

# IN Poised For Right-To-Work Era

Tom LoBianco, Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — State lawmakers were poised Wednesday to pass legislation that would make Indiana the Rust Belt's first right-to-work state and prohibit labor contracts requiring workers to pay union representation fees.

Meanwhile, union protesters were planning a rally and march through downtown streets bustling with Super Bowl festivities over the contested labor issue that has roiled the Statehouse.

Indiana would be the first state in a decade to enact a right-to-work law prohibiting labor contracts that require workers to pay union representation fees. The Indiana victory is expected to embolden national right-to-work advocates, who have unsuccessfully pushed the measure in other states following a Republican sweep of statehouses in 2010. But few right-to-work states boast Indiana's union clout, borne of a long manufacturing legacy.

Oklahoma, with its rural-based economy that produces comparatively fewer union jobs than Indiana, passed right-to-work legislation in 2001.

The Indiana Senate scheduled a Wednesday morning vote on the bill that, if passed, would be sent to Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels, who has said he will sign it as soon as it arrives on his desk.

The vote in the Republican-controlled Senate, and Daniels' anticipated signature, will close one chapter in a contentious debate that sparked a five-week walkout by outnumbered House Democrats last year and saw them stage numerous boycotts this session, delaying action on other bills and threatening to spill over into the Feb. 5 Super Bowl.

But union protesters say they aren't ready to be silenced. The AFL-CIO issued a call for protesters to show up at the Statehouse ahead of the hearing and to attend a rally and join a march after the vote.

"We are going crash their party and remind them that we aren't going anywhere," the AFL-CIO said in a statement issued Tuesday.

Supporters say right-to-work helps create a pro-business climate that attracts employers and increases jobs. Opponents say it leads to lower wages and poorer quality jobs, and they accused Republicans of rushing the bill through to avoid disrupting the Super Bowl.

But with Republicans outnumbering Democrats in the House and Senate, and House Democrats facing stiff fines if they walked out for a lengthy period as they did last year, opponents have had few opportunities to stop the bill.

## **IN Poised For Right-To-Work Era**

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

---

"We always knew this was going to be an uphill battle," said Indiana AFL-CIO spokesman Jeff Harris.

Harris said Wednesday's march will start a drive to build voter turnout for the November election.

About 75 marchers weaved through packed crowds in the Super Bowl Village on Saturday to protest the measure, chanting "Occupy the Super Bowl" and carrying signs that read "Fight the Lie" and "Workers United Will Prevail."

Experts say many factors influence states' economies and that it's nearly impossible to isolate the impact of right-to-work. For major industries, access to supplies, infrastructure, key markets and a skilled workforce are key factors, according to business recruitment specialists. For a state's workers, the impact of right-to-work is limited because only about 7 percent of private sector employees are unionized. Over the years, job growth has surged in states with, and without, right-to-work laws.

Over the past year, Republicans have pushed for other laws to curb union power in battleground Rust Belt states where many of the country's manufacturing jobs are located, including Wisconsin and Ohio, but they also have faced a backlash from Democrats and union supporters.

Despite massive protests outside the Capitol, Wisconsin's GOP-dominated Assembly passed a law backed by Gov. Scott Walker in March that striped nearly all collective bargaining rights from public sector unions. Walker is now preparing for a recall election after opponents turned in a million signatures aimed at forcing a vote and ousting him from office. In November, Ohio voters repealed a law limiting collective bargaining rights that was championed by Gov. John Kasich and fellow Republican lawmakers.

**Source URL (retrieved on 01/30/2015 - 4:51pm):**

[http://www.impomag.com/news/2012/02/poised-right-work-era?qt-recent\\_content=1](http://www.impomag.com/news/2012/02/poised-right-work-era?qt-recent_content=1)