

Submitter: Brian Jensvold  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

I strongly support Senate Bill 916, which aims to repeal the law that denies unemployment benefits to workers whose unemployment is due to a labor dispute. This bill is an important step forward in ensuring that workers who are fighting for better conditions are not punished by being deprived of the unemployment benefits they have earned.

The current law, which disqualifies workers from receiving unemployment benefits if they are unemployed due to an active labor dispute, is a significant barrier to workers exercising their right to organize and fight for better working conditions. Since the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, anti-union laws like this one have systematically weakened labor protections and restricted workers' ability to stand up for fair wages and conditions. As a result, union membership has steadily declined, from over 35% of the workforce in the 1950s to less than 6% in recent years. This decline has contributed to a broader trend of rising economic inequality, where the wealthiest 1% of Americans now hold more wealth than the bottom 90%.

Meanwhile, the pay gap between workers and executives has reached alarming levels. According to recent studies, the average CEO earns over 350 times the salary of the average worker, while wages for the majority of workers have stagnated for decades. This stark inequality is a direct consequence of the weakening of unions, which were historically instrumental in advocating for fair wages and workplace protections.

Senate Bill 916 is a critical piece of legislation that will help restore balance in the labor market. By ensuring that workers who are involved in labor disputes are not penalized by losing their unemployment benefits, this bill will allow workers to more effectively organize and fight for better conditions without the fear of economic devastation. The ability to collectively bargain is a fundamental right, and this bill takes us one step closer to correcting the imbalances caused by decades of anti-union legislation.

It is past time for us to support workers in their efforts to build a fairer economy. This bill provides a necessary step toward empowering workers and lifting the standards of living for working families across the state. By passing Senate Bill 916, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that all workers have the right to organize and advocate for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.

I urge the Committee to vote in favor of this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.