

Labor Reform in the States: A Visual Timeline

This timeline examines labor reforms and the electoral aftermath in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and Missouri from 2011 to 2014. Universally, the party which supported reform maintained and, in most cases, increased its legislative majority and kept the governor's mansion.

2011

March 31, 2011

Gov. John Kasich (R) of Ohio signs Senate Bill 5 to curtail government union privileges.



May 3, 2011

Wisconsin election to fill three empty Assembly seats vacated by Republicans who resigned to join the Walker administration. Republicans retain two of the seats.



August 9, 2011

Second round of Wisconsin recall elections. Six Republicans were targeted and four retain their seats.



November 8, 2011

Senate Bill 5 is repealed by Ohio voters 62 percent to 38 percent.



March 11, 2011

Gov. Scott Walker (R) of Wisconsin signs Act 10 to curtail government union privileges following a month of protests in Madison, which included 14 Democratic state senators fleeing the state.

April 6, 2011

First "referendum" on Act 10 of Wisconsin: A Supreme Court race between Republican-leaning incumbent Justice David Prosser and Democratic-leaning challenger JoAnne Kloppenburg. Central issue of the race was Act 10, and it was commonly thought that if Kloppenburg won, she would be the swing vote to overturn the bill. Justice Prosser won after a recount and Wisconsin labor reforms were protected at the state high court.

July 19, 2011

First Wisconsin recall election against Sen. Dave Hansen (D) for "not showing up for work" — he was one of the 14 legislators that fled the state when Act 10 was moving through the Legislature. Hansen wins with 66 percent of the vote.

August 16, 2011

The third round of Wisconsin recall elections results in two Democrats retaining their seats.

2012

June 5, 2012

Gov. Walker (R) of Wisconsin survives recall attempt, winning by a larger margin than his original victory in 2010. Act 10 was only a minor issue in the campaign, presumably because challenger Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett (D) used Walker's reforms to help his city. Republicans also win three of four Senate recall campaigns. Democrats in Wisconsin now have a majority in the Senate, but the legislative session ended two weeks earlier and a new one will not start until after elections in November.



February 1, 2012

Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels (R) signs right-to-work legislation.



August 27, 2012

Proposal 2, a ballot proposal to enshrine collective bargaining in Michigan's constitution, is cleared for the 2012 ballot. The constitutional amendment would give government union contracts the ability to override legislation and would have prohibited a right-to-work law. The proposal is described as one of labor's top priorities nationwide.

November 6, 2012 General Election Results:

- Indiana:** In the first election since the Hoosier State enacted right-to-work, Republicans pick up nine formerly Democratic seats in the House and do not lose any seats in the Senate. Mike Pence (R) is elected governor to replace term-limited Gov. Mitch Daniels (R). While Mitt Romney (R) wins the state over President Barack Obama, Hoosiers send Joe Donnelly (D) to the U.S. Senate to fill the formerly Republican seat.
- Michigan:** Voters reject Proposal 2 by 15 points, even as Pres. Obama wins Michigan by nine points and U.S. Sen. Stabenow (D) is re-elected by over 20 points.
- Ohio:** In the first general election since the passage and repeal of Senate Bill 5, the Ohio Senate balance remains the same. Ohio Republicans pick up one formerly Democratic seat in the House. Only two Republicans who voted for Senate Bill 5 lose their seats. U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D) was re-elected by 6 percent. Obama wins the state by 3 percent.
- Wisconsin:** Republicans win back majority in the Senate, meaning Democratic control would only last during the legislative recess. In the State Assembly, Republicans gain two seats. After this election and several rounds of recall elections, Democrats in Wisconsin are up only one seat in the Senate compared to where they were in 2011. Pres. Obama wins Wisconsin by 7 percent. Tammy Baldwin (D) is elected to the U.S. Senate by 6 percent.



December 4, 2012

Special election in Wisconsin is held to fill an empty seat (Senate District 33). Rep. Paul Farrow (R) is unopposed and wins the seat.

December 11, 2012

Gov. Rick Snyder (R) makes Michigan the 24th right-to-work state. Rep. Doug Geiss (D) threatens: "There will be blood ... there will be repercussions." Rep. Shenelle Jackson (D) predicts: "What you're doing today will only serve to empower [Democrats] ... [Democrats] will win back this chamber, possibly take the Senate back and certainly win the governorship."

2014

May 28, 2014

Michigan's deadline for placing voter-led initiatives on the 2014 November ballot passes without any signatures being submitted on behalf of legislation that would overturn right-to-work, which opponents of the policy initially wanted to do.



October 12, 2014

In Michigan, Gov. Snyder (R) and challenger Mark Shauer (D) schedule only one debate. Neither candidate brings up right-to-work as a primary issue. The only mention of the law is by the debate moderator, and only as a part of a question about a different issue. Subsequently, right-to-work is not a significant issue debated in the 2014 gubernatorial election in Michigan.

April 9, 2014

Right-to-work legislation wins majority approval in the Missouri House (78-68), but failed to receive enough votes (82) to send the bill for consideration by the Senate.

July 7, 2014

Michigan's deadline for placing constitutional amendments on the 2014 November ballot passes without any signatures being submitted for a constitutional repeal of right-to-work. Unions balk at first chance to put Michigan's right-to-work law before voters, and the law is safe from repeal.

October 16, 2014

David Crim, a consultant for one of the largest government unions in Michigan, admits: "I do not believe that on November 4th, when people go to the polls, they are going to say 'you know what I am going to decide who I am going to vote for, for governor, for the legislature, any office on the ballot based on the right-to-work law that was passed.'"

November 4, 2014 General Election Results:

- Indiana:** House Republicans gain two seats. Senate Republicans gain three seats.
- Michigan:** Gov. Snyder (R) is re-elected with 52 percent of the vote in the first gubernatorial election since passage of right-to-work. Senate Republicans gain a member. Michigan Republicans in the House gain four members. Right-to-work is barely an issue in the campaign, and no legislator who voted for right-to-work loses in the general election.
- Missouri:** No legislator who voted for right-to-work loses.
- Ohio:** Gov. Kasich (R) is re-elected with 64 percent of the vote in the first gubernatorial election since the passage and repeal of Senate Bill 5. Republicans also gain five House seats and lose no seats in the Senate.
- Wisconsin:** For the third time in four years, Gov. Walker (R) is elected governor. Republicans gain a seat in the Senate. Republicans also gain three seats in the House.