

Submitter: Erik halstead  
On Behalf Of: Myself  
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 916.

It is blatantly unfair to give special treatment to one, and only one class, of citizen with regards to unemployment benefits - especially when these people have a clear choice in working or not to work. The purpose of unemployment insurance is when a worker is unable to work due to no choice of their own doing, not to placate people who voluntarily refuse to work to force their employer's hand.

I found myself in a situation years ago where due to a multitude of safety issues, I was unable to perform my duties. When my employer refused to correct the situation, I was forced to make an unemployment claim, and begin the process to find new work. Over two years later, the State of Oregon chose to file a lawsuit against me, and an appointed, unelected administrative law judge found that because I did not make one phone call, that my entire claim was being denied - and I was required to repay my unemployment insurance. Never mind the numerous safety violations (that the state refused to investigate).

I had no choice, other than to subject myself to physical injury. The State of Oregon made a legal determination that I should have done that.

Thus, unless the Oregon Legislature is willing to write up a new bill to investigate why I was unfairly denied unemployment despite being in a situation against my will, this bill should be killed immediately. A striking worker has an absolute choice to return to work, even if it makes them unhappy. They can still work. I could not. Why should a union worker get special treatment simply for being in a union, when unemployment insurance is for ALL Oregonians who are UNABLE to work due to no fault of their own? Union workers can, within their own unions and using their own dues, set up strike funds. The rest of us should not be subsidizing their CHOICE to strike, while being denied our rightful benefits to receive pay when our employers make it impossible for us to work.