

March 3, 2017



Legislative Update

The Legislature moved past the one-third mark of the session without one single significant conversation about creating jobs, improving West Virginia's economy or addressing the worst budgetary crisis of our lifetime. However, the Republican leadership is moving forward with legislation aimed at lessening the voice of working people and diminishing their chances of success.

* The Senate Judiciary Committee approved and sent to the full Senate SB 239, the "paycheck deception" bill to prevent withholding from an employee's paycheck for political activities.

For the past two years, labor organizations in West Virginia have been the ones calling out the legislative leadership for their anti-worker agenda intended to lower wages and benefits and make workplaces less safe. Paycheck Deception is an attempt to silence and censor – to impede the free speech of workers and their families.

* Senate Judiciary also sent to the full Senate SB 224, which would repeal the requirement that new companies post a bond for wages and benefits, a safeguard put in place to help compensate workers in the event a new company fails.

* The House of Delegates passed and sent to the Senate HB 2452 over the objections of most House Democrats. Proponents say the bill gives state universities "flexibility" in personnel issues, affecting not just faculty but the people who maintain these facilities and keep them running smoothly.

Delegate Mike Caputo, who called the legislation "mean spirited," noted seniority would no longer be considered in the event the universities choose to lay off personnel, and to add insult to injury, such seniority would also not be considered in any future recalls. The universities would be able to set their own rules for classification and compensation of employees.

We will be following, and report back on, these and all other legislation affecting West Virginia working families, including a variety of public education bills and other legislation we've previously mentioned, such as SB 330 to clean up the "Right to Work" law; SB 221 removing labor organization representatives from the PEIA Finance Board; and SB 222, which would deny unemployment benefits for striking workers in all instances and locked out workers in some instances.