





Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 21, 2017

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Clinton: 2,268,193. These traditionally union states suffered from significant membership losses ever since they became “right-to-work,” greatly reducing the amount unions were able to spend on influencing the election’s outcome. It also greatly reduced unions’ ability to get out the vote.

In Wisconsin, for example, the state’s Education Association Council has lost about 60 percent of its membership since Governor Scott Walker pushed through Act 10 and right-to-work legislation. Act 10, it will be remembered, limits union collective bargaining just to wage negotiations, requires annual union recertification, and ends the automatic collection of union dues by payroll deduction.

When Michigan passed its right-to-work law in 2013, the Michigan Education Association had 113,000 members. By 2016, membership in the union had dropped to just over 90,000. As Matt Patterson, executive director of the Center for Worker Freedom, put it: “Give people the chance to leave their union, it turns out, and lo and behold there’s a stampede for the door. And these fleeing workers take their money with them — money that unions can no longer use to buy politicians.”

For pro-union Professor Raymond Hogler of Colorado State University, the war is nearly over. First, as he wrote in November, Trump’s victory will change the face of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), allowing it the opportunity to repeal much of the previous administration’s pro-union rules and regulations. Second, Gorsuch’s potential nomination to the Supreme Court would shift the court’s balance toward freedom of choice, helping Rebecca Friedrichs if her appeal gets there. Third is the momentum toward right-to-work by the states. In his “obituary,” Hogler wrote:

Since the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, class forces have fought for supremacy over the political and economic machinery as Republicans attempted to roll back the consequences of the New Deal legislative revolution.... The empire of right-to-work [now] leans toward further entrenching the power of corporations, not the economic emancipation of American wage earners.

Friedrichs doesn’t see it that way, of course. She sees her teachers’ union taking money from her paycheck and using it to promote ideology with which she strongly disagrees. Her First Amendment-protected rights are simply overpowering unions’ claims of “free-riding” as an excuse for extracting dues from non-union members. Hogler is correct: Right-to-work is sounding the death knell for public-sector unions.

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