



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on November 12, 2011

Ohio Could End Forced Union Membership

The constitutional amendment, known as the “[Workplace Freedom Amendment](#),” would make Ohio one of almost two dozen “right-to-work” states in America. If approved by voters it would allow government and private-sector workers to freely choose whether or not to join a union and pay union dues.



“No law, rule, agreement, or arrangement, shall require, directly or indirectly, any person or employer to become or remain a member of a labor organization,” reads the text of the proposed amendment. Federal employees in Ohio, however, would not be protected.

Individuals would still be free to join or support a union — if they so choose. And the measure would not affect already-existing agreements. But “Big Labor” is gearing up to fight anyway.

Led by a broad coalition of Tea Party groups and conservative activists under the banner of Ohioans for Workplace Freedom, supporters say the initiative will increase individual freedom while improving the state economy. And with current economic conditions, more jobs could be a major selling point for the plan — especially with [studies](#) showing that “right-to-work” states generally have higher employment and wages with a lower cost of living.

“Forced unionization serves like a weight on the back of the economy, and we don’t need that anvil on our backs as we try to climb our way out of a recession,” [said](#) former state Rep. Bryan Williams, who now works with the Associated Builders and Contractors of Ohio. Williams is one of the leaders of Ohioans for Workplace Freedom pushing the amendment.

Liberty-minded groups are also emphasizing the economic benefits of ending forced union participation. “Ohio’s current unemployment rate remains over 9 percent — it’s no coincidence that this rate of unemployment is much higher than in states that prohibit forced unionism, while private-sector job growth in those states has dramatically outpaced Ohio’s,” said Executive Director Maurice Thompson of the 1851 Center for Constitutional Law, another one of the organizations leading the charge.

“This Amendment will make it clear that Ohio is a safe place to start, locate, or keep a business, and also a safe place to gain employment without being commandeered by powerful political machines,” he added. But personal freedom is still an important component of the marketing plan.

The 1851 Center was also instrumental in the recently approved “[Healthcare Freedom Amendment](#)” prohibiting government healthcare mandates in Ohio. That measure, touted as a pro-freedom initiative, was approved by voters in a landslide referendum. Ending forced unionism and protecting workers’ freedom is also expected to be popular.

“Ultimately, freedom to associate also means freedom not to associate – it’s time for Ohio to end labor conditions that compel its citizens to participate in highly-politicized labor organizations, or instead pay



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a considerable penalty," Thompson concluded.

Another group working on the amendment, the Tea Party-umbrella organization known as the Ohio Liberty Council, is also emphasizing the liberty aspect of the Workplace Freedom Amendment. "We defend the freedom of all Ohioans to be free from the forced participation in labor organizations just as a condition of employment," explained Ohio Liberty Council spokesman and co-founder Chris Littleton. "It's a matter of protecting personal choice.... It's part of the American DNA to uphold liberty as a way of life."

[Polls](#) consistently show that even the vast majority of union members support workplace freedom by making dues voluntary. And most union members opposed the political causes and candidates supported by their dues, according to [studies](#) cited by the 1858 Center and the [National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation](#).

But in Ohio, Big Labor's political machine is particularly powerful. In the 2010 elections, for example, the [seven top contributors](#) to candidates and policymakers were all unions. And they won't go down without a fight.

Union bosses and their well-funded front groups have already vowed to battle the amendment effort with everything they have. State AFL-CIO President Tim Burga even demanded that the GOP Governor and Republican lawmakers "stop these extreme initiatives." In Ohio, however, voters will have the final say.

A union-funded organization known as We Are Ohio, which spent tens of millions on "[Issue 2](#)" to repeal [Senate Bill 5 reining in public-servant unions](#), has already spoken out against workplace freedom, too. It will presumably stick around to fight this battle also — especially because union bosses have suffered a string of [devastating blows](#) across the nation in recent years.

"Just two days ago, Ohioans spoke with one clear and emphatic voice, and voted by an overwhelming margin to support our everyday heroes and their right to collectively bargain," claimed We Are Ohio spokesperson Melissa Fazekas. "Yet, today their voices are already being ignored, even after Gov. Kasich and legislative leaders have promised to listen and reflect on Tuesday's vote."

The Democratic Party, which depends heavily on union-boss contributions, is also throwing a fit over efforts to make Ohio a right-to-work state. The amendment would have "draconian impacts on working families," claimed state Democrat Party boss Chris Redfern during a press conference.

"On Tuesday, [Senate Bill 5 was rejected](#) throughout Ohio as draconian overreach. Now they are trying to reach into the private sector," Redfern complained. "They're inviting a challenge." More than a few Democratic legislators have already protested the workplace freedom campaign as well.

Still, supporters of the amendment hope to see it on next year's November ballot. But they must first gather close to 400,000 signatures by July - a tough task for the volunteer effort.

Earlier this month the 1851 Center submitted initial information and petitions to the state Attorney General, who must approved the amendment's summary as "fair and truthful." The decision is expected soon.

Since the New Deal in the 1930s, unconstitutional federal statutes and regulations — especially the National Labor Relations Act — have played a key role in building up the power of union bosses and their pro-big government political machines. But despite the national rules, states are allowed to protect the freedom of workers within their borders. Ohio will become the 23rd state to do so if the



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Workplace Freedom Amendment is approved by voters.

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