

Defending Public Workers Protects Everyone's Wages, Salaries, and Small Business



BERGEN COUNTY GREEN PARTY

www.bergencountygreenparty.org

The defense of public workers right to unionize, which has reached a climax in Wisconsin, protects all Americans who work for a living. This is because the destruction of public workers unions is a step toward the destruction of all unions -- the way the smashing of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization by President Reagan was a signal to big corporations to attack unions in private industry.

Without Unions Workers Would Go Back To The Dark Ages

Without the struggles of labor unions most Americans would still be working 12 hours a day. There would be no weekends -- only Sunday would be a day off. There would be no minimum wage -- no unemployment insurance -- no social security pensions -- no Medicare or Medicaid -- no workplace safety laws. Big corporations, claiming the need to meet competition from China, could reduce the standards of American workers to the level of the workers in China.



The Decline of Unions in Private Industry has Already Depressed the Standard of Living

A study by the Center for American Progress shows that the steady decline of labor unions in private industry since the 1970's has been accompanied by the steady reduction of the real wages of most Americans. The standard of living has been maintained only by more women working outside the home, by people working overtime, by taking second jobs, and through borrowing through the use of credit cards and second mortgages on their homes. The American standard of living, once the highest in the world, is now much lower than that of most Western European Countries and Japan; and the reduction of the standard of living of workers has also limited the demand for the goods and services provided by small business.

Salaries Of Public Workers Are Lower Than Those In The Private Economy

Republican and Democratic politicians and the mass media try to set workers in the private economy against teachers and other public workers by claiming that public workers are compensated much better than people in private employment. Actually a study by the Center for Economic Policy and Research shows that the salaries of public workers average 4% less than people in private employment who have comparable training and experience.

Job Security, Pensions, and Health Benefits Have Been Recruiting Incentives Used By Government Agencies

These recruiting incentives have been used to attract workers to government jobs paying lower salaries or carrying greater risk of injury and death, such as fire fighting and police work. Now these recruiting incentives are being denounced by Republican and Democratic politicians and the mass media as special and unfair privileges.

Public Workers Pensions And Health Benefits Are Not The Cause Of State Governments Deficits

This charge by Republican and Democratic politicians is also false. The deficits are occurring because the Great Recession has caused a drastic drop in tax collections, huge losses in state pension funds invested in the stock market and greater state costs for Medicaid and unemployment insurance for workers who have lost their jobs. States' finances are also in a hole because of years of reduced taxes on high personal and corporate incomes and the skipping of required payments into state pension funds. In New Jersey, Gov. Christie refused to put any money into the state pension fund for 2010, in spite of the fact that the state was required to make a payment of \$3.1 billion!

State Government Deficits Can Be Eliminated By Increasing Revenue And Reducing Waste

State government revenues can be created by Congressional measures to create jobs for workers who will pay taxes and stop collecting unemployment insurance and using Medicaid. High salaried and unnecessary bureaucratic positions can be eliminated too. Does New Jersey, for example need some 600 superintendents of schools and a comparable number of police chiefs?

Make The Rich Pay Their Fair Share Of Taxes

Some years ago, Leona Helmsly, widow of a billionaire real estate tycoon remarked that taxes were only for little people. Though she was given a short jail term for not paying any federal income taxes, unfair tax laws and high-priced accountants generally enable the rich and big corporations to pay little or no taxes. They should pay more because government services are in large part to protect private property -- and they own most of it. Public schools and hospitals provide them with an educated and healthy labor force. And they can well afford to pay more: a recent chart in the New York Times showed that the gap between the rich and the poor in the United States is greater than in any of the Arab countries of the Middle East.

Taxes The Rich And Big Corporations Should Be Paying

These include higher taxes on their incomes, an end to their tax exemptions and a state sales tax on legal, accounting, architectural and other services used largely by the rich. A small property tax could also be levied on their stocks, bonds and other financial investments. Such taxes would produce a great deal of revenue. Experience has shown that multimillionaires and billionaires would not abandon their New Jersey mansions and estates because of some additional taxes. At the same time, middle and low income people could be exempted from such taxes.

How To Secure Tax Reforms And End State Government Deficits

Such tax reforms will only be secured by mass pressure on the governors and legislatures through petitions, protest demonstrations and voting for progressive political parties such as the Green Party. To facilitate the growth of progressive political parties and counter the corrupting influence of big corporate money, laws to provide public financing of elections are essential. The time for these actions is now!



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For further information, please visit:

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