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Workers for Opportunity celebrates Iowa win

New law strengthens union recertification mandate

By David Guenther | May 2026

Workers for Opportunity, a project of the Mackinac Center, celebrated a big win May 19 when Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds signed SF 472 into law. The measure strengthens a requirement that unions periodically gain their members' trust to continue serving as bargaining agents.

Iowa already had a 2017 law requiring union recertification. But many teachers and other public sector unions were able to short circuit the law and pressure government employers not to fulfill their required parts of the process.

SF 472 simply closes the loophole. While some union activists protested us by land and by air, the new law is a win for everyone, including union members.

The newly enacted law implements worker-friendly reforms for public sector employees. It does so by closing a critical gap in state law governing retention and recertification elections for collective bargaining units. Public employers will now be required to

submit a complete employee list to the Employment Appeal Board (EAB) within 10 days of receiving notice of a recertification election. Employers that fail to comply are identified on a public EAB list, and any Iowa resident may petition a court to compel compliance. The result is that workers get the opportunity for their voice to be heard through recertification elections.

“Public sector employees in Iowa should have regular and transparent elections” to decide which union, if any, will represent them, said SF 472's sponsor, State Sen. Adrian Dickey. “ This legislation ensures that election process is followed,” he added.

Public sector unions in Iowa will now need to win recertification elections to continue representing teachers and other public employees. Unions regularly claim to be the most democratic institutions in America. But they've historically written the rules so that their members don't have the chance to decide whether to continue having a union.

Thanks to the collaboration between Iowa state leaders and Workers for Opportunity, public sector employees in Iowa will have the opportunity to vote on who, if anyone, represents them in the workplace.

When signing the legislation, Gov. Reynolds said that SF 472 ends labor’s “undemocratic practice” of avoiding retention elections. She also personally thanked WFO Executive Director David Guenther for WFO’s work over the past few years to get SF 472 across the finish line.

Union reforms often take years of focused effort, which means that a durable infrastructure makes a difference. The Workers for Opportunity team has worked with Iowa lawmakers for several sessions.

Thanks to the Mackinac Center and WFO’s supporters, we continue to pass legislation across the

country to empower workers with more control over their own paychecks. They deserve the ability to vote on who, if anyone, represents them in the workplace.

We look forward to the day we can replicate this success in Michigan. The Michigan Senate passed a similar bill in 2018, but it died in the House.

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