

# Deceptive 'Right to Work' Laws Hurt Everyone

By many measures, the quality of life is worse in states with “right to work” laws. These laws take away working people’s freedom to join together and negotiate for a fair return on their work. In states with these laws, wages are lower, poverty levels are higher, people are less likely to have health insurance, and resources for education are lower—even infant mortality and the likelihood of being killed on the job are higher.

## States with right to work laws:

### Have Lower Wages and Incomes

- On average, workers in states with right to work laws make \$8,989 (15.2%) less annually than workers in other states (\$50,174, compared with \$59,163).<sup>1</sup>
- Median household income in states with these laws is \$11,628 (15.4%) less than in other states (\$64,071, compared with \$75,700).<sup>2</sup>
- In 2019, 24.0% of jobs in right to work states were in low-wage occupations, compared with 14.5% of jobs in other states.<sup>3</sup>

### Have Higher Uninsured Rates

- People younger than 65 in states with right to work laws are more likely to lack health insurance (11.9%, compared with 8.1% in free-bargaining states).<sup>4</sup>

### Have Higher Poverty and Infant Mortality Rates

- Poverty rates are higher in states with right to work laws (11.2% overall and 15.6% for children), compared with poverty rates in states without these laws (8.9% overall and 12.2% for children)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, data extracted on December 3, 2020, <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/dsrv?en>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements. Table H-8. Median Household Income by State: 1984 to 2019, <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/time-series/historical-income-households/h08.xlsx>

<sup>3</sup> Prosperity Now Scorecard, Low Wage Jobs, 2019 data, <https://scorecard.prosperitynow.org/data-by-issue#jobs/outcome/low-wage-jobs>

<sup>4</sup> US Census Bureau, Table HIC 06, Health Insurance Status and Type of Coverage by State: Persons Under 65 2008 - 2019, [https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/tables/health-insurance/time-series/acs/hic06\\_acs.xlsx](https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/tables/health-insurance/time-series/acs/hic06_acs.xlsx)

<sup>5</sup> US Census Bureau, POV46: Poverty Status by State: 2019, Below 100% and 50% of Poverty -- People Under 18 Years of Age, weighted average count, [https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/pov-46/2020/pov46\\_weight\\_10050\\_3.xlsx](https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/pov-46/2020/pov46_weight_10050_3.xlsx); US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, POV46: Poverty Status by State: 2019 Below 100% and 50% of Poverty -- All People, weighted average count, [https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/pov-46/2020/pov46\\_weight\\_10050\\_1.xlsx](https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/tables/pov-46/2020/pov46_weight_10050_1.xlsx)

- The average infant mortality rate states with right to work laws in 2018 was 6.3 per 1,000 live births, compared with 5.2 per 1,000 live births in free-bargaining states.<sup>6</sup>

### **Invest Less in Education**

- States with right to work laws spend 31.6% less per pupil on elementary and secondary education than other states.<sup>7</sup>

### **Have Higher Workplace Fatality Rates**

- The rate of workplace deaths is 37%<sup>8</sup> higher in states with these laws, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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<sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Infant Mortality Rates by State," 2018, [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/infant\\_mortality\\_rates/infant\\_mortality.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/infant_mortality_rates/infant_mortality.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Source: NEA Research, Rankings of the States 2019 and Estimates of School Statistics 2020, Table F-8 Public school current expenditures per student in fall enrollment, June 2020, [https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/2020%20Rankings%20and%20Estimates%20Report%20FINAL\\_0.pdf](https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/2020%20Rankings%20and%20Estimates%20Report%20FINAL_0.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries in 2019, [www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cfoi.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cfoi.pdf).