

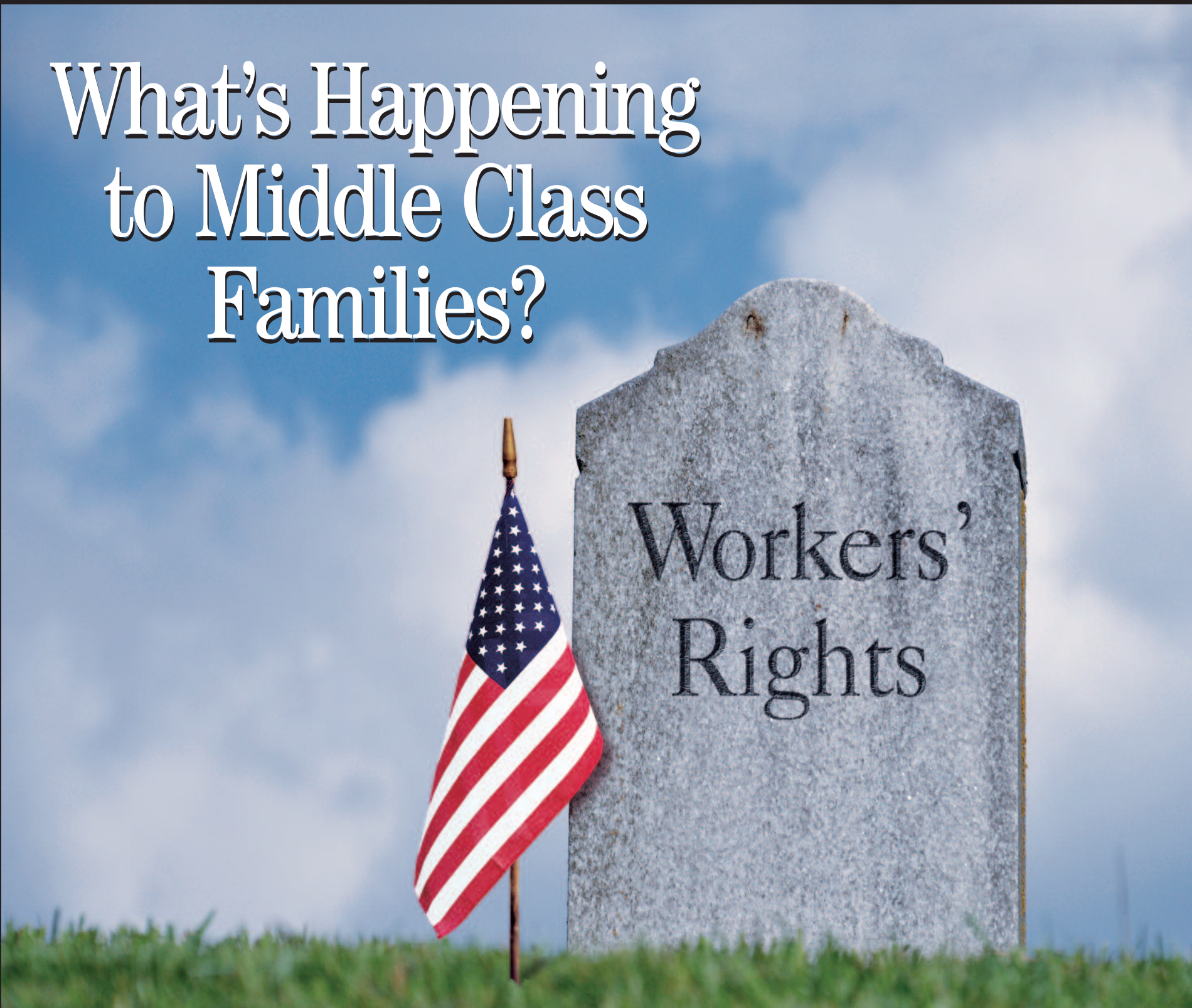
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CWA news

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What's Happening to Middle Class Families?



Workers'
Rights

WORKING Together

Is it Really the End of Workers' Rights?

Do you find the cover of the CWA News disturbing? We all should. It's unthinkable that we're seeing the kind of all-out assault on basic workers' rights and collective bargaining that we're seeing now in Wisconsin, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, Florida, Oklahoma, Missouri, New Mexico and many more states, and in the House of Representatives.

Workers' rights and collective bargaining are under a vicious attack. Our opponents, backed by the Chamber of Commerce and big bucks, right-wing interests like the Koch brothers are promising not to stop until they succeed in taking away the fundamental right of workers in a democracy to join together and bargain collectively. That's the reality.

The state assault now is focused on public workers, but private sector collective bargaining has been under attack for years. Collective bargaining rights for private sector workers are lower than they were in 1900 and just 1 in 15 now have collective bargaining rights. It's not because workers don't want a union voice, but management has made the price for having a voice on the job a high-risk decision.

The coming weeks and months are critical if we're going to preserve collective bargaining rights. We're witnessing incredible solidarity in Wisconsin, New Jersey, Ohio, and many other states. It's amazing to see so many working families saying, "it's enough."

Clearly, this fight is not about public workers. It's not about Wisconsin. This is about all of us, public and private sector. This is one fight. The right wing says this is labor's last gasp, but it's not. This is the dawn of a new movement, this is an awakening.

CWA also is leading the way in building new coalitions and alliances. We're working together with the Sierra Club, religious groups, Common Cause, the civil rights community,

and as many allies as we can find. We know we won't win the fight if we stick to our old ways. We can't live in the past.

In Wisconsin and too many other states, we've seen the results of the 2010 elections hit working families smack in the face. Republican governors and Republican-controlled legislatures are using budget arguments to wipe out the voice of workers, along with their collective bargaining rights. Too often, it's a false argument. Wisconsin was actually looking at a budget surplus earlier this year, until Gov. Scott Walker pushed through \$140 million in tax breaks for corporations.

Walker cries budget deficit so that he can eliminate public services and strip public employees of their collective bargaining rights for everything but wages, and cap wage increases at 2 percent. Wisconsin public workers have offered wage and pension changes that the governor is pushing, but Walker insists that's not enough. Clearly this isn't about balancing the budget but busting unions.

In New Jersey, the contract covering 40,000 CWA state workers expires June 30. Led by CWA, thousands rallied in the rain on Feb. 25, marking the beginning of that fight. Hundreds from Districts 2 and 13 rode buses and joined public and private sector workers from District 1 in saying to Gov. Chris Christie, "You say divide and conquer. We say unite and win."

Christie has proposed to cut state workers' pensions. New Jersey workers have been making contributions to their pension plan regularly, and never missed a payment. The state, on the other hand, hasn't made a full pension payment in 15 years and Christie has no plan to pay up. Christie says the state can't afford to make its contributions, but then vetoed the millionaires tax, eliminating \$1 billion in revenue.

Christie is also attempting to impose huge cuts in health



10,000 union members stood in the rain in Trenton, N.J. to hear CWA President Larry Cohen and leaders from labor, environmental, community, and religious groups condemn efforts to take away workers' rights and balance state budgets on workers' backs.

care coverage, privatize thousands of jobs, and eliminate seniority and other provisions. But most importantly, like Walker in Wisconsin and Kasich in Ohio, he has no intention of bargaining. He prefers to dictate and counts on the legislature to cave in and back him up.

It's no surprise, given this agenda in state after state, that tens of thousands of workers are standing up for good jobs and strong communities, sending the message that working and middle-class families won't give up our rights.

Several campaigns are highlighted in this issue of the CWA News, and there's a lot of work to do. We need to seize this moment and have unprecedented mobilization in every state. Here's what we can do now:

- Take this discussion into every workplace. Talk about our key issues, quality jobs, health care, retirement security and bargaining rights, and make sure everyone knows what's at stake.
- Support local events and get coworkers, their families, their friends and other supporters to turn out.
- Take this opportunity to build a strong political movement by electing to every level of government people who will stand with working families.

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Union solidarity electrified the thousands of CWAers and other union members who came to demonstrate at New Jersey's state capitol for their rights and fairness.

This is What DEMOCRACY Looks Like

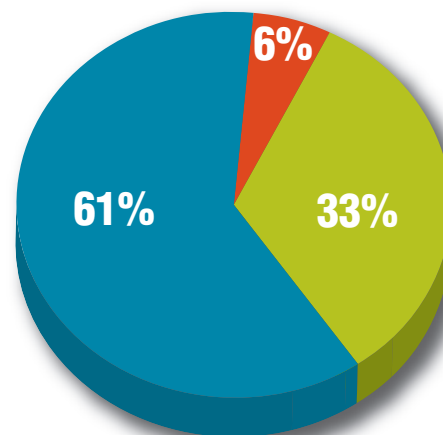
The All-Out Assault on Working Families

It doesn't matter if you're a private sector worker or a public employee. The benefits and bargaining rights we've had over the years are under attack. But politicians and their right-wing supporters are finding out that 'divide and conquer' isn't so easy. Here are just some examples of CWAers and union activists fighting back.

USA TODAY/Gallup Poll

Q. Would you favor or oppose a law in your state taking away collective bargaining rights of most public unions, including the state teachers union?

■ Favor
■ Oppose
■ No opinion

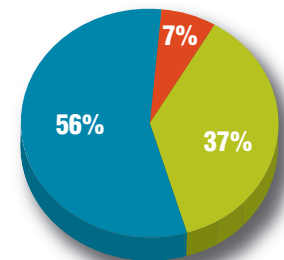


Source: USA TODAY/Gallup Poll of 1,000 adults Monday.
Margin of error: +/-4 percentage points

New York Times/ CBS NEWS Poll

Q. In order to reduce state budget deficits, do you favor or oppose cutting the pay or benefits of public employees?

■ Favor
■ Oppose
■ No opinion



Source: New York Times/
CBS NEWS Poll of 984 adults,
Feb. 24-27.

New Jersey:

Union Workers Stand Together in New Jersey

Some 10,000 union members and supporters filled the grounds of the state capitol in Trenton, sending a message of solidarity to Wisconsin public workers and some advice to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie: stop the attacks on public workers.

Busloads of CWAers from Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, Maryland, D.C. and West Virginia made the trip to stand up with public workers, sending a strong message that workers can't be divided. Despite the pouring rain, union members and supporters cheered the call for workers to have bargaining rights and jeered at politicians' efforts to divide workers.

CWA President Larry Cohen told the crowd that, "it's no surprise that tens of thousands of workers are standing up for good jobs and good communities, sending the message that working and middle-class families won't give up our rights."

CWA District 1 Vice President Chris Shelton and many leaders from public and private sector unions also were on hand.

Public workers in New Jersey, including 40,000 CWA represented state workers whose contract expires at the end of June, are fac-



Over 10,000 New Jersey state workers braved the rain and winds to protest the governor's proposals to balance the state budget on workers' backs.

ing exactly the same kind of attacks as those in Wisconsin. In fact, Christie has expressed his "admiration" for Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's campaign to eliminate workers' bargaining rights.

Chris Christie is seeking to do the same thing in New Jersey. He has a proposal to legislate health benefits for all public workers that would eliminate bargaining over health care. His budget proposal tries to pit working people against each other by promising to reinstate

property tax rebates to seniors and other middle class workers if the state legislature imposes his health care plan on public workers.

He's calling for cuts in workers' pensions and additional increased worker contributions. Christie said the state has no intention of making any contributions to the fund. The state had no problem, however, in giving people who earn more than \$1 million a \$40,000 tax break.

New Jersey workers have been making contributions to their pension plan year in and year out, never missing a payment. The state government, on the other hand, hasn't made pension payments in the last 13 years.

Christie used New Jersey's budget situation to slash workers' rights, eliminating fairness in hiring and promotions and the ability to negotiate furloughs and appeal dis-

cipline. If Christie gets his way, the only item left for public workers to bargain over would be wages. And Christie already has said he wants to legislate a cap on any wage increases.

"Dividing the middle-class and pitting New Jerseyans against each

other won't work. All across the country, Americans are coming together to tell the politicians that it is time to stop attacking working families and scapegoating public workers," said Hetty Rosenstein, CWA State Director.

The Attack on Working Families

Here's a quick look at what working families are up against, from Maine to Arizona

- 1 Elimination of collective bargaining rights for public workers.** Underway in at least eight states this year, more threats coming next year. Also attacks on pensions and health care benefits.
- 2 Paycheck Deception.** Campaigns backed by right-wing and corporate groups to take away workers' right to a voice in the political process. Underway in 15 states
- 3 Right to Work (for less).** Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. put it best. Right-to-work "provides no rights and no work." At least 12 states are pursuing anti-bargaining measures; 22 already have right-to-work laws.
- 4 Outlawing Prevailing Wage Laws.** These laws make sure that community wages are paid on publicly funded projects like roads, schools and bridges, and that contracts don't get awarded to political cronies who submit bargain-basement bids. They are under attack in 20 states.
- 5 Assault on Organizing Rights.** South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley said, "we're going to fight the unions and I need a partner to do it" when she hired a union-buster to head the state's labor department and block organizing among workers at Boeing. South Carolina and at least three other states want to keep workers from using majority sign-up to win bargaining rights and a union voice.

"Think for a moment about the debt of gratitude YOU owe to unions for the 40-hour, five-day work week; overtime pay; paid sick days, holidays and vacation days; family and medical leave; pensions; health and disability benefits; proper job training; safer working conditions and, perhaps most importantly, due process in the workplace."

John Tucker, TNG-CWA Local 31167



Paycheck deception in Kansas. Pensions under attack in Florida. Right to work (for less) in Maine. The list goes on and on. These are tools that politicians and right-wing political interests are using in the very real war on working and middle class families. But we're standing strong. We won't give up our rights.

'Stand Up for Ohio' Coalition Fighting For Good Jobs, Strong Communities

Good jobs and strong communities go hand in hand. That's the message of Ohio's new and growing coalition, "Stand Up for Good Jobs and Strong Communities."

Spearheaded by CWA District 4 Vice President Seth Rosen, the coalition's unions, civil rights organizations, neighborhood groups and other allies are fighting to protect workers, jobs and their communities before politicians finish what the recession started.

"Elected leaders are attacking workers, public sector budgets, civil rights and more," Rosen said. "But what they're really attacking are good jobs and decent communities. I want a community where the garbage gets picked up, where the teachers are competent, where police aren't spread too thin to respond when you need them."

Rosen said the coalition will use its collective, grassroots power to help fight each other's battles. The goal is to organize major street demonstrations throughout the state at least three times in the next six months, beginning with a series of events March 15.

"The politicians have a strategy of divide and conquer," Rosen said. "Our strategy is unite and win."

Solidarity on Display

In a mass display of unity, thousands of workers each day jammed into Ohio's statehouse and the outside capitol grounds for weeks beginning in mid-February as the Senate held hearings on a bill that would take away collective bargain-

ing rights for 35,000 state workers and 20,000 university employees. On Feb. 22, some 15,000 workers and supporters were on the capitol grounds ready to testify, but public safety officials temporarily barred them from the Capitol and the hearing. Security

Join the Stand Up for Ohio coalition on Facebook. More than 25,000 people signed on as friends in the first 12 hours, with more than 115,000 joining in just a few days. Search www.facebook.com for "Stand Up for Ohio."

finally relented and admitted about 1,000 workers' rights supporters so their voices could be heard. Rallies continued throughout the state, with public and

private sector workers joining forces in Dayton, Cincinnati, Marietta and other communities.

Another huge rally on March 1 brought 20,000 to the state capitol.

The vote had not yet been scheduled as the CWA News went to press.

It was clear that efforts to pit workers against each other weren't going to work. "It's just the opposite, everybody's united," said Diane Bailey, vice president of CWA Local 4310. "We're all coming out and supporting each other."

Pushed by Ohio Gov. John Kasich and the Republican-controlled legislature, the right-wing agenda includes a direct attack on 6,000 CWA members working at Ohio's universities and 1,000 more in other public sector jobs.

In addition to eliminating bargaining rights for state and university workers, Kasich wants to ban teacher strikes and kill rules requiring that contractors on public projects pay prevailing community wages.

Kasich's plans also include privatizing the Ohio Department of Development, "turning it over to some hedge fund manager from California," Rosen said.

Those are some of the issues



CWA members rallied with thousands of other union members and allies in cities across Ohio, including Dayton, left, and inside and outside the state capitol in Columbus, center and right.

Stand Up for Ohio will address, and then build on. Kirk Noden, head of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, explains that concerned Ohioans have been working for several years to form bonds that won't disintegrate once a specific fight is over.

"What we've set out to do is create a permanent alliance between neighbors, faith and labor, where

we're really starting to think about long-term change in the state," Noden said.

Rosen said Stand Up for Ohio is "going to connect the dots and bring all of our fights together. This isn't just about public workers or rights that directly affect unions. It's about people having good lives, with good jobs and strong communities."

'We Stand With Wisconsin'

That was the message that spread like wildfire as Wisconsin union members and supporters stood strong to keep the collective bargaining rights public workers have had for 50 years.

As Republican governors and Republican-controlled legislatures in many states attempted to strip away public worker bargaining rights, the state capital in Madison became the starting point of a huge grassroots campaign to stop the attack on workers.

Demonstrations began in mid-February and crowds swelled from 15,000 early on to 70,000 by the second weekend and up to 100,000 by the third, protesting Gov. Scott Walker's extreme agenda to drastically cut pensions and health care benefits and eliminate collective bargaining. Walker wanted it done immediately, without opportunity for discussion, debate or compromise. Wisconsin's 14 Senate Democrats said they had no other option but to

leave the state, preventing a quorum and a vote.

Union workers agreed to economic demands but the governor said that wasn't good enough. He was determined to take away workers' bargaining rights.

In the Assembly, sleep-deprived Democrats tried hard to stop the bill.

But after three days of continuous session, Republicans called for a vote, leaving the roll call open for only a matter of seconds. Just 13 of 38 Democrats were able to vote in time, leading to outcries of "Shame!" from the Assembly floor and gallery as Republicans walked out.

As the CWA News went to press,



Rallying in Wisconsin, from left: Greg Hartjes, a retired Local 4025 member, with his wife, Local 4025 President Kim Collier-Hartjes, and Local 4671 member Ann McNairy, chair of the CWA Wisconsin Political Council.

"If a thousand people tell say you can't organize, just do it. If ten million people tell you that you can't organize, just do it."

Rosa Wilson, CWA Local 7110, Iowa

What RACY Like



“People need to understand that this attack isn’t just about unions, it’s about the economic security of all working families.”

Tom Anderson, CWA Local 3865

Indiana: Legislature Backs Off ‘Right to Work’

Thousands of union workers are standing strong at the statehouse in Indianapolis, pushing back against a Republican governor and legislature that want to weaken workers’ collective bargaining rights.

Crowds of more than 4,000 filled the halls of the statehouse, standing up for Indiana families and workers’ rights.

Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels, like New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, is trying to drive a wedge between public and private sector workers. The good news: it’s not working.

Daniels called public workers “the privileged elites” at a Republican dinner in Cincinnati, the Chicago Tribune reported. That’s right from

Christie’s playbook, who has said there are two classes of citizens, “the people who get benefits, and the taxpayers who pay for them.” But on the ground in Indiana, Wisconsin, New Jersey and other states, thousands of workers are sticking together and standing together for their families and communities.

In Indiana, as in Wisconsin, they have the support of Democratic members of the state legislature.



At the Indiana statehouse, CWA members were among hundreds of demonstrators in February. From left, Jane Phillips, Local 4900; Debbie Sturgeon, Local 4700; and Dave Dunn, Local 4703.

Credit: Associated Press/Tom Stratton



Members of CWA Local 4900 proudly display their banner at the statehouse.

Indiana Democratic lawmakers left the state when it became clear that Republicans were unwilling to discuss or compromise over the right to work (for less) bill and other proposals.

Democratic lawmakers said “they’re trying to figure out a way to save the state from this radical agenda.” And they’ll return when the Republican majority drops the bills that are a real assault on the middle class. Democrats have raised concerns about several of the bills, including education reform and

budget proposals.

Republican lawmakers finally withdrew the measure to weaken collective bargaining, at least for this session.

Separately, Jeff Cox, an Indiana deputy attorney general was fired for the comments he made about using “live ammunition” against Wisconsin union demonstrators. In a Twitter conversation with a reporter, Cox called the Wisconsin demonstrators “political enemies and thugs.”

the Senate Democrats remained outside Wisconsin and Walker was threatening to send layoff notices to thousands of state workers.

He pledged to do so even though public worker unions have agreed to accept all of the health care and pension cuts he’s demanding, as long as they maintain their bargaining rights. Walker refused their offer.

Wisconsin was actually looking at a budget surplus until Walker pushed through \$140 million in tax breaks for businesses and the wealthy. Now he is trying to blame public workers for the deficit he created.

By an overwhelming margin — 57 to 37 percent — citizens of Wisconsin support the right of state workers to collectively bargain, according to Public Policy Polling. The poll, conducted in late February, even found that respondents in non-union households support workers’ right to bargain, 51 to 45 percent. Union households support bargaining rights for state workers 70 to 26 percent.

When the protests erupted in

mid-February, some 10,000 people rallied outside the capitol and another 3,000 waited in long lines to testify before the Joint Finance Committee. Democratic members continued to take testimony late into the night, and hundreds of people spent overnight inside the capitol.

“The energy that was going on in there, it was the biggest union boost I’ve had in my life,” said CWA Local 4630 President Terry Russell, who turned out with about dozen members of his local. “Absolutely every union was represented. It was a bonding like I’ve never seen before. I was proud to be part of it.”

CWA members from statewide Local 4671 traveled for hours to join the protest. “I think the energy that got ignited there is something the governor did not anticipate,” Local President Mike Oliver said, noting the roar from the crowd as firefighters and off-duty officers in police union sweatshirts marched around the capitol square.

When Walker announced his

intention to strip away those rights, he tried to intimidate workers by raising the possibility of using the National Guard against them.



Credit: AP Photo/Wisconsin State Journal, Craig Schreiner

We are at the dawn of a new, reawakened labor movement thanks to the thousands of Wisconsin state workers and supporters who jammed the state house in Madison to protest unjust proposals to take away workers’ bargaining rights.

“This is not about the money. This is about dividing the middle class, this is about taking away 50 years of moms and dads working to provide a reasonable standard of living for their kids.”

Mark Frey, CWA Local 4630

Oklahoma:

Workers Hit with Furloughs, Loss of Pension, More Pay Cuts

Public workers in Oklahoma also are facing a tough assault.

The state legislature is going after public workers' pensions, jobs and, for municipal workers, their bargaining rights. "Members of CWA Local 6012 in Broken Arrow and Stillwater will lose their voice on the job if this measure goes through," CWA District 6 Vice President Andy Milburn said.

State workers, members of Oklahoma State Workers/CWA Local 6086, already have made big economic sacrifices, taking two furlough days a month, the equivalent of a 10 percent pay cut. But the legislature wants more.

The furloughs are a serious issue for CWA members at the Department of Corrections, the officers who are responsible for maintaining security and controlling inmates in the state's prison system. Before the furloughs, one corrections officer had responsibility for 160 inmates. With furloughs, corrections officers must look after more inmates. The result has been more attacks on officers and violent incidents spinning out of control.

"With fewer officers looking over more prisoners, our members often are forced to wait until there is a lockdown before they can assist a colleague who is being threatened or attacked," said Lisa Sells, Local 6086's organizing coordinator. Three thousand of the department's corrections officers currently have been furloughed.

That bad situation will likely get worse under proposals now being considered in the state legislature.

"Our department's budget request is \$35 million but legislators are offering to appropriate just \$9 million," Sells said. "This will result in more cutbacks, creating a much more dangerous prison environ-

ment, and permanent layoffs for many of our members."

Since state workers formed their union in 1989, membership has more than doubled. Despite not having collective bargaining rights, the union has accomplished goals through mobilization and legislative and political action.

Now state legislators want to eliminate workers' defined benefit pensions and replace them with a 401(k) plan. Workers have been contributing 5 percent of their wages into the pension plan. The state hasn't made any contributions over the past eight years.

Lawmakers also are looking to

eliminate a longevity payment that state workers get annually after two years of service. For workers, who earn \$10,000 to \$24,000 a year, that extra payment "is money they count on to pay their homeowners' insurance, or other large household expenses," Sells said.

CWAers are launching a mobilization campaign called, "All Hands On Deck, or Else," with lobby days and weekly meetings with legislators.

On President's Day, hundreds of state workers demonstrated against legislators' attempts to put the burden of closing the budget gap on state workers and their families.

Texas:

Building a Coalition to Fight For Essential Services

Members of the Texas State Employees Union/CWA Local 6186 have formed a coalition with 36 other unions, civil rights and community groups that's working for a fair approach to close the state's budget deficit.

The Texas Forward Coalition is diverse. In addition to TSEU, it includes the Christian Life Commission, the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, and United Way.

They are calling on the governor and legislature to develop a balanced approach to closing the deficit that takes both spending and revenue into account but spares critical programs and services, and public worker jobs.

Texas state employees don't have collective bargaining rights, but have been successful in several campaigns to stop the state from cutting services for citizens, especially those who can least afford it. "We fended off a five-year effort that would have privatized our state's human services eligibility program," said TSEU organizing coordinator Mike Gross. The move would have eliminated 3,000 jobs and closed every state office where unemployed workers and others needing help would apply



Members of TSEU/CWA Local 6186 urged legislators in Austin to use some of Texas's unused \$9.4 billion 'rainy day' fund to cover budget gaps instead of cutting state services and workers' benefits.

for Medicaid and other vital services.

"Everything would have been moved into a call center, putting a tremendous burden on those who need quick access to essential services," Gross said. "We won by pushing back, and our campaign was just like an all-out organizing campaign." TSEU activists made their case to city councils and local Chambers of Commerce, as well as to lawmakers in districts that would have been affected.

On April 6, TSEU and coalition members will rally in Austin for a



Activists with the Oklahoma State Workers Union/CWA Local 6086 discussed strategies for building support in the state legislature against pension and benefit cutbacks at the AFL-CIO COPE Conference.

It's All About Politics, Not Budget Deficits

Do public employee bargaining rights cause budget deficits like some politicians and right-wing extremists claim?

The facts, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, say no way.

Public workers in Wisconsin have had bargaining rights for 50 years. Wisconsin's budget deficit for 2012 is estimated at 12.8 percent. But in North Carolina, where workers never have had bargaining rights, the budget deficit for 2012 will be much higher: 20 percent.

Same goes for Ohio, where Governor Kasich wants to end bargaining rights for public workers. Ohio's budget deficit — less than half of non-union North Carolina.

"We all take pride in our work and go well beyond the call of duty. And this job has allowed us the opportunity and ability to live in Beavercreek and provide a decent way of life for our families."

Martin Miller, CWA Local 4322

budget deficit. "Our deficit was caused by inadequate revenue and tax policies, not excessive pay or pensions of state workers," Gross said. "The state has always starved state services to keep taxes low for the wealthy and corporations."

Texas cut property taxes by 33 percent, revenue that was used to support schools. Now, without any plans to bring in revenue to cover that tax cut, schools are at a crisis point.

The 10,000 jobs targeted in the governor's budget include parole officers, health service workers, and University of Texas at Austin workers, educators and staff. That's in addition to the 100,000 school district jobs at risk.

TSEU members, like public workers across the country, are bracing for additional cuts to jobs and benefits, including pensions, although state workers already contribute 6.5 percent into their pension plan. Lawmakers want them to pay more still, while cutting the state's contribution.

"I have been a CWA member and worked for the State Department of Environmental Protection for 20 years, and I have never seen this kind of all-out attack on our retirement security and on collective bargaining."

Marty Mosen, CWA Local 1036

New Mexico:

Governor Cripples State Worker Rights Board

Within a month of taking office, New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez fired the director of the state's Public Employee Relations Board.

"That action makes it next to impossible for the agency to enforce the state's public workers' bargaining law," said District 7 Staff Representative Robin Gould, a former state worker, and CWA's legislative political coordinator for New Mexico. "It's like abolishing the entire National Labor Relations Board."

New Mexico state workers, members of CWA Local 7076, are facing the same kind of attacks as state workers across the nation. Republican governors and legislatures are trying to make public workers the scapegoat for big budget deficits that in fact have been caused by the Great Recession, the Wall Street mortgage scam that enriched bankers but devastated working families, and a right-wing agenda looking to favor political and business interests.

Local 7076's 4,000 members don't have full collective bargaining

rights. They can bargain over pay, but not pensions or health care.

And even that right is limited. After completing negotiations with state agencies, the governor and legislature still weigh in and can

override negotiations. Workers still are waiting for the raise they negotiated in 2009, pay increases ranging from 2 to 6 percent. Lower-paid workers would receive the higher increases. The state

refused to honor the negotiations and instead gave all workers a 2 percent raise. The average wage for New Mexico state workers is \$16 an hour; some earn barely \$10 an hour.

"We're now waiting to see what's in store for our pension which was nearly fully funded before the recession," said Local 7076 President Michelle Lewis. "At least a dozen bills affecting our pension have been introduced."

State workers already pay 8 percent of pay into their pension plan. The governor not only wants to increase that to as much as 12 per-

CWA state workers in New Mexico joined with other union members at a Solidarity Rally.



cent, but is looking to lower the state's contribution as well. "If our plan is so underfunded, why would the governor and others reduce the state's fair share. That will only make our plan's financial situation worse," Lewis said.

Local 7076 members already have held a Lobby Day and are continuing face-to-face meetings with state lawmakers, pressing for fairness and reminding legislators of the sacrifices public workers already have made.

"Working at jobs that provide living wages and decent benefits is not something that we, as Americans, should stop striving to achieve."

*Brien Bellous,
CWA Local 4502*

Tennessee:

Coalition Fights Extreme Attacks on Workers

In Tennessee, a broad coalition of unions and community supporters is fighting extreme proposals by the governor and some state legislators to eliminate collective bargaining for teachers, block public workers from making voluntary political donations and end the deduction of union and association dues from government paychecks.

"In Tennessee, we have a Republican governor and large Republican majorities in the House

and Senate that are using the same anti-worker bag of tricks as in Wisconsin, Ohio and so many other states," said Tom Anderson, president of CWA Local 3865/United Campus Workers.

Local 3865 represents 1,200 university workers at seven University of Tennessee campuses. Over the past 11 years, UCW has built a dynamic organization of higher education staff and faculty, even without collective bargaining rights

Further attempting to silence the voice of public employees in politics, Republicans want to end automatic payroll deductions for union dues and political contributions.

"People need to understand that this attack isn't just about unions, it's about the economic security of all working families," Anderson said. "We're standing with the teachers and with all workers who are being attacked, because when they get hurt, it hurts all of us."

Did You Hear the One About.....

So a public employee union member, a non-union worker and a CEO are sitting at a table with a plate of a dozen cookies in the middle of it. The CEO takes 11 of the cookies. Then he turns to the non-union worker and says, "Watch out for that union guy. He wants a piece of your cookie."

Notice Regarding Union Security Agreements and Agency Fee Objections

As a general matter, employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement containing a Union security clause are required, as a condition of employment, to pay an agency fee equal to normal Union dues (and, where applicable, initiation fees). While the wording of these clauses is not perfectly uniform, none requires more than the payment of this agency fee to retain employment.

The Communications Workers of America policy on agency fee objections is the Union's means of meeting its legal obligations to employees covered by Union security clauses and of effectuating those employees' legal rights as stated in the applicable decisions of the United States Supreme Court (including *Beck v. CWA*) and the companion lower court and labor agency decisions. Under the CWA policy, employees who are not members of the Union, but who pay agency fees pursuant to a Union security clause, may request a reduction in that fee based on their objection to certain kinds of Union expen-

ditures.

The policy provides an objection period each year during May, followed by a reduction in the objector's fee for the twelve months beginning with July and running through June of the following year.

Briefly stated, CWA's objection policy works as follows:

1. The agency fee payable by objectors will be based on the Union's expenditures for those activities or projects "germane to collective bargaining, contract administration, and grievance adjustment" within the meaning of applicable United States Supreme Court decisions.

Among these "chargeable" expenditures are those going for negotiations with employers, enforcing collective bargaining agreements, informal meetings with employer representatives, discussion of work-related issues with employees, handling employees' work-related problems through the grievance procedure, administrative agencies, or informal meetings, and Union administration. In the past, approximately 70-75% of

the International Union's expenditures have gone for such activities. The percentages of Local Union expenditures on "chargeable" activities have generally been higher.

Among the expenditures treated as "nonchargeable," which objectors will not be required to support, are those going for community service (including participating in charitable events), legislative activity, cost of affiliation with non-CWA organizations, support of political candidates, participating in political events, recruitment of members to the Union, and members-only benefits (including members-only social events). In the past, approximately 25-30% of the International Union's expenditures have gone for such "nonchargeable" expenditures. The percentages of Local Union expenditures on "nonchargeable" activities have generally been lower.

2. Objectors will be given a full explanation of the basis for the reduced fee charged to them. That explanation will include a more detailed list of the categories of

expenditures deemed to be "chargeable" and those deemed to be "non-chargeable," and the independent certified public accountants' report showing the Union's expenditures on which the fee is based. In addition to any other avenue of relief available under the law, objectors will have the option of challenging the Union's calculation of the reduced fee before an impartial arbitrator appointed by the American Arbitration Association, and a portion of the objector's fee shall be held in escrow while he or she pursues that challenge. Details on the method of making such a challenge and the rights accorded to those who do so will be provided to objectors along with the explanation of the fee calculation.

3. Objections for the period of July through June must be sent during May. Objections will be honored for one year unless the objection specifically states that it is continuing in nature. Continuing objections will be honored for as long as the agency fee payer remains in the bargaining unit. Agency fee payers who are new

to the bargaining unit, or who are returning to the bargaining unit, may object within thirty days of receiving this notice. In addition, employees who resign Union membership may object within thirty days of becoming an agency fee payer. Employees filing these objections in either circumstance should so state that circumstance in their letter of objection. New bargaining unit members are to receive this notice prior to any demand being made upon them for the payment of agency fees. If, however, for any reason a new unit member begins paying agency fees prior to the receipt of this notice, he or she may object retroactively to the commencement of such payments and for the duration of the current annual objection period.

The letter of objection should include name, address, social security number, CWA Local number, and employer. Objections must be sent to the Agency Fee Administrator, CWA, 501 Third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-2797.

Missouri:

Missouri Legislators Want to Weaken Workers' Rights, Child Labor Laws

In Missouri, the biggest assault against workers is coming from the state Senate, where the leadership is pushing a right to work (for less) bill to destroy private sector unions and a paycheck deception bill to destroy public sector ones.

And did you think you'd see the day when child labor laws were under attack? That's also on the agenda of Missouri's Senate, with a bill to allow 14-year-olds to work unlimited and unrestricted hours, along with other reduced protections for 15- and 16-year-olds.

Mary Rebecca Gavin, a children's service worker for the Missouri Department of Social Services in Kansas City and a member of Local 6355, said there have been efforts to divide workers, "but that's not going to work in Missouri. All of us, public and private sector workers, are standing together for what we know is right."

The paycheck deception bill would restrict public workers' right to make voluntary contributions and participate in the political process. And the Senate is looking to assess additional costs to unions and associations — "the greater of eight dollars or two percent of the amount authorized" — for payroll deduction of dues.

"It's just another way to attack workers who want a voice in our political process. It's our right, but some Missouri politicians want to

silence us," Gavin said.

No big surprise, the Missouri Chamber of Commerce is backing the right to work (for less) bill that the Senate was set to take up in March.

What else is under attack in

Missouri? The minimum wage law, the prevailing wage law that would allow outside contractors to low-ball bids for schools and other construction, majority signup in organizing campaigns, and much more.

Workers and supporters have been joining solidarity rallies throughout the state, to support Wisconsin workers and to stand up for workers' rights in Missouri.

Union members and supporters

will hold a lobby day March 30 in Jefferson City. Local 6450 and many other CWA locals are using Facebook, Twitter and other online networks to get the word out and get members mobilized.

"We are facing huge attacks in the Show-Me-State. The most direct assault is coming from our state Senate, where the leadership is pushing a right to work for less bill to destroy private sector unions and a paycheck deception bill to destroy public sector ones."

Rebecca Gavin, CWA Local 6355

California:

UC Rewards Top Administrators, But Aims at Workers' Pensions, Student Fees

The University of California is proposing \$500 million in budget cuts to help reduce the state's deficit. The problem is that most of those cuts are aimed at UC staff and faculty's pension and health care benefits and at students, who face a big jump in fees.

The 12,000 faculty and staff, members of UPTE-CWA Local 9119, are pushing back, along with student groups and other supporters.

The proposed pension and health care cuts are extreme. The net retirement income of a worker who retires at age 60 and earns \$26,000 a year would plummet from \$12,200 a year to just \$1,800.

"Politicians are using the economy and our state's budget crisis as a reason to destroy workers' pen-

sions," Local 9119 President Jelgar Kalmijn said.

For students, UC's Board of Regents has hiked tuition costs

again, this time by 8 percent for fall 2011. Tuition has soared by 40 percent since 2009, putting it out of reach for many students. Attending

UC is now more expensive than many private colleges in California.

Making students and activists even angrier are fat raises and new executive-level positions the university created. Kalmijn, a staff researcher at UC San Diego, said the Board of Regents approved raises for administrators as high as \$132,000 a year and added a chief ethics and compliance officer position with a \$230,000 salary.

"The university's decision to give big raises to some of its highest-paid administrators is unconscionable considering the huge financial sacrifices that the university is trying to force on students, workers and their families," he said.

UPTE and unions throughout the state have formed a broad coalition to mobilize against the cuts.



Members of UPTE/CWA Local 9119 at the University of California rally against unfair cuts to workers and students.

Credit: Photo by Amy Newell

Solidarity Rallies Across the Country

CWAers were a big part of solidarity rallies nationwide. Clockwise, from left: Chicago; Annapolis, Md.; Puerto Rico; Denver, Oakland, Calif.

