



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Hearing:
“The Protecting the Right to Organize Act: Detering Unfair Labor Practices”
May 8, 2019**

“Organized labor has a long history in the American workforce. Their early advocacy for fairness and decent treatment left an important legacy, one unfortunately that the modern labor movement has appeared to have abandoned. I grew up in a union household. My father was a machinist and union organizer for part of his career, and upon graduating from high school, I went to work at U.S. Steel South Works on the south side of Chicago. The lessons I learned from my father and my own experience as a union worker helped shaped my understanding of labor unions, both the good and the bad. Americans have the right to organize and join a union if they choose to do so, and United States law has protected this freedom for over 80 years.

Outdated U.S. labor laws are in need of significant reforms, it’s true. But those reforms should put workers, not union leaders, first. The sweeping legislation we are here to discuss today doesn’t benefit workers. H.R. 2474 reads like a sweeping special interest wish list. Contrary to the statements of the bill sponsors, this bill fails to promote the wellbeing or success of American workers. Instead, the legislation grants unprecedented power to special interests at the expense of workers and employers.

Among its many radical provisions, the bill requires employers to turn over workers’ personal information – including their home addresses, cellphone and landline numbers, personal email addresses, and more – without workers ever having a say in the matter. H.R. 2474 will decimate workers’ right to privacy in order to satisfy union demands.

The bill also bans right-to-work laws that allow workers to decide for themselves whether to join and pay a union—laws that have resulted in more jobs and higher incomes for workers. And in an effort to make it easier to create unions, the legislation contains a backdoor ‘card-check’ scheme that Congress deemed too extreme the last time Democrats were in power. The scheme provides that in the event that a union loses an election, employers must prove they did not interfere in the election’s results – a completely ludicrous and unworkable standard. If an employer is unable to prove they didn’t interfere, that union is automatically ushered into the workplace without ever winning a secret ballot election.

Union membership across the United States is steadily declining. They have failed to adapt with the changing economy, and the absence of transparency and accountability in their activities has left many workers disillusioned and dissatisfied. But instead of making necessary changes to better serve their members, union leaders appear to be exerting their political influence to call for radical labor laws like this one, that will allow them to further consolidate power and bolster their own agendas.

Rather than empowering unions at the expense of workers and employers, reforms to the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) should improve union accountability and transparency. The union election process must be updated to give workers expanded voting rights. It is the height of hypocrisy that Americans select their representation in Congress by secret ballot and Congressional Democrats select their own leadership by secret ballot, yet they seek to deny that same right to Americans selecting their representation in the workplace.

Today’s workers deserve better than what this radical legislation has to offer. Ten years on from the Great Recession and the American economy is achieving robust, record-breaking growth. Wages are rising while unemployment remains near record lows, and the number of job openings exceeds the number of job seekers nationwide. Workers have built this reality, spurred on by pro-growth policies like the Republican-led tax law and regulatory reform.

Everyone sitting here on this dais is here because we prevailed in a debate over ideas back in our districts. We’re here because our constituents decided we would

be responsible enough, and responsive enough, to serve them. Congress may not be the most popular organization in America, but at least there are mechanisms in place for voters to change their minds and change their representation. Those same basic American values and principles should apply to everyone, including organized labor. Resistance to those basic values and principles deserves a thorough examination, and that's what we want to do today."

###