



AFT Pennsylvania Position Payroll Deduction/Paycheck Deception

WHERE WE STAND: AFT Pennsylvania opposes any bill that would effectively silence the voices of teachers, public safety workers, nurses and other public servants in their workplace and in the political arena and make it difficult for them to advocate on issues that matter to working and middle-class Pennsylvanians.

Legislation prohibiting payroll deduction would wipe out collective bargaining rights that public employees have held for decades. It deprives teachers, nurses, college professors, school bus drivers and other public employees of their right to negotiate payroll deductions for union dues and voluntary political contributions to their union political action committees.

Payroll deductions are a benefit that should be left to employers and their employees to negotiate. Pennsylvania law has allowed unions and state or local governments to negotiate a payroll deduction arrangement for many years. Unions and members negotiate payroll deductions because it saves money for the union and employees.

Despite claims to the contrary, the payroll deduction process is inexpensive, and eliminating it doesn't achieve savings for taxpayers. Payroll deductions are highly automated and routinely used for direct deposit of paychecks, loan and bill payments, contributions to Social Security, Medicare and employer-sponsored benefit programs (disability insurance and 401(3b)) and charitable contributions (United Way, for example). The processing costs are nominal and are often factored into the union's contract.

States where similar legislation was passed are embroiled in long and expensive legal battles. Supreme Courts in Alabama, Arizona and Washington have ruled similar laws unconstitutional.

Federal and state laws already prohibit unions from using members' dues to contribute to political candidates and campaigns. Members make voluntary contributions (opt in) to support their union's political action committee.

Advocates claim that laws banning payroll deductions give union members "a choice" about how union dues are spent. Through the democratic process, union members determine how their union dues are spent – by electing officers, board members and workplace representatives, by voting on programs, actions, constitutions and bylaws and by being required to take affirmative steps to join and contribute to their union's political action committee. Through union elections, board meetings and conventions, union members determine how their unions participate in political campaigns and legislative advocacy.

Payroll deduction legislation is being advanced by corporations, hedge funds and special interest groups like the Commonwealth Foundation to push an anti-worker and anti-union agenda in Pennsylvania. If passed, teachers, nurses, firefighters, police and other everyday heroes would not be able to advocate effectively on issues that matter to all Pennsylvanians, including budget cuts to our schools and colleges, public safety funding, excessive corporate tax breaks, patient safety issues and workplace protections.