



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
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19TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Mr. Speaker, when I was first sworn in, I was told that I would get one maiden speech, one opportunity where everyone here will listen to what I had to say, all of what I had to say, and that I would even get applause at the end.

I wanted to save that speech for something truly important, something that spoke to my soul and to my district. Today I rise to speak on such an issue, and I'd like to begin with a story one of my neighbors sent me a few days ago:

My name is Matt and I'm a journeyman boilermaker at the boilermakers local 107 of Brookfield. I am writing you to ask that you help defeat the newly proposed right to work bill.

My line of work can be extremely dangerous. I often work at great heights, or within confined spaces, and many times asbestos or other hazardous materials are present. My union is a key component in keeping me safe at my job.

Right to work does nothing more than undermine my safety and future prosperity.

Matt.

That's all, simple, to the point. Matt values his safety.

Unions protect safety. They provide training and they look out for their members – just like we're supposed to be looking out for our state, for our neighbors, for working families.

Last night I spoke with Bob, one of my friends who, like Matt, loves his union and especially the safety they provide. I spoke with Bob about the intensive training his team and their members complete to have high standards of safety.

He told me how important this is to him and how important it is to his team. He told me he couldn't believe that this is coming to Wisconsin, and he asked me to share his thoughts.

He asked that we, as a deliberative body, consider the long term implications of this legislation.

That we consider the nearly 450 Wisconsin businesses that oppose this legislation. That we consider college graduates who will move away, where wages are higher. He asked that we consider the safety of him and his team and all the other teams across Wisconsin. All the workers across Wisconsin.

These are human lives were talking about.

Wisconsin is known for our quality labor, let's keep it that way.

I sat through hours and hours of testimony on this legislation the other day. Wisconsinites from all over the state drove and spoke against this legislation.

They are worried about their safety.

These aren't the enemies, these aren't our foes, they are our friends, our neighbors, our relatives, and their safety should be paramount. Their safety concerns are real, they are the experts, they are the ones going in and out of these hazardous situations day in day out.

Let's listen to them

And for what? What is the big reason we are putting so many lives in jeopardy, what is the big reason to disregard hour after hour of real peoples real testimony? What is the reason we're stripping people, the 8 percent, of their rights to organize? For the right to exploit? For lower wages, lower safety standards, and worse training?

Do we want cheap labor or the best labor? Do we want a cheap state or the best state?

The cheapest labor can be found in china, and so can all the safety violations, massive suicides, and horrifying working conditions that come with that. If folks want the cheapest of labor, they know where they can find it.

If folks want quality they come to Wisconsin.

Winning a race to the bottom just makes us the first of the worst.

That's a race I don't want any part of.

As Shane Greesbach from Portville, Wisconsin stated during his testimony "Today I'm here with a message, a conservative message. Why is this being brought up? This doesn't seem like a conservative value and we're frustrated with that. Government intervention isn't needed here. People do not want government to stick their nose into the private employee employer relationship."

This is targeted at 8% of our states workers. 8%! Why? Why? Why now? Why attack this group? What have they done that is so wrong? Are they to safe?! In this state employers can choose if they want union or non-union labor, and that *should* be their choice. Why are some of my colleagues on the other side of the isle seeking to remove that choice from Wisconsin's businesses?

Mr. Speaker, Wisconsin is known for our quality labor. Let's keep it that way.

There's a specific Republican state representative who thinks Wisconsin passing Right to Exploit is a great idea. He's absolutely giddy over it! He's been writing letters about it, going on TV, and telling anyone who will listen how thrilled he is. He has even been reaching out to recruit new businesses to come to his state because of it.

He's not in this room, heck, he's not even in this state. His name is Rep. Pat Garofalo and he is the Republican chairman of the Minnesota's Job Growth and Energy Affordability Committee.

His own words were: "Wisconsin's right-to-work legislation would negatively impact the private contracts between these companies and the unions they have voluntarily decided to partner with," Garofalo said in a statement. "It's heavy-handed and the wrong for Wisconsin to inject government into these private contractual relationships that has worked well for private companies for decades. That Republicans in Wisconsin would inject the heavy hand of government into this relationship is regrettable and quite inconsistent with the principles of free enterprise and limited government,"

I now understand full well why republicans are so excited for the Right to Exploit to come as quickly as possible. Minnesota republicans. In fact, there's one more reason why they are excited for this legislation. They, and many other Vikings fans across the country, would love to see the Green Bay Packers in jail for their union activities.

As a good friend of mine from the 66th said yesterday, It is supposed to be Wisconsin that is open for business, not Minnesota.

A few fancy lobbyists come in and to tell us why the Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce support Right to Exploit though only 7% of their membership does. We had some high priced lawyers and other folks from “just outside of Washington DC” and other parts of the country fly in to try and push this legislation through.

You know what else we had? Real Wisconsin workers, business owners, husbands and wives who drove for hours, waited for hours, listened for hours, so they could get their 7 minutes, that then shrunk to a mere 4 minutes, in front of us to voice their opinion.

There is no groundswell of people asking for Right to Exploit legislation. There is no grassroots movement behind this. There are forces, powerful forces, Walmart forces, who want this done because they believe their money is more important than the voices of Wisconsinites.

Let's prove them wrong!

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my friends, my colleagues on the other side, listen to the real Wisconsinites and vote against this right to exploit our labor.

Wisconsin is known for our quality labor, let's keep it that way.