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Rep. Hebl and Sen. Roys Introduce Bill That Will Protect Workers' Rights

Wisconsin became a flashpoint in the worker's rights movement in 2011 when Act 10 was passed by the Republican legislative majority. In a single bill, they severely curtailed the rights of unions and workers. Since then, they have consistently sided with the powerful before standing with the people.

Just this year they have reinstated burdensome work search requirements for people who lost their job through no fault of their own. Those work requirements were temporarily waived due to the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 and the way in which the pandemic threw a wrench into every aspect of our lives. They also have attempted to end federal unemployment assistance early, trying to force people back to work, even if it is to an underpaying job.

For too long in Wisconsin, workers have received the short end of the stick. It is time once again to stand in solidarity with working Wisconsinites. That is why State Senator Kelda Roys and I have introduced LRB-0266, the Worker's Scheduling Fairness Act.

The Worker's Scheduling Fairness Act will bring some much-needed consistency to worker's scheduling and stability to worker's paychecks. Low-wage workers are disproportionately affected by unfair scheduling practices at work, such as sending workers home early, keeping workers on call without a guarantee of work hours, and retaliating against workers who need changes to their schedule.

Without a stable work schedule, income can vary widely from paycheck to paycheck and wreak havoc on workers' lives. These workers often need to arrange their schedules to align with their education, family care, or other jobs. Workers cannot effectively manage short term or long term plans if they have an ever-shifting, unpredictable work schedule. Hardworking Wisconsinites should not have to sacrifice long term goals or family needs because they are unable to find time to plan due to erratic work scheduling.

Our bill seeks to remedy this situation. The bill requires employers to consider employee schedule change requests and protects workers that ask for those changes from retaliation by the employer. It also requires employers in certain occupations to provide schedules to employees two weeks in advance in order to help workers plan ahead and make arrangements for the other responsibilities in their lives. The bill also provides for a small amount of additional pay to these employees when their schedules are unexpectedly changed, or they are given challenging shifts (such as being on call or split shifts).

Workers deserve protections from abusive scheduling practices that are meant to punish or harass. Not only will this bill protect workers from these kinds of abuses, it will also ensure that these employees have more certainty about their income and their work schedules.

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