiative also will weaken workers' ability to form strong unions that can protect and advance their rights. At a time when the workplace is changing so fast and becoming more complex, when costly threats like the Tieman/Sizemore Initiative to get rid of the 6% pickup and reduce our pay and retirement benefits confront us, strong, aggressive unions are more important than ever.

This initiative is an attempt to break our union because it would:

- Reduce the amount of field representatives' time that goes to organizing members as it turns field representatives into dues collectors.

- Reduce the ability of public sector unions to negotiate for and maintain the fully employer paid, full family health care that OPEU members have made our number one bargaining issue for several years.

- Reduce the strength of public sector unions. This measure diminishes OPEU's ability to fight ballot measures, like the Tieman/Sizemore Initiative.

- Reduce OPEU's ability to provide training in worker rights to our members, stewards, and officers.

- Hurt our ability to inform our members about their rights and benefits and the threats to their rights and benefits.

- Enlarge a special class of "free riders" who are entitled to the benefits of union representation without paying their fair share of dues.

- Turn public employees into second class citizens by vastly reducing the rights of labor unions in Oregon's public sector.

Putting this on the ballot subjects internal union administration and contract rights, approved and ratified by OPEU members, to a vote of the public at large.

The Myth of Government Waste Oregon Compared

Compared with other state and local governments, and by a number of measures, Oregon's government is either smaller than the U.S. average, or smaller than the average of the rest of the Western States.

Since states vary in the implementation of statewide programs (some deliver services through the counties, for example, some do not), state and local government sizes are compared together.

Employment Comparison

Number of State and Local Government Employees per 10,000 Population (1990)

Oregon:	537
National Average:	545 (1.5% higher than Ore.)
Average of 10 Western states: (excludes Alaska and Hawaii)	571 (6.3% higher than Ore.)
Oregon's ranking among 50 states:	25th

Fiscal Comparisons

State and Local Direct General Expenditures Per Capita (1990)

Oregon:	\$3397
National Average:	\$3356 (1.2% lower than Ore.)
Average of 10 other Western states: (excludes Alaska and Hawaii)	\$3413 (0.5% higher than Ore.)
Oregon's ranking among 50 states:	20th

Note: In 1985, Oregon's expenditure per capita was 7% above the national average.

State and Local Direct General Expenditures as a % of Personal Income (1990)

Oregon:	21.3%
National Average:	19.1%
Average of 10 other Western states: (excludes Alaska and Hawaii)	21.9%
Oregon's ranking among 50 states:	14th

Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

OCA proposed initiative threatens all Oregonians, on the job and off

The rights of all Oregonians continue to be threatened by a ballot initiative from the Oregon Citizens Alliance directed at gays and lesbians.

Like Measure 9 in 1992, this one would treat one group of Oregonians as second class citizens under the guise of prohibiting "special rights."

However, as THE OREGON PUBLIC EMPLOYEE was going to press, a judge ruled that the measure was flawed and not eligible for the ballot.

This measure would:

- Invalidate negotiated non-discrimination protection in our Union contracts.

- OPEU supports equal rights for all men and women, regardless of age, sex, race, religion, handicap, or sexual orientation.

- Condone discrimination on the job.

- Permit coworkers to be harassed or fired from their job for their perceived sexual orientation.

- Leave no recourse for coworkers facing harassment for their sexual orientation.