

Right to Work is Wrong – Let’s Outlaw It

A MESSAGE FROM GENERAL PRESIDENT JAMES P. HOFFA



A Republican-controlled Congress has taken aim at workers’ rights in 2017, including the ability to collectively bargain. But now a group of lawmakers have said “Enough!”

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.) are the lead sponsors of legislation introduced in late September that would outlaw right-to-work (RTW) laws in the U.S. It is a fitting push back on efforts to curtail the ability of workers in this country to organize and stand united against their employers.

As of now, 28 states have passed RTW laws. While supporters claim that the law promotes job growth, history shows otherwise. The policy is a ruse that only causes a race to the bottom for wages.

RTW states have a higher poverty rate than states with union rights. In fact, nine of the 10 highest poverty states are RTW. That, in part, is attributable to lower salaries and benefits. Those with no rights at work make almost \$1,500 a year less. They are also less likely to receive employer-based health insurance or retirement benefits.

That’s why it makes sense for elected officials to push back on these lousy laws. They strip unions of the ability to collect dues from all workers who benefit from union-negotiated contracts. Unions are forced to use their time and money to provide benefits to free riders who won’t pay their fair share.

Canada is now fighting to have language barring RTW laws placed in an updated version of NAFTA. That’s a good thing. Lawmakers must take a fresh look at these measures.

James P. Hoffa



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BREWERY & SOFT DRINK News

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LOCAL 812 MEMBERS’ SOLIDARITY STANDS STRONG

Workers who deliver, sell and merchandise Budweiser, Heineken and other beer products on Long Island went on strike on April 13 in what would be an 82-day strike that showed the strength of solidarity among the members of the union, but also the community at large. Known as one of the best solidarity events in recent history, the workers returned to work in July but only after weeks of rallies, community support and pressure ramped up against the employer, Clare Rose Distribution.

Clare Rose, the exclusive Long Island distributor of Anheuser-Busch products and a family-run enterprise for over 50 years, had long employed members of Local 812. Despite years of satisfactory relationships, negotiations for a new contract took a sour note as new members of the corporate family steered the talks. For the first time, management was proposing a drastic cut in salaries of 30 percent and the elimination of their retirement plan. The company mailed letters to workers informing them that

they had been permanently replaced and giving them instructions to end their membership in the union. The company also brought in out-of-state temporary workers to replace those on strike.

The over 100 Teamster drivers and warehousemen voted down management’s “final offer” and leaders at the local union, joined by state-wide and local labor organizations, retailers and customers, set about fighting back.

“We are the middle-class families that make up Long Island,”

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Anheuser-Busch Negotiations Next Year

Over the summer, General President Jim Hoffa appointed me Director of the Brewery and Soft Drink Workers Conference. I have been a Teamster member since 1973 and I was first elected an officer of Local 1038 in 1981. I have served as principal officer of the local since 1995. Additionally, I have served on the Executive Board of Joint Council 43 since 1998 and as President of the Joint Council since 2011. I have represented the Brewery and Soft Drink Workers Conference as the Central Region Representative since 1999. It's been my privilege to serve in these roles in my local union and for members in the greater Detroit area. I consider working for the Brewery and Soft Drink Workers Conference an honor and I am excited by the challenges ahead.

As mentioned in this newsletter, we are preparing for negotiations with Anheuser-Busch, the largest single employer we have in the Conference. As in past years, we will have an active negotiating committee made up of elected leaders from local unions.

Local 812 won a great victory earlier this year in their fight with Clare Rose Distribution. Even being on strike for 82 days did not dampen the spirits of their members—no one crossed the picket line. It was terrific to hear about the support the strikers had from their neighbors, Long Island labor affiliates and other Teamster locals. Strikes are always difficult and we always need the support of each other to keep the line strong.



Winning Against Corporate Greed at Clare Rose *continued from page 1*

said Mark Pooler, who has delivered beer at Clare Rose for 26 years. "While this company is making millions, they were trying to cut the wages and retirement benefits that our families depend on. We had bills to pay and mortgages to pay. Make no mistake, we were willing to strike as long as it took to protect our livelihoods."

"The union did everything possible to reach a fair deal with Clare Rose, but the company was putting its greed ahead of its workers," said Local 812 President Ed Weber. "When there was no Bud, Heineken or other beer brands at the supermarket or bar, Long Islanders knew who to blame: Clare Rose executives."

Jim Hoffa, Teamsters General President, responded immediately to the strike, vowing, "The full might of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters is behind the members of Local 812 in their fight at Clare Rose. We represent Budweiser and other brewery and transportation workers across the country. Such union busting and draconian wage cuts are unheard of at similar distributors elsewhere. We intend to put forward our political, economic and organizing resources to ensure that these workers get a new union contract that protects their wages and retirement."

Victory

Victory did not come easy for workers at Clare Rose. But through a combination of solidarity, community support and Teamster power, a tentative agreement was reached on July 13 and a new three-year contract was ratified by the membership two days later.

The Teamsters had put forward a multifaceted campaign to win the strike. The union made a six-figure ad buy in key Long Island news outlets, promoting the boycott of Clare Rose and linking Anheuser-Busch to the abuses at the company. Social media, mainly through Facebook, was used to provide a continuous stream of information on the daily pickets and the support received from the community. It also promoted Long Island businesses that supported the boycott and knocked those that continued to buy from Clare Rose.

"The public support was absolutely amazing," Pooler said. "We had visitors come from Boston, from California to support us on the line. Some members from Local 896 stood on the line with us for three days. Everyone knew what we were standing for. We did not have one person go back and cross the picket lines."

The Long Island Federation of Labor swung into action, too. "CWA, UFCW and other affiliates supported the Teamsters," said John Durso, President of the federation. "Everybody and their brother was out there on the line because this was not about a company in trouble. This was about third-generation greed at Clare Rose."

"I know every Teamster in New York is cheering the Clare Rose workers and their big win," said George Miranda, President of Joint Council 16, which represents 120,000 Teamsters in Greater New York. "When working families are under attack, we showed that nothing can beat a united labor movement. Employers shouldn't underestimate what workers are capable of."

COOK COUNTY ILLINOIS BEVERAGE TAX REPEALED

• LOCAL 727 ESTIMATED 6,000 JOBS SAVED •

Earlier this month, the Cook County (Chicago) Board of Commissioners voted to repeal the Cook County Beverage Tax Ordinance. Local 727 announced that more than 6,000 jobs could have been displaced by the industry because of the penny-per-ounce beverage tax. In addition, projected lost wages were as high as \$321 million for beverage production workers and delivery drivers. Even the county itself was expected to sustain losses of \$1.3 billion in economic activity due to businesses closing and consumers traveling elsewhere for soft drink products.

"From the first day this poorly constructed tax plan was introduced, Local 727 remained committed to protecting hardworking Teamsters and their good-paying jobs. Our legislators need to pursue sustainable solutions to satisfy the budget without nickel-and-diming Cook County's working families," said John Coli Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of Local 727.



Local 727 had urged the Cook County Board to drop similar beverage tax proposals, providing lawmakers with concrete evidence of the detrimental effects these taxes have on workers and cities such as Berkeley, Calif. and Philadelphia.

Local 727 represents nearly 2,000 beverage industry workers throughout the county. These include workers at Pepsi, Coca-Cola Refreshments, Great Lakes Coca-Cola Distribution, Dr Pepper Snapple Group and Home Juice.

BUDWEISER COMMITTEE PREPARES TO NEGOTIATE

Leaders from local unions representing contracts with Anheuser-Busch met recently to work on strategy for next year's contract negotiations. The Brewery and Soft Drink Workers Conference represents 4,500 A-B Teamsters at 12 breweries across the country.

"We expect to fight for good health care and wages in next year's contract talks," said Greg Nowak, Director, Brewery and Soft Drink Workers Conference. "It was important for us to meet, as a committee, to hear the concerns our members have so we can integrate that information into our strategy."

All 12 A-B breweries in the U.S. employ Teamsters who package, brew and bottle the brands produced by the company. The brewery locations are:



Los Angeles; St. Louis; Jacksonville, Fla.; Newark, N.J.; Houston; Fort Collins, Colo.; Williamsburg, Va.; Cartersville, Ga.; Merrimack, N.H.; Fairfield, Calif.; Columbus, Ohio; and Baldwinsville, N.Y.