



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 44: RIGHT-TO-WORK

Presented to the Senate Committee on Labor and Government Reform

By John Huebscher, Executive Director

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On behalf of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), I offer this testimony “for information” regarding the right to work legislation before you today, Senate Bill 44.

The Catholic Church has long insisted that while it does not have technical solutions for every human problem, it does have a moral duty to speak out on matters that involve the life and dignity of the human person and the common good.

The Church’s moral voice on social matters is based on its Catholic social teaching, developed over centuries and based on Jesus’ call to nourish the hungry and thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the ill and imprisoned (Matthew 25:35-39).

Catholic social teaching consists of seven essential principles, one of which is the “Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers.” As our WCC 2015 Public Policy Positions document states,

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s act of creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers, owners, and others must be respected – the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and choose to join a union, to economic initiative, and to ownership and private property. These rights must be exercised in ways that advance the common good.

...

Workers have the right to choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively, and to exercise these rights without reprisal. Workers also have responsibilities – to provide a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, to treat employers and co-workers with respect, and to carry out their work in ways that contribute to the common good. Workers and employers should not only advance their own interests, but also work together to advance economic justice and the well-being of all.

The Church defends the right of workers to form unions as a natural right. Likewise, it defends the right of employers to earn a profit. The Church warns both against the dangers of excessive self-interest.

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But while acknowledging this can be a challenge, the Church insists that a just economic order is possible. When the interests of both employee and employer are balanced, such that neither tries to damage the other and each cooperates for the advancement of justice and the common good, everyone prospers.

Therefore, as you debate SB 44 the WCC urges you to keep the following questions in mind:

- Does SB 44 benefit the common good?
- Does it provide a just balance between the interests of workers and the interests of employers?
- Does it protect the natural right of workers to assemble and form associations?

We hope these insights are helpful to you as you weigh the merits of this proposal. On behalf of the bishops, thank you for the opportunity to offer them.