



FACT SHEET

Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act

H.R. 842 | S. 420

Sen. Patty Murray (Wash.) and Rep. Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (Va.) have introduced the PRO Act, which restores the right of workers to freely and fairly form a union and bargain together for changes in the workplace. The PRO Act is landmark worker empowerment, civil rights and economic stimulus legislation, and an essential part of any plan to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic and recession.

Unions Are Key to the American Dream

- The latest research shows that the fall and rise of economic inequality since 1936 closely tracks the growth and decline of union density. As the collective strength of working people to negotiate for better pay and benefits has eroded, the gap between rich and poor has reached levels not experienced since the Great Depression.
- Unions were instrumental in creating the American Dream, and the decline of union density has made financial security and upward mobility less achievable for working people. More and more workers today, especially young workers, feel that a good job and a decent career are beyond their reach.

Unions Improve Pay and Working Conditions for All Workers— Especially Workers of Color

- Working people who come together in a union can bargain for higher wages (11.2% more than what nonunion workers make). Union members also are more likely to have employer-provided health insurance (94% compared to 68%); access to paid sick days (91% compared to 73%); retirement benefits through private employers (82% to 48%); and guaranteed pensions through private employers (54% to 8%).
- The union advantage is greater for Black, Latino, women, immigrant, LGBTQ and other workers who have experienced workplace discrimination. Black, Latino and women workers are paid 13.7%, 20.1% and 5.8% more, respectively, when they belong to a union. Union contracts pay women and men the same for doing the same job. You cannot be fired for your sexual orientation or gender identity under a union contract.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has shown once again that belonging to a union can literally be the difference between life and death on the job, especially for workers of color and women who are disproportionately essential workers and have been more likely to lose life, health and employment during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- So it should not be surprising that more and more workers want to join a union. A 2018 MIT study found that nearly half of all nonunion workers—more than 60 million people—would join a union today if given the chance.

The National Labor Relations Act Is Broken and Must Be Fixed

- The problem is that our basic labor law, which is supposed to protect the rights of workers to form a union and bargain collectively, is broken. In recent decades, employers have been able to violate the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) with impunity. An entire union-busting industry now works nonstop to block working people from exercising our rights. Today, in more than 40% of all union organizing elections, employers are charged with breaking the law. They lie. They threaten and coerce. They routinely fire union supporters. Workers are forced to attend mandatory meetings with one item on the agenda: union-bashing. These messages of fear and intimidation come from the very people who control our paychecks, how much time we can spend with our families and whether we will have a job tomorrow. And the penalties for employers that engage in this illegal behavior are inconsequential.
- The PRO Act is the answer because it would fix many of these problems (see the accompanying PRO Act Explainer for details). The PRO Act would make it possible for tens of millions of workers to exercise our freedom to join together and bargain with our employer, and to have more of a say in our jobs, our economy and our country.

We Need the PRO Act Now

- We need the PRO Act to ensure good jobs for working people. Historically, unions have turned bad jobs into good jobs in one industry after another. All workers need and deserve the collective power of a union to help achieve decent pay, secure benefits, flexible schedules, fair treatment, and basic respect and dignity at work.
- We need the PRO Act to address inequality. The latest research shows that the rapid growth of unions in the 20th century dramatically reduced inequality by extending the union advantage to more workers, particularly lower-income workers and Black workers, while at the same time raising standards for nonunion workers across entire industries. Growing today's labor movement is the only policy that has the scale necessary to take us off our current trajectory of ever-growing inequality. Without it, broadly shared prosperity that extends to most working people has virtually no chance.
- We need the PRO Act to fix our economy. The result of growing inequality and a shrinking middle class is an economy that does not work because the vast majority of people lack the incomes or the economic security to consume or invest. Economists are increasingly recognizing that inequality stunts economic growth. We need to grow the labor movement to rebalance the economy, which will be good for growth.

- We need the PRO Act to fix our democracy. Another consequence of declining worker power and economic failure is that more and more people lose confidence in the system as a whole. To restore that confidence and strengthen our democracy, we need to make the economy work for working people.
- We need the PRO Act to promote racial justice and eradicate all kinds of discrimination. A union contract is the single best tool we have to close racial and gender wage gaps, and to ensure dignity and fair treatment for all workers, regardless of where we were born, who we are, or what industry we work in. More than 65% of union members are either women or people of color, and Black workers are the most likely of any demographic group to be union members (13.5%). The decline of unionization has played a significant role in the expansion of the racial wage gap over the past four decades, and an increase in unionization would help reverse this trend.
- We need the PRO Act to give working people a real say in our future. The PRO Act would reduce inequality, ensuring that workers share in the benefits of future economic growth and the rising productivity that will be fueled by technology, and give workers a say in how technology is deployed in the workplace. The PRO Act also includes specific provisions to correct trends that may be troubling in the future such as employers washing their hands of responsibility toward the workers who make them profitable.