



COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION & LABOR  
REPUBLICANS

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STATEMENT

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**Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Hearing:  
“Standing with Public Servants: Protecting the Right to Organize”  
June 26, 2019**

“The two pieces of legislation we’re here to discuss today are another Democrat attempt to put the thumb on the scale in favor of forced unionization and they also show no regard for the system of federalism on which this nation was founded.

H.R. 1154, the *Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act*, and the *Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act* disregard the will of the voters in every state by imposing a one-size-fits-all labor relations mandate enforced by federal bureaucrats in Washington. If there’s one thing this country doesn’t need, it’s more federal overreach. We can be better than that, and as policymakers, shame on us if we’re not.

The founding fathers spent countless, critical hours in debate, deliberating a system of checks and balances that would ensure that individual states were not unreasonably controlled by the federal government. Today, states have legitimate concerns with public sector collective bargaining, which is why even union-dominated states place some limitations on the practice. Rather than impose its will on individual states, Congress should respect these differences of opinion among the states and allow them to remain ‘laboratories of democracy’ in determining their own public employee labor laws.

We should all know by now that government unions create perverse incentives that do not exist in the private sector. Government unions are an enormously powerful political force. While all Americans are free to join together and engage in the political process, government unions can essentially elect their own employer – in other words, governors and state and local lawmakers – with whom

they negotiate collective bargaining agreements. These practices often force exorbitant, seemingly unlimited costs onto taxpayers, an unfortunate circumstance which is markedly different than negotiating with companies over the use of inherently limited profits, as private-sector unions do. Moreover, when government unions strike, it imposes undeserved hardship on the American people by depriving basic public services they expect from their state or local government.

It is for these reasons that historically, lawmakers on both ends of the spectrum have steered clear of instituting collective bargaining in government. Even President Franklin Roosevelt and George Meany, former president of the AFL-CIO, opposed collective bargaining in government.

Imposing collective bargaining on state and local governments will likely result in a massive unfunded mandate on taxpayers. Congress should therefore appropriately leave these decisions to states as our predecessors have done.

Not only do these bills undermine our nation's system of federalism, they are another attempt by Committee Democrats to advance union special interests at the expense of workers.

Democrats' top labor priority is H.R. 2474, the *Protecting the Right to Organize Act*, which deprives private sector workers of important workplace rights while giving labor unions almost unlimited power to impose economic harm on unsuspecting businesses.

I bring up H.R. 2474 not only to demonstrate where Committee Democrats' priorities lie, but also to show that the goal of the Democrats is to promote forced unionization throughout both the public and private sectors.

Exactly one year ago, the Supreme Court in *Janus v. AFSCME* ruled that no public employee should be forced to pay union dues as a condition of employment. Forced dues in government are particularly egregious, because collective bargaining impacts public policy and is thus inherently political speech.

Rather than undermine these rights for public and private sector workers alike, this Committee should focus on issues where we actually have jurisdiction,

including protecting the rights of workers covered by the *National Labor Relations Act*. Private sector workers should be allowed to make workplace decisions for themselves, like the choice to join and pay a union or not, share personal information with a union organizer, or vote for a union in a secret ballot election. At the same time, states should be free to determine public-employee labor laws for themselves, without needless intervention from the federal government.”

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