

Walker Signs So-Called 'Right to Work' Bill

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MADISON - This morning, Gov. Scott Walker, who in 2011 succeeded in slashing collective bargaining rights for most public sector workers, signed a private-sector right-to-work bill that makes Wisconsin the 25th state to adopt the policy and has given new momentum to the business-led movement.

For decades, low wage states across the South and Great Plains have enacted such policies, known as “right to work” even though the right to work has nothing to do with them. They really are simply designed to prevent organized labor from forcing all workers in a shop covered by their collective bargaining agreement to pay union dues or fair share fees.

Also for decades, the higher paid industrial Midwest has resisted. Those days are gone, as Wisconsin follows neighbors Michigan and Indiana. While it may take years before the full effect of the new law becomes apparent here, most expect it to weaken unions and drive down the wages of union employees.

"This freedom-to-work legislation will give workers the freedom to choose whether or not they want to join a union, and employers another compelling reason to consider expanding or moving their business to Wisconsin," Walker said in regard to the signing, even though there is little evidence that either claim is true.

Walker's real motivation is much more likely about politics than job creation: breaking a dwindling union movement in Wisconsin and boosting his standing as the conservative choice for the Republican presidential nomination next year. In the long run, the new laws throughout the region are intended to help Republicans build a favorable electoral map for 2016, by weakening the labor groups that have traditionally provided muscle and money to Democratic candidates in crucial swing states.

So the political ambitions of Scott Walker and his big business donors once again trump the interests of the people of Wisconsin, who still face a lagging economy and a \$2.2 billion state budget deficit. Only time will tell how the events of the last two weeks will affect Walker's electability.

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