

### Spotlight on 'Right to Work' Laws

- **President Obama Condemns Anti-Worker 'Right to Work' Laws.** The President strongly disapproves of the new laws restricting the collective bargaining rights of workers. He has been very critical of the efforts of Michigan Governor Rick Snyder<sup>1</sup>, Ohio Governor John Kasich<sup>2</sup>, and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker<sup>3</sup> to limit or end the collective bargaining rights of public employees. President Obama has said public employees “should not be blamed for a financial crisis they had nothing to do with and that sacrifices should be shared in tough economic times.”<sup>4</sup> The President believes that public employees make enormous contributions to our society.<sup>5</sup>
- \*\*\*\*\*
- **Mitt Romney Offers Belated Support for National Effort to Restrict Workers' Rights; Supports Failed New Hampshire 'Right to Work' Law.** Romney initially refused to take a position on a national 'right to work' bill that would restrict collective bargaining rights. Following criticism<sup>6</sup> for this position and a poor showing in the Ames straw poll, Romney's campaign said that he “would sign a national right-to-work law if it came across his desk.”<sup>7</sup> Last month, Romney expressed his support for a New Hampshire effort to enact its own so-called 'right to work' law.<sup>8</sup> The New Hampshire House failed to override a veto of that legislation, which would have helped reduce workers' wages and restrict workers' rights. Romney's campaign stated: “Governor Romney does not believe any law should force employees to pay dues as a condition of employment.”<sup>9</sup>
- **Rick Perry Endorses Failed Effort to Force 'Right to Work' Rules in New Hampshire; Supports National Measure.** Almost two dozen New Hampshire House Republicans joined Democrats in upholding the veto last month, despite being asked the same day by Rick Perry to vote for an override. Before the New Hampshire State House, Perry argued: “Unions have their proper role in America, but you shouldn't be forced to join one to feed your family.”<sup>10</sup> This stance confirmed Perry's earlier position in support of a national 'right to work' measure to restrict workers' rights. Said Perry's campaign: “Governor Perry would support Senator DeMint's national right to work bill.”<sup>11</sup>
- **Jon Huntsman Writes in Support of So-Called 'Right to Work' Measures.** In August, Huntsman wrote an op-ed in support of so-called right to work measures, saying “I witnessed firsthand the fruits of that advantage in Utah, which is one of 22 states with a right-to-work law.”<sup>12</sup> However, when given the chance to defend that position prior to the New Hampshire veto override, Huntsman chose not to discuss the topic.<sup>13</sup>
- **Rick Santorum Blasts Unions; Offers Contradictory Statements on Federal Anti-Worker 'Right to Work' Efforts.** Speaking after the New Hampshire vote, Santorum blasted the “union bosses and their Democrat cohorts who are hijacking our economy.” He went on to argue that “the federal government has trampled states' rights” before apparently reconsidering his position on federal power and promising that he would “proudly sign a National Right-to-Work Law.”<sup>14</sup>

### NEA Believes

- So-called “right-to-work” measures lower wages, restrict the rights of workers, and weaken the long standing principles of free collective bargaining in the United States—bargaining that continues to improve the wages, benefits and working conditions of union and non-union employees. These anti-worker proposals prevent local associations from collecting agency fees from non-union members who receive the full benefits of the union negotiated contract.
- A new study from the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) finds that so-called “right to work” efforts do not improve the economy and may increase state unemployment rates. Seven of the 10 highest unemployment states have right to work laws on the books. In addition, right to work initiatives on average cause lower wages by about \$1,500 per year for all workers—union and non-union. A widespread reduction of wages, according to EPI, would only further damage states' economies.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Obama Uses Labor Day Speech to Condemn 'Right to Work' Laws,” [The Washington Independent](#), September 6, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> “Kasich Blasts Obama for SB5 Comments,” [The Columbus Dispatch](#), April 27, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> “Kasich Blasts Obama for SB5 Comments,” [The Columbus Dispatch](#), April 27, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> “Kasich Blasts Obama for SB5 Comments,” [The Columbus Dispatch](#), April 27, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> “Obama Joins Wisconsin's Budget Battle, Opposing Republican Anti-union Bill,” [Washington Post](#), February 18, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> “Vacillation on Right-to-Work Hurts Romney in Ames,” [The Illinois Review](#), August 16, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> “Perry, Romney Embrace a National Right-to-Work Law,” [The Street](#), September 28, 2011, and “Right-to-Work Law Curbing Unions Sought by Romney, Republicans” [Bloomberg](#), November 23, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> “Unions survive anti-labor push in New Hampshire,” [Los Angeles Times](#), November 30, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> “Perry, Romney Embrace a National Right-to-Work Law,” [The Street](#), September 28, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> “On Second Day in N.H., Rick Perry Pushes Right to Work Bill,” [ABC News](#), November 30, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> “Perry, Romney Embrace a National Right-to-Work Law,” [The Street](#), September 28, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> “The Huntsman promise heard in New Hampshire: Boring but dependable,” [The Daily Caller](#), November 30, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> “Perry, Huntsman woo New Hampshire lawmakers,” [Washington Post](#), November 30, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> “Santorum comments on attempted veto override of New Hampshire Right-To-Work law,” [Coralville Courier](#), November 30, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> “'Right to Work': The Wrong Answer for Michigan's Economy,” [Economic Policy Institute](#), September 15, 2011.