

Spotlight on Teachers' Collective Bargaining Rights

On November 8th, Ohio voters will go to the polls to vote on Senate Bill 5, which restricts the rights of public unions.¹ Teachers' unions will no longer have the right to negotiate employee qualifications, work assignments, or staffing levels. Teachers would also lose their right to strike in the event of an unfair contract situation.

- **President Obama Upholds the Rights of Public Employees to Collectively Bargain.** This year's Labor Day Presidential Proclamation honored labor's history and cites labor as "the reason we have a minimum wage, weekends away from work to rest and spend time with family, and basic protections in our workplaces." According to the proclamation, collective bargaining is a "fundamental American value."² As Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker moved to dismantle public unions in February 2011, President Obama observed that it seemed "like more of an assault on unions."³ Concerning Ohio, President Obama stated that "public employees should not be blamed for a financial crisis that they had nothing to do with," and that he "strongly disapproves of new laws restricting public employee unions in Ohio."⁴
- **Governor Romney Waffles on Restricting Teachers' Collective Bargaining Rights in Ohio.** Romney supported Senate Bill 5 in June, writing, "My friends in Ohio are fighting to defend crucial reforms that the state has put in place to limit the power of union bosses...I stand with John R. Kasich and Ohio's leaders as they take on this important fight."⁵ On October 25th after a visit and pep talk for phone bank volunteers, Romney declined to endorse the ballot measure.⁶ After a major outcry from conservatives, who overwhelmingly support the effort to restrict teachers' bargaining rights, Romney changed his tune again, reaffirming his original support for the measure saying, "I am 110 percent behind Gov. Kasich and in support of [Senate Bill 5]."⁷
- **Governor Romney Supported Assaults on Teachers' Rights in Wisconsin.** Mitt Romney vocally supported Governor Walker's legislation restricting workers' rights, donating to the Wisconsin Republican Party's efforts to pass the bill and advocating for his supporters to do the same.⁸ The measure eventually passed with the help of Romney.
- **Governor Perry Favors Restricting Union Rights.** In Wisconsin and Ohio, Rick Perry endorsed state measures that would strip public unions of their rights to collectively bargain over most important issues. Perry was chairman of the Republican Governors Association during the battle over collective bargaining rights for teachers in Wisconsin and he stood behind Walker, donating to the Governor and the Wisconsin GOP.⁹ Perry similarly supported restrictions on collective bargaining rights in Ohio. Weighing in on the issue after Romney waffled, Perry said, "As a true conservative, I stand with Gov. Kasich in promoting S.B.5."¹⁰
- **Herman Cain Believes Teachers are "Bankrupting" Wisconsin.** In a February interview with Fox News, Herman Cain claimed that public sector unions representing teachers were trying to push [Wisconsin] into bankruptcy.¹¹ In fact, teachers' unions in Wisconsin agreed to the wage and benefit concessions demanded by Walker to balance the state budget, but acted to preserve their collective bargaining rights.¹²
- **Rep. Bachmann Compared Wisconsin Republicans' Assault on Teachers' Unions to Ronald Reagan's Efforts Against the USSR and Abraham Lincoln's Fight Against the Confederacy.** In comments on conservative talk radio, Michele Bachmann compared Republicans' success in getting Wisconsin Democrats and teachers' unions to retreat to President Reagan's efforts to defeat the Soviet Union and President Lincoln's victory over the Confederacy in the Civil War.¹³

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- Trying to blame public employee salaries and pensions for state budget shortfalls is a red herring. Eliminating collective bargaining does not save money or solve problems.
- When states try to reduce public salaries and pensions by eliminating collective bargaining, they take an economic hit in the long term. The lower the wages of public employees, the less discretionary income they have to spend in the local economy. The higher the wages, the higher the reinvestment into the economy. And research shows that most public employees stay – and spend – within the state after retirement.
- Restrictions on school employees' right to bargain collectively leaves teachers and education support professionals with little say in the quality of public education. Workers have a right to organize and join a union without harassment or retaliation from employers.

¹ "Issue Two, Referendum," [Office of the Ohio Secretary of State](#), Accessed October 31, 2011.

² "Presidential Proclamation," Office of the Press Secretary, [The White House](#), September 2, 2011

³ "Obama on Wisconsin Budget Protests: 'An Assault on Unions,'" [Political Punch, ABC News](#), February 17, 2011

⁴ "President Obama Opposes New Collective Bargaining Law in Ohio," [WSAZ.com](#), April 26, 2011

⁵ "Mitt Romney supported Gov. John Kasich laws in June," [Politico](#), October 25, 2011.

⁶ "Romney Says He Backs Ohio Measure Limiting Union Power," [Real Clear Politics](#), October 26, 2011.

⁷ "Romney Says He Backs Ohio Measure Limiting Union Power," [Real Clear Politics](#), October 26, 2011.

⁸ "Romney Weighs in on Wisconsin Battle," [Boston Globe](#), February 24, 2011.

⁹ "RGA Rolls Out Website to Support Walker," [Newsmax](#), February 23, 2011.

¹⁰ "Perry Takes Sides in Ohio Union Fight After Romney Dodges Issue," [CNN](#), October 25, 2011

¹¹ "Herman Cain: Unions 'are trying to push [Wisconsin] into bankruptcy'," [YouTube](#), February 21, 2011.

¹² "Spreading Anti-Union Agenda," [The New York Times](#), February 22, 2011.

¹³ "Bachmann: Wisconsin Republicans are Like Lincoln, Reagan," [The Minnesota Independent](#), February 28, 2011.