

# The Truth About Right to Work *For Less*

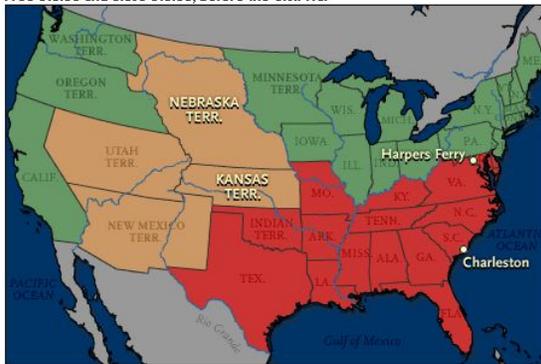
## So-called Right to Work laws are an attack on workers' right to organize unions

- **Unions are among the most democratic organizations in the United States**  
Workers form unions through collective, democratic action. Unions are certified **only** when a majority of workers support a union. Workers vote in their union, elect their representatives, and vote on every contract.
- **Empowered workers support and sustain their unions**  
To sustain their union, workers pay dues to fund contract administration, grievance staff, member education, new organizing, and other functions to ensure workers have a voice on the job.
- **Any worker in the U.S. can opt-out of union membership**  
No worker in the U.S. can be forced to join a union and they may easily opt-out of union membership. However, a union is still legally required to represent them if a majority of their co-workers decide to form a union.
- **Workers who opt-out pay no union dues and instead pay a reduced agency fee**  
To balance a union's need for funding with the free speech rights of dissenting workers, workers may pay an "agency fee" – an amount (less than full member dues) to cover the union's representational responsibilities.
- **So-called Right to Work laws are about defunding workers' unions**  
Politicians opposed to unions want workers who opt out to pay nothing, but still reap the benefits of the union contract. Currently, 28 states have such provisions and a bill in Congress would extend this across the country.

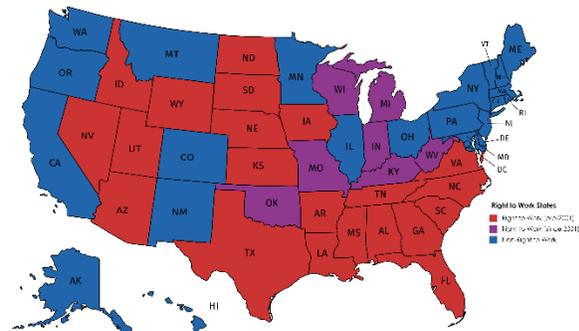
## So-called Right to Work laws are rooted in U.S. segregationist history

There is a striking overlap between states of the former Confederacy and long-time Right to Work states, and it's no accident: conservative segregationists pushed the first wave of these laws in the 1940s.

Free States and Slave States, before the Civil War



■ - FREE STATES AND TERRITORIES  
■ - SLAVE STATES  
■ - TERRITORIES OPEN TO SLAVERY



## So-called Right to Work laws have lowered wages and made conditions worse for all workers

Right to Work laws are associated with wage decline not just for union workers, but also for workers who do not belong to a union, which is why many workers refer to them as "Right to Work for Less" laws. According to AFL-CIO research:

- The typical worker in a RTW state makes over \$6,100 less annually.
- The poverty rate is 20% higher in RTW states.
- Working-age people are 38% more likely to lack health insurance in RTW states.
- The risk of workplace death is 49% higher in RTW states.

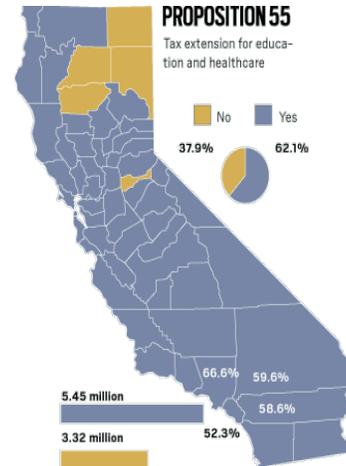
There is no evidence that states with these laws enjoy any greater economic activity or job growth than other states.

## The power of unions is critical to winning progressive policy in California

California has not always been the progressive policy leader it is today, and demographics alone cannot explain the transformation. Following the 59%-41% win of the anti-immigrant Prop. 187 in 1994, strong coalitions of workers, communities, immigrants, environmentalists, and other progressives fought together to change the way that voters think about issues. Success – as seen in the 62% victory for 2016’s revenue-raising Prop. 55 – was possible in part because of the relative strength of the California labor movement.



	Votes	%
✓ Yes	5,063,537	58.93%
✗ No	3,529,432	41.07%



In 2016, supporters and opponents spent more than \$473 million on the 17 propositions on the November ballot. Corporations and wealthy individuals account for the lion’s share of this funding; more than one-third of *all* spending came from the tobacco and pharmaceutical industries alone. Working people and communities have a voice in these fights thanks primarily to the institutional power – phone calls, door knocking, and hard dollars – of the labor movement.

Without major funding from unions, these propositions easily could have gone the wrong way:

- Prop. 53 - A single multi-millionaire family spent over \$6 million to make it more difficult for the state to issue revenue bonds.
  - **Unions contributed \$2.9 million against – the measure lost, 51% - 49%**
- Prop. 55 - This initiative extended the tax increase on high-earners, in order to continue funding for basic state services.
  - **Unions contributed \$29.4 million for the measure – it passed, 63% - 37%**
- Prop. 56 - Raising the tobacco tax would improve health through harm reduction as well as additional funds for health care, but the tobacco industry raised \$71 million to fight this.
  - **Unions gave over \$2.5 million – the measure passed, 64% - 36%**
- Prop. 57 - Designed to address prison overcrowding and to make the California criminal justice system more humane.
  - **Unions contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars, helping to ensure passage by 64% - 36 %**
- Prop. 58 - The repeal of the “bilingual ban” undid the harm of the divisive Prop. 209.
  - **Unions contributed over \$2 million – the measure passed, 74% - 26%**

For more information and data sources, go to: [www.laane.org](http://www.laane.org)