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LABOR DAY

Each Labor Day, we celebrate the contributions American workers have made to our society. Through the action of organized Labor, we have gained numerous benefits that many of us now take for granted- such as weekends, worker safety standards and the end of child labor.

Unfortunately, for the past several decades membership in labor unions has been declining, and workers have been facing attacks from hostile business owners and politicians. That includes laws such as Act 10, passed by the GOP-controlled Wisconsin Legislature and signed by GOP governor Scott Walker, which aimed to break unions and thwart collective bargaining.

Luckily, organized labor has been enjoying a bit of a renaissance over the last few years. Nationwide, workers at companies such as Starbucks have enjoyed an incredibly successful run of unionizing. Amazon famously had its first warehouse vote for unionization. Strikes have led to better working conditions, benefits, and/or higher pay at Kellogg's Nabisco, Frito-Lay, and John Deere, among others.

Of course, this has been met with backlash from corporate ownership. Starbucks and Chipotle have permanently closed unionizing shops instead of treating their workers slightly better. Frozen food maker Amy's and outdoor outfitter REI have also engaged in union busting tactics.

That hasn't stopped workers from fighting for their rights. At one Starbucks in Buffalo, New York, workers walked out in solidarity with an unjustly fired worker that had been a leader in the push for unionization. That kind of solidarity is what helps win rights. Sticking together and fighting together will lead to better conditions for all.

That is what the Labor movement is about- workers uniting together for a common cause. I hope to see much more of it going forward, because a stronger labor movement means a stronger middle class, which in turn leads to a stronger, more equitable economy for everyone.

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