

Compulsory Union Membership

PROBLEM

Ohio is one of 28 so-called “closed shop” states. That means if you want to work for a unionized company, you have to join the union as a condition of employment within that company. There are 22 states that are “right to work” states, in which membership in the union a voluntary choice.

Right to Work states have a huge competitive advantage over states like Ohio when it comes to attracting new or expanding industries. When it comes to competing for new businesses, companies eliminate closed shop states like Ohio before they ever consider tax policy, workers compensation costs, workforce training or any other issue.

Samuel Gompers is considered the founding father of the union movement in the United States and he is the first president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). In 1919, Gompers published the following remarks in the American Federationist:

“I want to urge devotion to the fundamentals of human liberty – the principles of voluntarism. No lasting gain has ever come from compulsion. If we seek to force, we but tear apart that which, is invincible....

There may be here and there a worker who for certain reasons unexplainable to us does not join a union of labor... It is his legal right and no one can or dare question his exercise of that legal right.”

Forcing a person to join a union as a condition of employment is un-American and Samuel Gompers knew it. So too did George Meany (head of the AFL-CIO 1952 – 1979). In 1957 Meany wrote,

“Gompers founded the American Federation of Labor on the bedrock of voluntarism. Lenin called it a “rope of sand.” Gompers retorted that this rope of sand would prove more powerful than chains of steel. He believed with his whole soul in personal freedom, in democratic government, and in the ultimate triumph of voluntary human cooperation over any form of compulsion or dictatorship”

The two pre-eminent labor leaders of the last century both extol the virtue and necessity of what Ohio law does not – a person should have the right to work for any employer without being compelled to join a labor union.

The right to establish and join a labor union is no more superior than the right to work without joining a labor union. Sadly, Ohio law does not fully embrace workplace freedom and it does so at its own obvious detriment.

SOLUTION

Have Ohio become the 23 state to enact right to work legislation and, in this one grand act, open Ohio’s floodgates of economic opportunity.

Bryan C. Williams

Director of Government Affairs

ABC of Ohio

1725 Jetway Blvd, suite B

Columbus, OH 43219

(614)359-4846

bwilliams@abcofohio.org