



**INTERNATIONAL  
BROTHERHOOD  
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**KENNETH W. COOPER**  
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International  
Secretary-Treasurer

March 8, 2023

**VIA EMAIL**

To: All Members of the United States Senate

**Re: The Richard L. Trumka Protecting the Right to Organize Act**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 775,000 active members and retirees of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), I am writing to inform you of the IBEW's support for S. 567, the Richard L. Trumka Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, sponsored by Senator Bernie Sanders. 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. These fundamental rights, however, 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 2023. The percentage of private sector workers in a union is even lower – just 6 percent – in 2023. According to the Economic Policy Institute, however, more than 60 million workers wanted to join a union last year but could not. The collective strength of workers to negotiate for better pay and benefits has eroded due to these trends, and income inequality has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression.

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 penalties against employers when they fire or retaliate against workers. The PRO Act, in addition, 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 updates the definition of an independent contractor and



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supervisor to crack down on misclassification and extend NLRA protections to more eligible workers.

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 11.2 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 protects so many families on the edge of economic disaster in the event of a job loss or a medical emergency. Unions provide economic independence and self-sufficiency, and an expanding middle class is good for the economy and the country.

The IBEW urges every member of the U.S. Senate to stand with working Americans in every state and community and cosponsor the Richard L. Trumka PRO Act.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth W. Cooper", is positioned above the typed name.

Kenneth W. Cooper  
International President

KWC:efw

