



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 24, 2012

Right-to-Work Bill Passes Ind. Senate, Goes to House; Democrats Walk Out

At the start of the New Year, Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels (left) announced that he would see to it that Indiana becomes a 'right to work' state before he leaves office in January 2012. On Monday, Indiana's state Senate approved a controversial 'right-to-work' bill, which then moved to the House floor for debate, where tensions were high.

The Republican-dominated Senate voted 28-22 in favor of the legislation, which prohibits companies and unions from agreeing to contracts that require non-union workers to pay union dues. Nine Republican Senators joined the 13 Democrats who opposed the bill.



According to Republican State Senator Carlin Yoder, the bill would significantly improve the Hoosier State's economy by bringing in more jobs and businesses, and giving workers more freedom to decide what they want to do with their money.

Reuters [noted](#) that if the bill becomes law, Indiana would be the first right to work state in the area [which is] considered the country's traditional manufacturing belt. Such legislation could have a significant impact on what has now been dubbed the rust belt because of so many plant closures.

Democrats in the Senate disagreed with the bill's necessity, asserting that companies such as Honda and Toyota managed to expand successfully in Indiana without its being a right-to-work state. Right-to-work is nothing more than a race to the bottom for the middle class of Indiana, asserted Senate Minority Leader Vi Simpson (D-Ellettsville), and that, my friends, is not a race I care to win. She added, "This so-called right to work bill is not conferring any rights to a job on anybody."

Late Monday evening the bill was sent to the House, where five hours of debate on amendments to the measure, HB 1001, underscored the controversy surrounding it. According to the *Indianapolis Star*, House Republicans rejected "all Democrat changes, including their call to have voters decide this issue in a referendum" in November. House Democrats contend that they were blocked from offering more amendments to the proposed legislation. The *Star* [reports](#):

Moments after the vote rejecting the referendum was cast, House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, asked if there were further motions to amend.

He repeated those words and just as a Democrat was speaking up, Bosma gaveled the bill closed, meaning that no further amendments could be offered; it was now eligible for a final vote, likely tomorrow.

Democrats quickly said they needed to caucus and left the floor.

I'm very saddened with that. I thought that they should have the right to have a say in what is probably



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the biggest wage-impact issue of our generation, lamented Democratic Rep. Win Moses. “We wanted the vote to be up or down,” added House Minority Leader Patrick Bauer. “The Republican Party wanted to skip the people completely, skip the election process and then skip the referendum process on whether or not you can have this bill, which many consider a ‘right to work for less’ less pay, less safety, less health care.

There were 25 other amendments that the Democrats wanted to be considered.

Originally, Indianas House was scheduled to stay in session to discuss amendments to other bills, including a statewide smoking ban, but now some are speculating whether Democrats will ever return. Democrats drew particularly negative attention to the right-to-work battle last February when they fled from Indianapolis to hole up in Urbana, Illinois for five weeks, successfully killing the same legislation because there was no quorum for a vote in the House.

We passed an anti-bolting’ bill last session,” stated Senate President Pro Tem David Long (R-Fort Wayne), “and polls show the people rejected what the other side did.

Democrats such as Win Moses received considerable fines last year for going AWOL, and this year, the cost of walking out could be up to \$1,000 a day. According to Moses, Democrats will not employ the same tactic this time. This year, everybody understands it. We had 1,000 people [opposing the bill] at the Statehouse this week, he noted.

But not everyone has ruled out that possibility. House Minority Leader Patrick Bauer has declined to answer whether or not Democrats will once again walk out on this legislation.

Opponents of the right-to-work bill argue that it will cause workers wages to go down. Jim Robinson, an official at the United Steelworkers in Indiana, accused Republicans of exacting vengeance on their biggest opponents. Its a political attack on what the Republicans see as one of their main opponents organized labor. They want to weaken unions to help assure continued Republican majorities, he insisted.

But supporters of the right-to-work bill contend that it will in fact stimulate Indianas economy. Indiana loses up to 50 percent of its job opportunities to right-to-work states. We have done a phenomenal job of growing our economy, but in a tough global economy, its not enough, pointed out Senate President Pro Tem David Long.

Indiana House Republican speaker Brian Bosma made similar observations. Local economic development officers testified that 25 to 50 percent of companies looking to create employment, whether through expansion or locating a new facility, just took Indiana and other non-right-to-work states off the table, he said in an interview. This is stopping employers from coming to Indiana. We need to deal with that.

Still, union leaders charge that right-to-work states allow for free riders [non-union workers] to reap the benefit of unions without paying for those benefits. Critics of that assertion respond that if unions are interested in maintaining their membership, they simply have to provide a service that workers deem valuable enough to want to contribute to financially.

Sen. David Long voiced similar sentiments, observing, Several right-to-work states have a higher percentage of unions than non right-to-work states.

Governor Daniels has become very popular among Republicans for his willingness to take on unions in the state, and will in fact be giving the Republican response to President Obamas State of the Union



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address tonight.

His [Gov. Daniels'] actions in cancelling collective bargaining have led a number of Republican governors to attempt the same thing, noted Darrell West, vice president and director of governance studies for the Brookings Institution.

There are currently 22 right-to-work states in the United States, mostly in the South and the West.



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