



Legislation Text

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Preconsidered Res. No. 1444

Resolution affirming the right to collectively bargain for workers in the City of New York

By Council Members Miller, Dromm, Kallos, Koslowitz, Chin and Treyger

Whereas, Since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, organized labor has played a crucial role in the growth of America's middle class; and

Whereas, For decades, collective bargaining, the process by which groups of employees negotiate with management to secure benefits such as health care, safety protections, and pensions, has undergirded the livelihood of millions of American families; and

Whereas, Organized labor has a proud tradition in New York City; and

Whereas, On September 5th, 1882, the first Labor Day Parade, which featured roughly 10,000 workers, took place in Manhattan; and

Whereas, The International Ladies' Garment Worker Union (ILGWU), a major forerunner of UNITE HERE, was founded in New York City in 1900; and

Whereas, Samuel Gompers, the founder of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), started organizing on the Lower East Side; and

Whereas, Organized labor remains a major presence in New York City, which is home to 900,000 union members, or 25.5 percent of all city workers, an increase from 21.5 percent in 2012; and

Whereas, According to the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center, a similar trend exists statewide, as New York State's private-sector union density increased from roughly 14 percent in 2012 to 15.1 percent in 2014 ; and

Whereas, Moreover, a January 2017 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicates that New York State's union membership rate of 23.6 percent is not only the nation's highest but also more than twice the national average of 10.7 percent; and

Whereas, Some elected officials have sought to undermine unions across the country in recent years; and

Whereas, Twenty-seven states have passed right-to-work (RTW) laws, which release workers from the obligation to pay the fees that fund union representation; and

Whereas, In these states, individuals who leave the union can now get a "free ride" by receiving the benefits of collective bargaining without paying for them; and

Whereas, Over the last several years, RTW laws have undermined union membership across the country, even in our nation's industrial heartland; and

Whereas, BLS has found that Wisconsin, which has a long union tradition, has seen union membership plummet since it passed RTW legislation in 2011; and

Whereas, BLS found that in 2015, 8.3 percent of Wisconsin workers were union members; and

Whereas, That is a sharp decrease from 2014, when 11.7 percent of the state's workforce belonged to unions; and

Whereas, The Center for American Progress (CAP) also found that the decline in union membership correlates with a declining share of total income for the middle 60 percent of households; and

Whereas, Although the three middle quintiles earned 53.2 percent of the nation's income in 1968, they received 45.7 percent of all income in 2012; and

Whereas, The political climate remains hostile for organized labor, as President Trump supports RTW laws, and Congress recently introduced legislation to implement them nationwide; and

Whereas, Amid this assault on union workers and their families, it is vital that New York City renews its commitment to collective bargaining as an indispensable part of the American social compact; now, therefore,

be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York affirms the right to collectively bargain for workers
in the City of New York

LS#10238

4/7/17

MK