



What is the Workers' Rights Amendment?

If passed by Illinois voters on **November 8**, the Workers' Rights Amendment (WRA) - formally known as Senate Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 11 - would amend the Illinois Constitution to guarantee the fundamental rights of workers to unionize and collectively bargain.

Put simply, the **Workers' Rights Amendment would guarantee the right of workers to bargain for safe working conditions, fair pay, and benefits.**

How will the Workers' Rights Amendment protect my rights?

The WRA would prohibit Illinois from passing any state law (and any municipality from passing a local ordinance) "that interferes with, negates, or diminishes the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively over their wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment and workplace safety."

That means the **WRA would prohibit the passage of any so-called "right-to-work" laws in our state, which are designed to reduce workers' rights and benefit big corporations.**

I'm a union member, so my rights are protected by my contract. Why should I care about the Workers' Rights Amendment?

Union members receive benefits and protections in contracts bargained between the union and employer. But as we've seen in Illinois and other states, anti-union lawmakers and big corporations (for example, Bruce Rauner and the Koch brothers) have tried to undermine or eliminate your right to collectively bargain fair agreements. By passing the WRA, we can permanently enshrine the fundamental right to collectively bargain in the Illinois Constitution.

Don't "right-to-work" laws protect workers?

No, "right-to-work" laws are meant to weaken unions, reduce worker rights, and benefit corporations. These laws have a devastating impact on the economy. In Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, the introduction of "right-to-work" laws lowered hourly wages by 3 percent (on average). By contrast, Illinois workers earn higher wages, are more likely to have health insurance coverage, have higher rates of homeownership, and are more productive than their counterparts in "right-to-work" states.

Research continually shows that "right-to-work" laws are bad economic policy. A May 2021 report from the Illinois Economic Policy

Institute and the Project for Middle Class Renewal at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign shows that "right-to-work" states lag in creating middle-class jobs and delivering economic growth. (These findings accounted for factors such as cost of living, occupation, race, gender, wages, and income.)

Thanks to the efforts of Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) members and other union workers over the years, Illinois currently has no "right-to-work" laws on the books. The 27 states that do have paid the price.

Does the Workers' Rights Amendment change our state's labor laws?

The amendment does not change our state's current labor laws, it only creates a constitutional floor for collective bargaining that will prevent future attacks like those we've seen in many neighboring states.

How will the Workers' Rights Amendment help the economy?

A stronger middle class helps us all. When people are paid fair wages, it boosts local economies and strengthens our communities.

Union contracts guarantee fair treatment for all, including ensuring equal pay for people of color and women – putting more in families' bank accounts.

When do I vote for the Workers' Rights Amendment?

On **Tuesday, November 8, 2022**, Illinois voters will have the opportunity to **vote YES** to protect worker rights.

Let's help Illinois' working women and men access good jobs and secure a respected voice in their workplaces!

How can I get involved?

In the months ahead, please watch your inbox and future issues of **Union Link** for more information and action alerts about how we can pass the Workers' Rights Amendment.



Illinois Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

ift-aft.org facebook.com/iftaft @iftaft

For more information about the Workers' Rights Amendment, please visit www.ift-aft.org/wra or contact your field service director.