



## Vermont Building and Construction Trades Council

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**Testimony of  
Larry Moquin, Field Supervisor, Local 668 LiUNA! & Vice President, Vermont Building &  
Construction Trades Council  
before the  
Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee  
on  
Proposal 3  
February 21, 2024**

Good morning Madame Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Larry Moquin and I am the Field Supervisor for Local 668 of the Laborers' International Union of North America. My local jurisdiction covers all of Vermont and a portion of New Hampshire. I also serve as the Vice President of the Vermont Building & Construction Trades Council. I grew up in Winooski and my family has been in Vermont for five generations.

I am here on behalf of the VT Building Trades and our over 3,000 members supporting Proposal 3. We hope the committee will advance this proposal to the full Senate.

I would like to thank the committee for allowing me time to discuss the importance of passing Proposal 3. This amendment will protect our strong labor laws, Vermont workers, and the rights they currently enjoy for generations to come.

Vermont is a place where we care about each other. We care about helping the underprivileged, the unrepresented, the uninsured, the underemployed and all people without a voice. We care about our children's education, reproductive freedoms, LGBTQ+ rights, the climate, our neighbors and being good to each other. Vermont is great and a lot of it has to do with the laws in place. Now, we can be the second state in the country to enshrine workers' rights into their constitution following Illinois which did so in 2022.

Proposal 3 is important because it would outlaw so-called "right to work" laws from ever being introduced in Vermont. Right to Work was an idea for a law that originated in the 1940s to try to maintain Jim Crow in the south. The idea was pushed by a corporate lobbyist named Vance Muse who was a known white supremacist, anti-Semitic and anti-unionist from Texas. Muse and others claimed the CIO was sending labor organizers to the rural south to agitate a contented but gullible African American population and force white workers to join unions with black workers and call them "brother." This definitely is not a Vermont value, but nine states have actually enshrined Right to Work into their constitutions: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

To show the impacts of Right to Work laws on workers in these states, I compared data about minimum wages, unemployment benefits, uninsured population, infant mortality rates, poverty rates and education ranks for these states with Vermont. I am not surprised by most of the findings, which I will summarize briefly.

Minimum Wages- five of the nine states pay the federal minimum wage of 7.25 and eight of the nine have a minimum wage lower than Vermont.

Unemployment Benefits- nine out of nine states have a lesser benefit than Vermont with five of nine states benefit being \$320.00 or less per week, the lowest being \$235.00 per week. Four of nine states only allow 20 or less weeks of benefits, Florida being the worst allowing only 12 weeks.

Uninsured Population- Vermont has an uninsured population of 3.7%. Of the nine RTW states mentioned Nebraska has the lowest with 7.1% uninsured and Oklahoma has the highest with 13.8%. The eleven states with the highest uninsured populations all have RTW laws on the books.

Infant Mortality Rate- Vermont ranks #1 with an infant mortality rate of less than a percent. The nine states we are comparing have rates from a low of 5.47% in Arizona to a staggering high of 9.39% in Mississippi. These numbers are based on the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

Poverty Rates- Nine out of nine states have higher poverty rates than Vermont. Vermont stands at 10.3% poverty rates while Nebraska has lowest poverty rates of these nine at 10.8% and Mississippi again has the highest poverty rate at 19.4%

Most Educated States: Vermont currently ranks #2 nationally behind Massachusetts as the most educated state. Of the nine states Florida is the highest ranked at #21, with Kansas #23, Nebraska, #24, Arizona #36, Tennessee #39, Alabama #45, Oklahoma #46, Arkansas #47 and Mississippi coming 49# only ahead of West Virginia, another RTW state.

Eight out of the top ten states with the highest workplace fatality rates are RTW. This statistic sheds light on the fact that when workers' rights and collective bargaining rights are attacked the consequences can be far worse than just the economic impact on the worker.

The Vermont Building Trades hopes that this will pass your committee unanimously on its way to the full Senate. Our organization's membership, much like the state of Vermont, is made up of people from across the political spectrum. In many ways, Vermont is somewhat of a "conservative" state, in the traditional meaning of the word "conservative." We value our rights, and we value our freedoms. We believe that we all deserve the opportunity to succeed and to live our lives in the manner that we choose. The workplace is no different. Vermont workers deserve the right to organize and be protected when they choose to join together to do so.

We have a chance to be a model for the Northeast when it comes to how workers should be treated and respected. This amendment could be a beautiful recruitment tool. We need more workers now. Let's show those workers that they should come to Vermont because we care about our workers, the rights they have and will continue to have.

We, the workers of Vermont, ask the committee to let us decide the future: We ask that you send Proposal 3 to the full Senate, taking the first step toward sending this constitutional amendment to the people.

STATE	Min. Wage Per Hour	% Uninsured	Infant Mortality Rate Per 1000 Live Births %	Poverty Rate %	Weekly Unemployment Benefit
Vermont	\$13.67	3.7	less than 1	10.3	\$583.00
Alabama	\$7.25	9.9	7.56	16.1	\$275.00
Arizona	\$14.35	10.7	5.47	12.8	\$320.00
Arkansas	\$11.00	9.2	8.59	16.3	\$451.00
Florida	\$12.00	12.1	5.9	13.1	\$275.00
Kansas	\$7.25	9.2	5.3	11.7	\$540.00
Mississippi	\$7.25	11.9	9.39	19.4	\$235.00
Nebraska	\$12.00	7.1	5.49	10.8	\$440.00
Oklahoma	\$7.25	13.8	7.13	15.6	\$539.00
Tennessee	\$7.25	10	6.18	13.6	\$275.00

Sources:

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