

# **IN Senate Approves Right-To-Work Bill**

Tom LoBianco, Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Lawmakers voted Wednesday to make Indiana the Rust Belt's first right-to-work state, passing legislation that prohibits labor contracts requiring workers to pay union representation fees.

Thousands of union members gathered inside the Statehouse chanted "Shame on you!" and "See you at the Super Bowl!" as the vote was announced. Thousands more amassed outside for a rally that spilled into the Indianapolis streets, already bustling with Super Bowl festivities, hoping to point a national spotlight on the state.

Indiana will be the first state in a decade to enact a right-to-work law, although few states with legislation in place boast Indiana's union clout, borne of a long manufacturing legacy. The move is likely to embolden national right-to-work advocates who have unsuccessfully pushed the measure in other states following a Republican sweep of statehouses in 2010.

Passage of the law 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 Sunday's Super Bowl.

The Republican-controlled Senate approved the bill in a 28-22 vote Wednesday morning. The bill now heads for the desk of Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels, who has said he will sign it upon arrival.

"We're giving freedom to workers who don't want to be a part of something they don't believe in," said Republican Sen. Carlin Yoder, shortly before the vote.

Over the past year, Republicans have pushed for other anti-union laws in battleground Rust Belt states where many of the country's manufacturing jobs reside, including Wisconsin and Ohio, but they also have faced backlash from Democrats and union supporters. Wisconsin last year stripped public sector unions of collective bargaining rights.

Despite massive protests outside the Capitol, Wisconsin's GOP-dominated Assembly passed a law backed by Gov. Scott Walker in March that strips 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 In November, Ohio voters repealed a law limiting collective bargaining rights that was championed by Gov.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.

State police estimated that 3,000 protesters packed the Statehouse Wednesday and another 3,000-4,000 packed the Statehouse lawn. Union protesters in Indiana said

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Wednesday they were not ready to be silenced.

About half of the protesters marched to the Indiana Convention Center and cheered when a person went over head on the zipline set up for Super Bowl fans.

Some of the protesters were holding signs reading "Hands off My Union," "Stop the War on Workers" and another said "Ditch Mitch."

Bruce Frazier, 56, an ironworker from Muncie who works in Indianapolis, stood on the south lawn of the Statehouse on Wednesday afternoon surrounded by more than a thousand union members and supporters protesting the vote.

Frazier said many of the buildings now being used for this week's Super Bowl events were built with skilled labor.

"We built everything in Indianapolis to bring the Super Bowl here — and this is how they thank us, by breaking our way to make a living," he said.

Indiana AFL-CIO spokesman Jeff Harris said protesters planned to hand out leaflets before Sunday's game. Daniels said this week that it would be a "colossal mistake" for union protesters to disrupt Super Bowl festivities and that any such move could backfire on them.

Indiana AFL-CIO president Nancy Guyott pledged that Wednesday's vote wouldn't be a permanent victory, noting that Indiana has adopted and repealed right to work before.

"We'll take our state back, one block at a time," she said.

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 had few opportunities to stop the bill.

Testifying against the bill Wednesday, Sen. Vi Simpson, D-Bloomington, said there was no evidence that right to work created jobs and likened the bill's fate to the Super Bowl, but with one team playing at a huge disadvantage.

"Our side has fewer men on the field, and our team doesn't have pads or helmets," Simpson said. "We already know what the final score is going to be."

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

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legislation 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.

Oklahoma, with its rural-based economy that produces comparatively fewer union jobs than Indiana, was the last state to pass right-to-work legislation, in 2001.

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