



Workers' Bill of Rights

Workers in the United States have been losing ground since the early 1980s. Our workers have been punished as a result of companies prioritizing profits over people. Income inequality has increased dramatically, and wages have stagnated in multiple sectors across our economy. The war on labor unions and the resulting large-scale reduction in union membership has hurt our country and our economy.

The majority of current labor law in the United States was written in the 1920s and passed into law in the 1930s—almost 100 years ago. These century-old laws must be adjusted to account for today's workforce and our current economic reality.

The economy that was dominated by large-scale industrial manufacturing no longer exists in most places. As a country, we produce more now than we did during that time, but we do it in very different ways. The laws do not work well for today's economy as they are written.

We need labor law that matches the contours of today's economy and protects today's workers—a 21st-century labor law written for the 21st century's economy. While we need to strengthen industrial labor law through the federal PRO Act, we must also be aware that today's economy's largest sector is the service industry. The growth of employment in the service industry demands labor law that matches the contours of the current situation. We shouldn't try to force the service sector into current industrial labor law. Instead, we should meet the market reality of the service industry.

The pandemic has disproportionately negatively impacted working women, and the entire economy has suffered. We need to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, advocate for more affordable and accessible child care, and ensure a fair wage for child care workers, home health care workers, and long-term care workers. Employers should also be more flexible with adjusting work hours and schedules, and we should guarantee every employee paid leave.

Progressive values and economic justice should go hand and hand. We need to create a Workers' Bill of Rights to safeguard all workers' rights to fair working hours, safe working conditions, and humane treatment. The well-being of workers should not depend on who holds power in Congress or the White House. We need to establish strong federal safeguards to empower the American workforce to unionize, strengthen existing and established unions, and protect all workers for generations to come.



Enact a Workers' Bill of Rights

Guarantee every worker the right to be a member of a union

The federal government should guarantee every worker's right to the freedom of association, organize a union, and bargain collectively for better working conditions, free from retaliation. Current U.S. law excludes certain categories of workers from the right to organize, making it more difficult for workers to join unions and stifles the drive for better working conditions.

Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15, add indexing and parity for tipped workers

The old trope that raising the minimum wage will cost jobs has been disproven time and time again. Currently, 30 states and Washington D.C. have minimum wages above the federal minimum wage, while at the same time, we see nearly record job creation and record low unemployment. The federal minimum wage should be immediately raised to \$15 an hour, and we should index it to median wage growth so that it increases without the need for politicians to take a vote. When the economy grows, the minimum wage goes up—simple.

Nobody in this country should be working full time and still be unable to meet their basic needs. When basic needs go unmet, the taxpayer picks up the tab through subsidizing health insurance, SNAP benefits, etc. When employers pay a living wage, it reduces the need for those vital services. It's also time to eliminate the tipped minimum wage, which is based in sexism and racism and makes it more likely that these workers live in poverty.

Guarantee every worker paid leave

The United States is the only advanced country that does not currently guarantee paid leave. Estimates of workers' access to paid leave across the country suggest that only between 19% to 50% of all employees have either formal access to paid family leave through an employer or can take paid time off even in the absence of a formal benefit plan. Additionally, most low-wage workers do not have equal access to paid leave.

Congress should require every employer to guarantee 20 days of paid leave per year for every full-time employee. While this would be less than many other countries, it would establish a minimum floor that employers could build on.



Pass the Paycheck Fairness Act

Women in the United States only make approximately \$.80 on the dollar for doing the same job as men, and this disparity is even worse for women workers of color. It's long past time for Congress to act and pass the Paycheck Fairness Act into law. It's already passed the House and is currently being held up in the Senate. When I get to the Senate, I will ensure that equal work=equal pay for everyone.

Solve child care crisis by paying child care workers, home health care workers, and long term care workers a fair wage

We as a country provide very little support for child care, early education, and support for our aging adults. One of the results of the lack of support is that women work less in the United States compared to other advanced nations. According to the Economic Policy Institute, childcare workers in the U.S. are only paid \$13.51/hour, and home health care workers are paid \$13.81/hour - roughly half what the average U.S. worker is paid (\$27.31). We must raise wages for child care, home health care, and long-term care workers to help entice more women to come back to work, which a recent Brookings Institute report said would also lower inflation over time by easing the shortage of workers across all sectors of the economy.

Classify most gig workers as employees for union rights purposes

According to an August 2021 Pew Research Center report, 16% of American adults have earned money through an online gig platform, and 1/3 of workers say it's their primary job. The surge in the numbers of gig workers over the last decade presents long-term challenges for a large portion of the workforce. Often, app companies like Uber, Lyft, DoorDash, and Grubhub force gig workers to either accept changes to their contracts that allow those corporations to take more money away from gig workers, or the workers are blocked from getting additional gigs through the app. These workers should be classified as employees in order to expand workers' protections and allow them to form a union to bargain for better working conditions, pay, and benefits.

Outlaw "right to work" on a federal level

Currently, 28 states have "right to work" laws that take away rights from working people, drive down wages, and weaken labor unions. In Wisconsin, we have seen firsthand how dangerous these laws can be, and Scott Walker and the Republican legislature passed this law as a part of their war on organized labor. Congress should preempt these statewide restrictions and make them illegal in all states.



Enable Sector Bargaining

We need to enable and encourage sectoral or industrial level organizing where all the employers in a sector can get to the table to negotiate one contract to set standards across an entire sector or even an entire industry. The United States is an outlier in the 35 countries in the industrialized world, and other countries already have sector bargaining.

Impose civil fines of \$100,000 for each employer violation of federal labor law during union campaigns

Companies regularly violate federal labor law during union campaigns because the penalty for doing so is too low. We need to significantly increase the monetary damages for this type of behavior. We need the penalty for these activities to be high enough that companies won't consider engaging in these union-busting activities.

Level the playing field for union organizing

We need to ban captive audience meetings. No employer fighting a union should be able to force their employees to sit through meetings specifically designed to thwart the union drive, interrogate workers about the organizing campaign, and disseminate union-busting materials. In addition, we need to allow workers casting ballots in union organizing elections to do so offsite. This allows workers to vote their preference without fear of harassment or intimidation. Finally, we must require employers to publicly report expenditures that are spent on anti-union campaigns. If a company is going to resort to union-busting tactics, then everything spent on those efforts should be reported to the U.S. Department of Labor and be publicly available.

Require the federal government only does business with companies that pay at least the living wage of \$15 an hour, provide a safe workplace, and respect workers' rights to organize a union

The federal government is the largest purchaser of goods and services in the country. We should require that the federal government only does business with companies who pay living wages, provide a safe workplace, and respect their workers' right to organize a union, free from retaliation.