



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg
Republican Leader, Subcommittee on Health, Labor, Employment,
and Pensions
Hearing on “Protecting Workers’ Right to Organize: The Need for
Labor Law Reform”
March 26, 2019**

Thank you for yielding.

While we agree that federal labor law is in need of reform, the title of today’s hearing is premised on a fallacy: that workers’ right to organize and join a union is, in some way, in jeopardy. Federal law protects workers’ right to unionize, point blank. Becoming a union member is an important personal decision and Republicans and Democrats alike respect the right of employees to decide for themselves whether union membership is right for them.

It’s personal for me, too. I grew up in a union household. My father was a machinist and tool and die maker who spent part of his working career as a union organizer. When I graduated from high school, I went to work at a steel mill on the south side of Chicago. It’s important that we have a level playing field and workers receive good pay for a good day’s work.

But times have changed since my father was organizing his workplace. Since 1983, union membership has steadily fallen from over 20 percent to just 10.5 percent in 2018, and less than 7 percent in the private sector. Of the workers that are still represented by unions today, almost none have ever actually voted for the union that represents them.

It seems straightforward that the best way to reverse the downward trend would be through increased transparency and working to better serve their members. Instead, we’ve seen calls for labor laws that would empower union interests and allow those at the top to further consolidate power.

There’s no question that the *National Labor Relations Act* (NLRA) and *Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act* (LMRDA) are in need of targeted

reforms. However, the answer should not be to alter these laws in a way that tilts the balance of power toward special interests at the expense of the hardworking men and women who drive our economy.

Let's not forget, the last time Democrats held the majority in the House, they voted to deny workers the right to a secret ballot in union elections. In 2015, the Obama NLRB implemented a rule that gives workers as few as 11 days to decide whether or not to join a union. The Obama Board also ruled that employers must hand over employees' private information like home addresses, phone numbers, and work schedules, aiding well-documented efforts to harass, intimidate, and pressure workers into supporting the union.

Workers deserve the right to make free and informed decisions about joining a union, and reforms to the NLRA and LMRDA should put workers, not union leaders, first. That is why Republicans have introduced numerous pieces of legislation in recent years that would protect and expand workers' rights within their union and increase financial transparency, so workers can see with greater detail how unions are spending the dues taken from workers' hard-earned paychecks.

American workers have greater opportunities today than they have in decades. Wages are rising, unemployment is at near-record lows, and millions of jobs have been created since President Trump took office. There are "Help Wanted" signs everywhere I go across Michigan. With so many good-paying jobs waiting to be filled, we need to develop a skilled workforce and equip our people with on-the-job experience.

As this economy continues to thrive, our focus should be on expanding pro-growth economic policies that create the best path forward for union and non-union workers alike.

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