

# Deceptive ‘Right to Work’ Laws Hurt Everyone

By many measures, the quality of life is worse in states with “right to work” 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:<sup>1</sup>

### Have Lower Wages and Incomes

- On average, workers in states with right to work laws make \$5,971 (12.2%) less annually than workers in other states (\$43,028 compared with \$48,998).<sup>2</sup>
- Median household income in states with these laws is \$6,568 (11.8%) less than in other states (\$49,220 vs. \$55,788).<sup>3</sup>
- 25.9% of jobs in right to work states are in low-wage occupations, compared with 18% of jobs in other states.<sup>4</sup>

### Have Lower Rates of Health Insurance Coverage

- People younger than 65 in states with right to work laws are more likely to be uninsured (16.3%, compared with 12.4% in free-bargaining states).<sup>5</sup>
- People in right to work states also are less likely to have job-based health insurance (53.9%, compared with 57.1% in free-bargaining states).<sup>6</sup>
- Only 46.8% of private-sector employers in states with right to work laws offer insurance coverage to their

employees, compared with 52.6% in other states. That difference is even more pronounced among small employers (with fewer than 50 workers)—only 30.3% offer workers health insurance, compared with 38.8% of small employers in other states.<sup>7</sup>

- Workers in right to work states also pay a larger share of their health insurance premiums, on average, than those in free-bargaining states (29.9% of the premium, compared with 26.1% in free-bargaining states).<sup>8</sup>

### Have Higher Poverty and Infant Mortality Rates

- Poverty rates are higher in states with right to work laws (14.8% overall and 20.2% for children), compared with poverty rates of 13.1% overall and 18.3% for children in states without these laws.<sup>9</sup>
- The infant mortality rate is 14.2% higher in states with right to work laws.<sup>10</sup>

### Invest Less in Education

- States with right to work laws spend 31.3% less per pupil on elementary and secondary education than other states.<sup>11</sup>

### Have Higher Workplace Fatality Rates

- The rate of workplace deaths is 54.4% higher in states with these laws, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the infant mortality rate and low-wage jobs data, the state data included here do not include data from Indiana and Michigan. Because they passed right to work laws in 2012, the impact of “right to work” policies on their economies would not have been fully experienced in 2012 and 2013. They have therefore been excluded from the free-bargaining states versus right to work state analysis of data from those years.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages, Average Annual Pay for 2013, accessed 12/9/14.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Median Household Income by State: 1984 to 2013, Table H-8*. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/household/2013/h08.xls>.

<sup>4</sup> CFED, Asset and Opportunity Scorecard, *Low Wage Jobs, 2011*, <http://scorecard.assetsandopportunity.org/2014/measure/low-wage-jobs>.

<sup>5</sup> The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, *Health Insurance Coverage of Nonelderly 0-64, 2012*, <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/nonelderly-0-64/#>.

<sup>6</sup> The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, *Percent of Private Sector Establishments That Offer Health Insurance to Employees, 2012*, <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/percent-of-firms-offering-coverage/>.

<sup>7</sup> The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, *Percent of Private Sector Establishments That Offer Health Insurance to Employees, by Firm Size, 2012*, <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/firms-offering-coverage-by-size/#>.

<sup>8</sup> CFED, Asset and Opportunity Scorecard, *Employee Share of Premium, 2012*, <http://scorecard.assetsandopportunity.org/2014/measure/employee-share-of-premium>.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *POV46: Poverty Status by State: 2013 Below 100% and 50% of Poverty—People Under 18 Years of Age, Weighted Person Count*, [http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstable/032014/pov/pov46\\_000.htm](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstable/032014/pov/pov46_000.htm).

<sup>10</sup> The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, *Infant Mortality Rate (Deaths per 1,000 Live Births), 2007-2009*, <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/infant-death-rate/>.

<sup>11</sup> National Education Association, *Rankings & Estimates—Rankings of the States 2013 and Estimates of School Statistics 2014, Table H-11: Current Expenditures for Public K-12 Schools per Student in Fall Enrollment, 2012-2013, March 2014*, <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA-Rankings-and-Estimates-2013-2014.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> AFL-CIO, *Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect*, April 2014, <http://www.aflcio.org/content/download/126621/3464561/DOTJ2014.pdf>.