

HB 1772 -- FREEDOM TO WORK ACT

SPONSOR: Rehder

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Workforce Development and Workplace Safety by a vote of 7 to 3.

This bill establishes the Freedom to Work Act which specifies that a person as a condition or continuation of employment cannot be required to:

- (1) Become or refrain from becoming a member of a labor organization as defined in the bill;
- (2) Pay dues, fees, assessments, or other similar charges to a labor organization; or
- (3) Pay to any charity or third party any equivalent amount in lieu of dues, fees, assessments, or other charges required of a member of a labor organization.

Any agreement, understanding, or practice between a labor organization and an employer that violates the rights of employees as guaranteed under these provisions will be unlawful, null and void, and of no legal effect.

Anyone violating a provision of the bill will be guilty of a class C misdemeanor, and any person injured as a result of a violation of a provision of the bill may recover all resulting damages, including costs and attorney fees, and will be entitled to injunctive relief against any violator or person threatening a violation.

Certain specified employers, employees, and agreements are exempt from the provisions of the bill.

The provisions of the Freedom to Work Act will only apply in counties in which the act has been adopted by the governing body and approved by the voters of the county. The issue of repealing the act may be put on the ballot by the county governing body or by voter petition.

PROPONENTS: Supporters of the bill say that right-to-work laws encourage job growth because businesses take this into consideration, and businesses will locate and relocate to Missouri with these laws in place.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Rehder and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that allowing elections in each Missouri county would create a patchwork of laws, reducing the certainty for businesses that the bill claims to be providing. "Right to Work" is about reducing wages. It would widen the gap between the rich and the poor, eliminating the middle class.

Testifying against the bill were Robert Soutier, Greater St. Louis Labor Council; Missouri AFL-CIO; United Transportation Union; Plumbing Industry Council; and Carpenters Council of Greater St. Louis.