

# U.S. Rep. Pocan: Pocan and U.S. Sen. Sanders Lead Democrats in Introducing Workplace Democracy Act

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***Legislation would restore workers' rights to collective bargaining, end 'right to work' laws***

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Today, **U.S. Representative Mark Pocan (WI-02)** joined **U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT)** and their colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to introduce legislation that would strengthen the middle class by restoring workers' rights to bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions.

“Republicans like President Trump and Governor Walker continue to crack down on unions and push a special interest, corporate-driven agenda that makes it harder for middle class families to get ahead. And while they stack the deck against the American worker, unions are fighting to expand economic opportunity and strengthen the middle class,” **said Pocan, a member of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades.** “The Workplace Democracy Act restores real bargaining rights to workers and repeals the right to work laws like those that Governor Walker has used to undercut American workers. I’m proud to introduce this legislation with Senator Sanders and stand up for the millions of middle class families who are under attack by Republican leaders.”

“We must no longer tolerate CEOs and managers who intimidate, threaten or fire

pro-union workers, who threaten to move plants to China if their workers vote in favor of a union, and who refuse to negotiate a first contract with workers who have voted to join unions,” **Sanders said.** “If we are serious about reducing income and wealth inequality and rebuilding the middle class, we have got to substantially increase the number of union jobs in this country.”

Unions lead to higher wages, better benefits and a more secure retirement. Union workers earn 26 percent more, on average, than non-union workers. Union workers are also half as likely to be victims of health and safety violations or of wage theft, 18 percent more likely to have health coverage, and 23 percent more likely to have either an employer sponsored pension or 401(k).

However, the rights of workers to join together and bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions have been severely undermined. Sixty years ago, nearly a third of all workers belonged to a union. Today, that number has gone down to less than 11 percent. When workers become interested in forming unions, 75 percent of private-sector employers hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns. An employee who engages in union organizing campaigns has a one in five chance of getting fired.

“The biggest economic challenge of our time is that people are in jobs that do not pay them enough to live on. While corporate profits soar, working people are getting smaller and smaller shares of the wealth they create. Corporate interests are highly organized and fight like hell to make sure their interests are protected—in the economy and in our political system,” **Rep. Rosa DeLauro said.** “The Workplace Democracy Act aims squarely at that issue by simplifying the process for workers to form a union. We know that when workers are able to collectively bargain, they achieve increased wages and more substantial benefits—like healthcare coverage and retirement security. That is why Congress needs to act immediately on this legislation to make it as easy as possible for people to organize into unions and fight for a fairer economy.”

“Workers win when they band together and use their voices to raise wages and standards in the workplace,” **said Rep. Donald Norcross, a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and electrician by trade.** “I know how important it is for working families to work together because I lived it. I fought for them at the negotiating table for decades. Now we must fight back against attacks on democracy in the workplace. We need to come together and pass this act to help restore workers’ rights.”

The Workplace Democracy Act would make it easier for workers to join unions in a number of ways:

- It would end right to work for less laws by repealing Section 14(b) of the Taft Hartley Act, which has allowed 28 states to pass legislation eliminating the ability of unions to collect fair share fees from those who benefit from union contracts and activities.
- Under the legislation, when a majority of workers in a bargaining unit sign valid authorization cards to join a union, they must have a union. Companies would not be allowed to deny or delay a first contract with workers who have voted to join a union. Unions would be given the right to have their voice heard through secondary boycotts and picketing. And workers would have the right to know when their company spends millions of dollars running anti-union campaigns.
- The bill would also stop employers from ruthlessly exploiting workers by misclassifying them as independent contractors or denying them overtime by falsely categorizing them as a “supervisor.”

The bill is cosponsored in the House by Representatives Brendan Boyle (PA-13), Katherine Clark (MA-05), Rosa DeLauro (CT-03), Mark DeSaulnier (CA-11), Keith Ellison (MN-05), Adriano Espaillat (NY-13), Marcy Kaptur (OH-09), Barbara Lee (CA-13), Donald Norcross (NJ-01), Jan Schakowsky (IL-09), Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA-03), Mark Takano (CA-41), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-23), and Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12). The bill is cosponsored in the Senate by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Edward Markey (D-MA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

Click [here](#) to read the bill.

Click [here](#) to read a summary of the bill.

To watch the press conference, click [here](#).