



**INTERNATIONAL
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March 9, 2021

VIA EMAIL

To: All Members of the United States House of Representatives

Re: Protecting the Right to Organize Act

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the 775,000 active members and retirees of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), I urge you to vote in support of H.R. 842, the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act when it is considered by the full U.S. House of Representatives this week. The PRO Act would restore the original intent of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to protect workers' right to organize a union and negotiate higher wages and better benefits.

The right to organize and collectively bargain is a fundamental right of all Americans and the bedrock of a capitalist society that allows the benefits of a growing economy to be shared broadly between workers and employers. However, these fundamental rights have been steadily undermined in recent decades. As a result, union membership has dropped dramatically from over 20 percent in 1983 to 10 percent in 2019. The percentage of private sector workers is even lower, falling to just 6.3 percent in 2020. During the same period, income inequality has steadily risen to reach levels not witnessed since the Great Depression. In the midst of a global pandemic, which has killed tens of thousands of frontline workers, it is more important than ever that working Americans have the right to rely on the protection of a union contract.

The PRO Act would modernize the NLRA by bringing its remedies in line with other workplace laws. Currently, there are no penalties on employers who illegally fire or retaliate against workers attempting to form a union. This legislation establishes compensatory damages for workers and penalties against employers when they fire or retaliate against workers. In addition, the PRO Act streamlines the NLRB process so workers can petition to form a union and get a timely vote without their employer interfering or delaying the vote. It would also prohibit companies from forcing workers to attend "captive audience" meetings as a condition of continued employment.

Employers often misclassify workers as supervisors or independent contractors to deprive them of their rights under the NLRA while allowing management to skirt minimum wage, Social Security and workers' compensation laws. The PRO Act tightens the definitions of an independent contractor and supervisor to crack down on misclassification and extends NLRA protections to more eligible workers.



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The PRO Act recognizes that employees need the freedom to picket or withhold labor in order to push for necessary changes in the workplace. The bill protects employees' right to strike by preventing employers from hiring permanent replacement workers. It also allows unrepresented employees to engage in collective action or class action lawsuits to enforce basic workplace rights, rather than being forced to arbitrate such claims alone.

Unions provide skills training and continuing education to their membership, as well as a more stable and safer workforce. A worker covered by a union contract earns more than 13 percent more in wages than a peer with similar education, occupation and experience in a nonunion workplace in the same sector. Where unions are strong, wages are higher for typical workers – union and nonunion members alike.

There is no better path to the middle class than a union job with the security it provides in salary, health benefits and retirement income. Family-sustaining middle class jobs are the route to economic security, providing the crucial financial cushion that protect so many families on the edge of economic disaster once a job loss or a medical emergency hits a family. Unions provide economic independence and self-sufficiency, and an expanding middle class is good for the economy and the country.

The IBEW urges all members of the U.S. House of Representatives to stand with working Americans in every state and community and vote in favor of the PRO Act.

Sincerely yours,

Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President

LRS:nl