

# Right to Work Law Is 'Transforming' Oklahoma

## *Real Household Income Rising, Poverty Falling in Sooner State*

Four years ago last September, one of Big Labor's most formidable fear-and-loathing campaigns ever launched ended in failure when Oklahoma approved a statewide ban on compulsory union dues and fees and thus became the nation's 22nd Right to Work state.

Almost immediately, the very union bosses who had been shrilly predicting that a Sooner Right to Work law would swiftly lead to disaster moved to prevent the law from having any impact at all.

When the Right to Work law had been in effect just seven weeks, Big Labor lawyers launched an underhanded bid to overturn it. This legal attack kept the law's future under a cloud for more than two years.

But in December 2003, the state's attorneys and Right to Work attorneys intervening on behalf of several independent-minded workers finally prevailed when the Oklahoma Supreme Court unanimously rejected national AFL-CIO Associate General Counsel Larry Gold's demand that it overturn the law.

### **Since Ruling, Sooner Incomes Have Grown Half Again as Fast As Forced-Dues State Average**

"Since the union bosses' legal assault on Oklahomans' Right to Work was thwarted, the state's economy has picked up more strength," observed Doug Stafford, vice president of the National Right to Work Committee.

"From the first quarter of 2004 through the third quarter of 2005, real personal income in Oklahoma grew by 3.5% -- half again as fast as the overall average of the 28 forced-dues states.

"Over the past year alone, a wide array of businesses have announced major new investments in Oklahoma.

"For example, in December 2005 Mercury MerCruiser, a manufacturer of stern drive marine engines, announced it would expand operations in Stillwater, Okla., rather than beef up other domestic or offshore operations in China and Mexico.

"The planned \$13.5 million expansion of the company's Stillwater plant could add up to 100 jobs for machinists and die cast operators when complete.

"To mention just one other example, in July Dell announced it would expand



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**MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE.** Oklahoma, America's newest Right to Work state, has bragging

rights not only about 2005 *American Idol* winner Carrie Underwood, but also about a host of new, high-paying jobs.

its customer-contact operation in Oklahoma City with an additional 120,000 square-foot building. The company increased the number of projected employees to 1000 by this year, up from 250-500 when the center was first announced in 2004."

Right to Work laws facilitate the creation of high-paying service-sector jobs, as well as traditionally unionized manufacturing jobs, because they help improve a state's general business climate.

### **Right to Work Laws Benefit Citizens at All Income Levels**

"In states where forced dues are legal," explained Mr. Stafford, "union campaign operatives use a large chunk of the forced dues they grab to elect politicians who are beholden to Big Labor's agenda of higher taxes, more government spending, and strait-jacket regulation of business.

"This high-tax, high-regulation agenda hinders the creation of service and manufacturing jobs alike.

"That's why Right to Work laws increase opportunities for all kinds of citizens -- at all income levels.

"According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 2000-2001 and 2003-2004, Oklahoma's constant-dollar median household income increased by

roughly \$1500, while the national median fell by \$1106 as a result of the 2001 recession and subsequent slow recovery.

"During the same period, the Sooner poverty rate dropped by 3.2 percentage points, while poverty increased by 1.1 percentage points nationwide.

"The evidence is clear that Oklahoma's Right to Work law is transforming the state. And the biggest benefits are yet to come."

Across the country, improved public understanding of the salutary economic impact of state Right to Work laws is helping to spur popular movements to ban forced union dues in more and more states.

As this Newsletter issue goes to press, grass-roots proponents of Right to Work have won or are seeking recorded votes on Right to Work measures in Missouri, Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and a number of other states.

"The Committee and its 2.2 million members are greatly encouraged by these efforts at the state level," commented Mr. Stafford.

"And we will do everything possible to ensure their success."

Newsletter readers who want to help their state enact a Right to Work law may e-mail Committee Director of Legislation Greg Mourad -- [gwm@nrtw.org](mailto:gwm@nrtw.org) -- to obtain pertinent information for their legislators and local media. 