



# KITCHEN TABLE ECONOMICS

## What is a “Right to Work” Law?

Twenty-four states have “Right to Work” laws. Workers in these states have the right to take a job without being forced to pay some of their wages to a labor union.

The opposite of Right to Work is a compulsory union or “forced-union” state. When there is a labor union in place at a workplace in these states, an individual worker does not have power to negotiate their own wages, benefits and often even promotions with an employer. Instead, a labor union takes that power away and charges a mandatory fee that is removed from the worker’s paycheck.

This mandatory fee is called “union dues.”

Union leaders and supporters believe forced payment of union dues is fair and necessary because employees at unionized worksites benefit from wages, benefits, and working conditions that union bosses negotiate with the employer. Unions argue that everyone at a worksite benefits from the results of the union’s mandatory negotiations, so everyone should be forced to pay for it in the form of union dues.

Forced dues are the legal standard in the 26 forced-union states that do not have a Right to Work law.

Does a union provide a service valuable enough to justify taking away an individual worker’s right to refuse it?

Government data shows just 11 percent of all workers and only 7 percent of private sector workers belong to a union. Most Americans negotiate their own wages, benefits and promotions with their employers, and are not forced to surrender that right - and union dues - to a labor boss.

In addition to forking over mandatory dues, a forced-union employee also surrenders some of his or her rights to be recognized and rewarded for individual merit, achievement and work ethic. An employer in a forced-union environment cannot give a very talented or harder-working employee raises or promotions if those rewards are deemed to violate the union contract and thus the “rights” of other workers.

All workers should have this basic right to be rewarded for their individual merits. Unions that do a good job of advancing this valuable service for workers should have no trouble getting the workers to voluntarily pay for the service. But nobody should not be forced to accept union services and pay for them if they do not see the value.