

Payroll Deduction Letter-Writing Toolkit

*Prepared for AFT Pennsylvania by the
Pennsylvania AFL-CIO*



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Pennsylvania AFL-CIO

Dues Deduction

Key information for public employee union members, leaders and staff

What is payroll deduction?

Many public-sector union members pay their union dues by using voluntary payroll deduction. Payroll deduction is easy, efficient and has almost zero cost. Gov. Corbett and his legislative allies want to prohibit all public sector union members from using voluntary payroll deductions.

- Employers and employees through their collective bargaining agreements voluntarily agree to have union dues deducted from their paychecks.
- Member dues are not used to contribute to political campaigns or to directly support the candidates for office endorsed by the union.
- This legislation is no different from Corbett's previous attempts to attack working people through attacks on their unions. The goal of this legislation is exactly the same as proposals to pass right-to-work, privatize our liquor stores, and cut public pensions – they all silence and hurt workers.
- Employers and employees may negotiate reimbursement of the cost of using automatic payroll deduction, but the cost is so minimal that many public employers have never requested reimbursement.

Talking Points

Gov. Corbett is being a bully, and he is retaliating against those who have opposed his agenda by trying to take away the rights of teachers, nurses, firefighters and other public employees.

- Pennsylvania currently ranks 46th in job growth, but Gov. Corbett made things worse by cutting nearly \$1 billion from our public schools and giving away millions of dollars in corporate tax breaks. Pennsylvania has real problems that need to be addressed, but instead Corbett is obsessed with retaliatory legislation to help his own reelection campaign.
- This legislation is a political power grab by corporate interests that aim to choke off union members' voices, slash their salaries and pension benefits, and pave the way for even more tax breaks for the wealthy and big corporations. We have seen these attacks orchestrated across the country.
- These attacks are about weakening our union, our communities and us. We won't allow bullies to push us around. We're going to fight these attacks with all of our resources, and with the most powerful weapon of all: the truth.
- With his approval ratings at record-low levels, Gov. Corbett is now waging a desperate, unnecessary, politically motivated attack on workers for opposing his attempts to privatize the state liquor stores, his nearly \$1 billion in public school funding cuts and his attempts to slash public employee pensions.
- These misleading bills discriminate against public employee union members and their employers by eliminating the freedom to negotiate payroll deductions.

Gov. Corbett has sided with the wealthy and powerful at every turn, and he has been rewarded with tens of millions of dollars for his campaign. This legislation is another example of Gov. Corbett putting corporate interests ahead of the interests of the middle class.

- Proposals like this are being promoted all over the country by a secret network of out-of-state Tea Party billionaires and corporate special interests. They want to tilt laws even more in their favor and keep even more corporate profits for themselves by weakening the ability of middle-class workers to win higher salaries and better benefits.
- A right-wing think tank called the Commonwealth Foundation is leading these attacks, backed by wealthy donors who aren't required to disclose their contributions.
- The Commonwealth Foundation fights for corporate tax cuts, weakening collective bargaining laws, school vouchers, and attacks on pensions.

There is nothing political about public employees' current payroll deductions, but the attempts to end those deductions are political. We all work hard for the salaries we earn, and we have the right to contribute our money as we choose.

- Considering this legislation is being pushed by right-wing political operations, it is no surprise that it protects payroll deductions by organizations that support the bills' sponsors, but prohibits payroll deductions for organizations that give a voice to middle-class workers and their families.
- This legislation unfairly singles out and prohibits voluntary deductions made by nurses, teachers and public safety/service workers but continues to allow deductions that go to insurance companies, big banks, and financial companies, even though they use the money to spend heavily on lobbying and politics.
- The bills are unnecessary because payroll deductions of any kind are essentially the press of a button – and cost taxpayers nearly nothing.
- Most government payroll systems are highly automated, so there is almost no cost to taxpayers for union members who choose to pay their dues this way.
- In fact, payroll deduction is the same way that millions of people make contributions to charities like the United Way or the American Cancer Society, or make payments to their credit unions, health insurers, or retirement plans.
- To use payroll deduction to pay union dues or to make voluntary political contributions, it must be agreed upon between a local or a state employer – and public-sector union members can choose to have their union dues deducted directly from their paycheck. Contributions for political activities are entirely voluntary, and public sector unions may not spend member dues on political campaigns or candidates.

All Pennsylvanians have a right to be heard, but this legislation unfairly singles out public employees like teachers, firefighters, and public safety/service workers and restricts their ability to advocate on behalf of the working families they serve.

- The collective voices of our public workers – our teachers, our firefighters, and our nurses -- keep us all safe. Nurses negotiate for safer staffing levels. Teachers negotiate for smaller class sizes. Firefighters negotiate for better equipment so that they can protect us more effectively. Police officers negotiate for more training to help keep our communities safer.
- These proposals weaken the ability of public workers to do their jobs. Public employees' voluntary contributions provide them with a voice in matters that directly affect their jobs and the people they serve.
- The real motivation for such legislation that unfairly singles out public employees is to take away their rights and silence their voice.
- Gov. Corbett has shown that he will side with the wealthy and powerful at every turn. Once he has attacked our brothers and sisters in the public sector, how long will it be before he comes for the rest of us?

FOR LOCALS WITH FAIR SHARE: Opponents claim that payroll deductions of fair share dues for non-members are being forced on them, but that claim is not true. Consider these facts:

- No one can be forced to join a union, even if a workplace is unionized.
- Unions are allowed to charge non-members a portion of the normal dues paid by their members in order to cover the cost of the benefits provided to every employee by the union.
- Non-members cannot be charged for lobbying expenses.
- They are not even charged when the lobbying helps them too.
- For example, they are not contributing to efforts to lobby to increase school funding, protect our pensions, improve workplace safety, increase the minimum wage, and protect teachers from unfair evaluations.
- There is a fair process in place for appealing fees that are perceived by non-members to be too high, but public employee unions' fair share fees have been upheld every time they were challenged.
- Payroll deductions and fair share fees are bargained between the employer and the union and must be contractually approved by both. Usually something is given up in order for local unions to get fair share into the contract.



Pennsylvania AFL-CIO

Dues Deduction

FAQ Summary Information

What is payroll deduction?

Many public sector union members pay their union dues by using voluntary payroll deduction. Payroll deduction is easy, efficient and has almost zero cost. Gov. Corbett and his legislative allies want to prohibit them from using voluntary payroll deduction, but will allow it for insurance companies, banks and financial companies.

Why are Gov. Corbett and his allies attacking it?

Gov. Corbett is being a bully, and he is retaliating against those who have opposed his agenda by trying to take away the rights of teachers, nurses, public safety workers, and other public employees.

What are Gov. Corbett and his allies trying to do?

Gov. Corbett and his corporate cronies have already shown their contempt for working people by attempting to push a right-to-work law, attacking our pensions, cutting education funding and attempting to privatize our liquor stores. This legislation is another example of Gov. Corbett putting corporate interests ahead of the interests of the middle class.

Why are they bringing politics into this?

There is nothing political about public employees' current payroll deductions, but the attempts to end those deductions are political. Regardless of whether we work in the public or private sector, we all work hard for the salary we earn, and we have the right to contribute our money as we choose.

Why do we need to stop these attacks?

This legislation is a first step towards less job security and lower pay for all workers in Pennsylvania. The wealthiest 1% has been the beneficiary of all of the income growth in the state since 2008. By taking away workers' rights, this legislation would hurt Pennsylvania's struggling middle class even more and open the door to increased attacks on other union members.



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Dues Deduction

Writing Letters to your State Representative and State Senator

Letter Writing Exercise

To get started all you need is a piece of paper, a pen and an envelope.

1. Please write a letter to your State Representative and State Senator.
 2. Be sure to personalize your letter. Your story is persuasive and powerful!
 3. Place your letter in a plain envelope and address it by hand.
 4. Place a stamp on the envelope
 5. Use your home address so your legislator knows you are a constituent.
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General Letter

Dear Representative or Senator _____:

As a member of _____ (name of your union), I am writing to ask you to oppose House Bill 1507 and Senate Bill 1034, which will prohibit public safety/service workers, nurses, teachers, and many other workers from using payroll deduction to pay dues, agency fees and make voluntary political contributions.

These proposals unfairly single out and silence the voices of regular people like me while still allowing deductions to insurance companies, big banks, and financial companies.

Contrary to what others would have you believe, dues collection is not a burden to taxpayers. Payroll systems are highly automated, and payroll deductions cost virtually nothing. What's more, no one can be forced to join a union in Pennsylvania or be forced to contribute to political campaigns. Deductions are negotiated between employers and employees. To suggest otherwise is untrue.

[Add your personal story here]

Pennsylvania faces real challenges, like funding public and higher education adequately and sustainably, making colleges and universities accessible and affordable, providing early childhood education, providing Pennsylvanians with health insurance and creating family-sustaining jobs. Payroll deduction bills are a distraction from these issues. Please oppose these bills and focus on the real issues that matter to Pennsylvanians.

Thank you,

[Your Name and Address]

If the Representative or Senator is with us

Dear Representative or Senator:

I am writing to express my gratitude to you for opposing HB 1507 or SB 1034 or any other proposal that would restrict my choice to negotiate payroll deductions to pay my union dues and voluntary political contributions.

As you know, this bill singles out working people by prohibiting them from negotiating payroll deductions with their employers. This bill is simply an attempt to weaken unions and undermine our voices. It is supported by groups who have always opposed unions and the ability of workers to negotiate and advocate for decent wages for themselves and speak out for the students, schools and programs we serve.

This bill is simply another attack on workers, their unions and the middle class. It is time to stop the distractions from the real issues that are most important to all workers. They are good jobs, maintaining a world class public education system and policies that will expand our middle class not continue shrinking it.

I thank you for supporting Pennsylvania's workers and please continue fighting for legislation that benefits all citizens.

Thank you again,

[Your name and address]



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Dues Deduction

Letter to the Editor Submission Information

Please send letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Your letter must include your name, address and daytime phone number. Please personalize your letter. Your story is the most persuasive one for the readers. Your letter should be no more than 200 words. Use the templates as a guide in helping you make your point. Thank you.

Below is a list of contact information for submitting a letter to the editor.

Advance of Bucks County advance@ingnews.com

Allentown Morning Call letters@mcall.com

Beaver County Times timesletters@timesonline.com

Bucks County Courier Times letters@phillyburbs.com

Butler Eagle letters@butlereagle.com

Centre Daily Times cdtletters@centredaily.com

Delaware County Times ldemeglio@delcotimes.com

Doylestown Intelligencer intell_letters@phillyburbs.com

Doylestown Patriot doyles@ingnews.com

Erie Times-News http://216.128.12.36/sites/customerservice/newsdepartment_letters_to_editor.html

Express-Times http://www.lehighvalleylive.com/opinion/send_a_letter

Gettysburg Times editor@gburgtimes.com

Harrisburg Patriot News letters@patriot-news.com

Indiana Gazette mepetersen@indianagazette.net

Johnstown Tribune-Democrat bwissinger@tribdem.com

Kittanning Leader Times leadertimes@tribweb.com

Lebanon Daily News http://www.ldnews.com/send_letters_editor

Philadelphia City Paper http://www.citypaper.net/contact-us/letter_to_the_editor

Philadelphia Daily News views@phillynews.com

Philadelphia Gay News sarah@epgn.com

Philadelphia Inquirer inquirer.letters@phillynews.com

Philadelphia Tribune editorial@phila-tribune.com

Philadelphia Weekly letters@philadelphiaweekly.com

Pittsburgh City Paper cpotter@steelcitymedia.com

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette letters@post-gazette.com

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review opinion@tribweb.com

Reading Eagle <http://www.readingeagle.com/opinion.html>

Scranton Times / The Tribune letters@TimesShamrock.com

Warren Times-Observer editorial@timesobserver.com

Yardley News yardley@ingnews.com

York Daily Record <http://ydr.inyork.com/ydr/opinion>

York Dispatch letters@yorkdispatch.com

Sample Letters to the Editor

To the editor:

The Commonwealth Foundation is at it again. They have teamed up with extreme legislators in our state Capitol to push a so-called “paycheck protection” bill which has nothing to do with protecting workers’ paychecks and everything with silencing their voices.

This time the Commonwealth Foundation is teaming up with a sinister organization known as the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and other out of state interests in two new efforts to attack workers’ rights. HB 1507 and SB 1034 prohibit school teachers, care givers, and public safety workers from choosing how they want to pay their dues through a payroll deduction. Most workers including myself choose payroll deduction to pay my dues and other payments. It is easy, convenient and the costs are next to nothing. The cost is so minimal that our employer hasn’t requested a reimbursement even though we have agreed to do so.

These proposals were not the brainchild of anyone in Pennsylvania. Portions of both laws are lifted verbatim from similar laws that ALEC has pushed in Missouri, Arizona and Kansas. They aren’t written to help working Pennsylvanians – they are written to advance an out-of-state agenda to hurt labor unions and destroy our middle class.

Our legislators need to see these bills for what they are and strongly oppose HB 1507 and SB 1034.

To the editor:

Pennsylvania has a problem with income inequality. One in eight Pennsylvanians live in poverty, while the wealthiest 1% have been the beneficiary of all of the income growth in our state since 2008.

Yet at a time when our leaders should be focusing on strengthening our middle class, some legislators in Harrisburg are actually working to accelerate its decline. Lawmakers and Gov. Corbett are pushing a so-called “paycheck protection” law, HB 1507 and SB 1034 that would hurt our struggling middle class. This law is a first step towards less job security and lower pay for Pennsylvanians.

Tom Corbett’s agenda has been to give away tax credits to corporations while slashing education funding. (He is, conveniently, reconsidering giving our schools a little cash, as it is an election year after all.) This is just another cynical effort to screw middle-class Pennsylvanians by dictating that they must be prohibited from paying dues to their unions and donations to organizations who might give them a voice in the workplace.

Protecting workers’ rights on the job keeps our communities stronger. Instead of pursuing bills like HB 1507 and SB 1034, our leaders should work to strengthen our communities by protecting and creating jobs and supporting policies that lead to higher wages not lower wages for working families. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

To the editor:

I have a question for Rep. or Sen. [NAME]. Do ordinary people deserve as loud a voice in politics as corporations?

According to two new bills in the Pennsylvania Legislature, we don’t.

Extremists in the Pennsylvania House and Senate are pushing for two bills that silence the voices of working families making more difficult for all of us to make our elected officials accountable to us in supporting public education, quality care for our parents and grand-parents and making sure our roads, highways and communities are safe. These bills prohibit voluntary payroll deductions made by teachers, nurses and public safety workers to their union or their union’s political action fund.

Yet these bills do nothing to stem the deductions that go to insurance companies, big banks, and financial companies, even though they use that money to spend heavily on lobbying and politics.

If the Legislature insists on debating these measures, we should at least call them out for what they are: a cynical attempt to silence the voices of ordinary middle class workers.

To the editor:

I have always assumed that we pay our legislators to solve our problems, not create new ones, but this may not be true anymore. Last year Pennsylvania created fewer jobs than any other large state in the country, and what have our leaders done? Well, Rep. Bryan Cutler and Sen. John Eichelberger decided to file bills making it illegal for state workers to pay union dues or fees through automatic payroll deduction.

HB 1507 and SB 1034 do not create jobs. It does not generate revenue that could fund programs to create jobs. It will, in fact, cost our state government more money. It does not solve a problem – it just creates new ones.

Pennsylvania currently ranks 48th in job creation among all U.S. states. Contrary to what Gov. Corbett said in his recent budget address, we have serious work to do to get our economy on track. Our leaders should focus on solutions that address real problems. How workers choose to use automatic payroll deductions isn't one of them.

These bills should be placed in the round file.

To the editor:

Another attack on workers' rights is brewing in Harrisburg. This time it's in the guise of a so-called cost-savings measure known as "paycheck protection". It sounds nice, right?

These "paycheck protection" bills should be named "paycheck deception" bills because they are written to deceive people about their real intent. They take away workers' voices on the job by prohibiting workers from supporting safe jobs and good jobs through their voluntary payroll deductions. While I along with my co-workers would be prohibited from negotiating payroll deductions all other payroll deductions to big banks and insurance companies, as well as charities are allowed even though all of these organizations spend millions on lobbying – for legislation that benefits them.

These bills discriminate against public servants and labor unions. They hurt working families by tilting the playing field even further in favor of corporate interests who benefit from silencing workers.

Our legislators need to raise up the voices of working people and condemn this legislation for being unfair to workers and bad for Pennsylvania. I urge Rep. or Sen. [NAME] to oppose HB 1507 and SB 1034.



Pennsylvania AFL-CIO

Payroll Deduction

Right To Work For LESS!

House Bill 1507 and Senate Bill 1034 would prohibit workers from negotiating payroll deductions and silence the voices of middle class Pennsylvanians.

Payroll Deductions Are Not Forced

- Dues deductions, and fair share fees are not forced, they are negotiated between the employer and the union and must be contractually approved by both parties.

Don't Single Out Working Pennsylvanians

- These Bills unfairly single out working Pennsylvanians. They prohibit payroll deductions for teachers, nurses, and public safety workers while allowing payroll deductions for health insurers, credit unions, and retirement plans.

Don't Choose Special Interest Groups Over The Middle Class

- These Bills are being promoted by the Commonwealth Foundation and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). This is part of a right-wing agenda funded by out-of-state billionaires and corporate special interests.

Payroll Deductions Have Almost Zero Cost To Taxpayers

- These bills would not save taxpayers dollars. Payroll deduction has almost zero cost to taxpayers, because payroll deduction is highly automated, cost-effective, and efficient.

Middle-Class, Working Pennsylvanians Oppose These Bills

- These bills are strongly opposed by middle-class, working Pennsylvanians. Public sector workers, private sector workers, public safety officers, and workers in the construction trades are united in their opposition to these bills, because they value their right to negotiate payroll deductions.

Don't Distract Attention From Issues Working Families Care About

- HB 1507 and SB 1034 are a distraction from the issues that the majority of Pennsylvania's working families care about - like jobs and education.

Please reject these attacks on the middle class so we can work together to support our schools, create jobs, and build a vibrant Pennsylvania.

VOTE NO ON HB 1507 and SB 1034 OR ANY OTHER SIMILAR LEGISLATION

VOTE NO ON RIGHT-TO-WORK FOR LESS!

Prepared by the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO Legislative Department
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TAKE ACTION!



JOIN THE FIGHT! Help STOP the Attacks on Pennsylvania's Middle Class

Out-of-state corporate interests and their allies want to weaken the middle class by singling out unions and denying our voice on the job. Their proposals will silence teachers, firefighters, nurses, police officers and many other working Pennsylvanians.

Contact your state legislators today and tell him or her to oppose efforts to limit workers' rights to freely bargain – tell them to **OPPOSE** HB 1507 and SB 1034.

Visit our website at www.aftpa.org or use the QR Scanner at the right

Call your legislators

State House **877-972-4473**
State Senate **888-584-6114**

