

MSCF Minute



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Call It What It Is - Unfair Workplace Legislation

by Gretchen Long, MSCF Membership Recruitment and Engagement Committee chair

Once again, so called “RTW” (right to work) legislation is under consideration. But let’s start calling this legislation what it really is: Unfair Workplace Legislation. Workplaces where all employees are benefiting from the rights and compensation that only some are paying to protect are unfair workplaces. Workplaces where employees have fewer and fewer resources to protect and negotiate contracts that ensure just treatment for all are unfair workplaces. And workplaces with no contract or where employees have little or no say in their working conditions are truly unfair workplaces. That is exactly what this legislation does. So call it what it is: Unfair Workplace Legislation.

Unfair Workplace Legislation is unfair on its face. Currently, all workers who benefit from a contract **pay their fair share of the dues their union spends to negotiate and protect those benefits.** Under our contract, these benefits include fair wages and deferred compensation (healthcare and pensions), fair treatment in the workplace, and a voice in the governance of our colleges. Fair share

dues do not compel anyone to become a member of the union, but they do ensure that everyone who is receiving the benefits of the contract contributes to the cost of negotiating and enforcing the contract. This is fair. All faculty are receiving these benefits, and MSCF must, under federal law, represent any faculty whose rights are violated. **It is NOT fair when all workers receive these benefits but only some are paying for them.** That is exactly what Unfair Workplace Legislation does. If you pay, you don’t, but we both get the same benefits. That is unfair.

Unfair Workplace Legislation is unfair in its effect. An imbalance of power already exists between workers and management. When bargaining teams or grievance reps representing workers walk in to a room with management, they are already at a disadvantage. Worker representatives have fewer resources, less staff, less money, and less time than management who have the full resources of the state or a corporation at their disposal. **By preventing the unions who represent and protect all workers from collecting fair share dues from all the employees they are required**

to represent, Unfair Workplace Legislation tips the balance of power even further in favor of management. Joining together as workers through unions, whether as members or fair share dues payers lessens the power imbalance between workers and management. Eliminating fair share dues makes the playing field even more unfair than it already is. **Unfair Workplace Legislation rigs our economy even further against workers and makes the power imbalance between workers and management even more unfair than it already is.**

Unfair Workplace Legislation is unfair in its intent. By shrinking the resources available to unions to negotiate fair contracts for all workers, **the intent of Unfair Workplace Legislation is to weaken and eventually eliminate those contracts,** contracts that, in our case, protect:

- Fair wages and deferred compensation for all faculty
- Fair treatment of all faculty through the assurance of due process and representation
- Fair evaluation of all faculty by ensuring we have a say in how we will

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be evaluated through the Shared Governance and AASC processes

- Fair treatment when faculty are laid off

This is just a small sample of the benefits our contract provides for. Without a strong contract, our jobs, pay, and working conditions become subject to the whims of administrators and students, popularity contests, and an arbitrary bottom line, among others. This would be a fundamentally unfair workplace.

Make no mistake, **the only rights involved in this legislation are the ones threatened by it, namely, the right to a fair workplace.** So, when someone mentions (rtw), correct them. This legislation is Unfair Workplace Legislation. It’s unfair on its face, it’s unfair in its effect, and it’s unfair in its intent. The first step to defeating it and protecting fair workplaces is calling it what it is.

Welcome New Members!

John Witthauer, Dakota County
Melissa Johnson, Fond du Lac
Lynn Cain, Lake Superior
Matthew Harmon, Saint Paul