

Wisconsin AFL-CIO: Assembly votes to roll back child labor law in Wisconsin

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Assembly Bill 25 and Senate Bill 11 eliminates parental sign-off for children 16 and 17 years old, giving employers direct access to child labor. Supporters of the bill claim that the signature requirement is a hurdle that keeps some kids out of the workforce. In reality, if no parent or guardian is available, a DWD officer can sign for a child worker. These officers are funded by a \$10 permit fee paid by the employer. A portion of the fee also goes to the state's General Treasury. By eliminating this fee, Republicans are gutting funding for the enforcement of child labor laws for 16 and 17-year-olds, and at a time when every penny counts needlessly reducing state revenue.

"I don't remember one politician running on a platform of weakening child labor law in Wisconsin," said **Phil Neuenfeldt, President of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO**. "This is the second time since Gov. Walker has taken office that legal protections for child workers has been rolled back. Gov. Walker's 2011 budget also weakened child labor law in Wisconsin. It's shocking and alarming that Republicans continue to chip away at protections for child workers, this is a slippery slope."

"The state assembly just voted to take away every Wisconsin parent's right to sign off on their child's work permit. Sixteen and 17-year-olds may very well think they're all grown up, but every parent knows they're still kids and they still need parental guidance," said **Stephanie Bloomingdale, Secretary-Treasurer of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO**. "No one knows better how important a first job is than

us in the labor movement – responsibility, work ethic and cold hard cash can all result from a good first job, but bottom-line parents deserve to have a role in that decision. The permitting process was put in place to protect our kids from being exploited by bad employers, why would anyone who cares about families want to take that away now?”

Wisconsin’s child labor laws are in place to protect the life, health, safety and welfare of children. The permit process is an essential safeguard that lets child workers and their parent or guardian know their rights under the law and how the workplace is regulated for those under 18. It is an important protection against exploitation by unscrupulous employers.