



For Immediate Release

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REMARKS: State Senator Gina Walsh on SB 19

Jefferson City, Mo. – The following are **State Senator Gina Walsh**'s remarks on Senate Bill 19, the so-called **Right-to-Work** legislation, as prepared for delivery:

“Thank you Mr. President.

We stand here today, debating this issue, not at the request of our constituents, but because politicians, beholden to special interests, have promised that so-called Right-to-Work would finally be passed in 2017.

But lest we forget - this country was not built by politicians and special interests.

This country was built by working men and women.

Union men and women.

They built our homes and hospitals, our roads and bridges.

They built our pipelines and factories, our cars and schools.

Union men and women built the Stan Musial Memorial Bridge in St. Louis, adding to that city's iconic skyline.

They are the ones building the new \$211 million state mental hospital at Fulton, where politicians will cut the ribbon when it opens.

They are the ones building the new Boeing Triple-Seven X components in St. Louis. That project is a \$300 million investment in our region, creating more than 700 good paying jobs.

Politicians may have taken credit when the cameras were rolling, but it was the skilled workers who were doing the work and growing the economy by partnering with a good employer: Boeing.

These workers are the ones building the bestselling trucks in America, in Claycomo and Wentzville. Trucks we can drive to our kids' soccer games, or use on the farm, or to drive ourselves to a good paying job that union membership preserved.

Union workers built the middle class, where we as politicians go looking for votes during election time.

You know what else they've built?

They've built our economy with union investment funds. Just in the St. Louis Region alone, this has created thousands of housing units and nearly a billion in investments through union pension funds.

That, folks, is a lot of man hours that pay a fair wage with health insurance and retirement plans. It allows workers to retire with dignity and not rely on government assistance to survive.

You know the reason they invest in our region?

They invest here because of the positive working relationship that labor unions and businesses have preserved over the years, without government interference.

Let's not forget folks - Union workers built this country.

They built this state.

When the Great Recession hit, it was Union workers and the middle class that made America great again.

Folks pushing this bill forget that Missouri has the hardest working, most highly skilled and safest workforce in the world.

For generations, union workers fought, and sometimes died, for rights the rest of the world is still catching up to: The right to a safe and humane workplace; the right to compensation if you're hurt on the job; the right to fair wages; the 40-hour work week; child labor laws; sick leave; health insurance; and the weekend.

Those victories lifted the living standards of working families everywhere. Union and non-union.

Yesterday, the sponsor said that unions were, maybe, needed back in day to change the injustices of the workplace. But now, we're telling them "thanks for doing such a good job, but you aren't wanted any longer."

Sad.

That is a sad and shameful way to treat the folks who gave rise to America's middle class, the backbone of the strongest economy in the world.

To undermine them by passing this legislation is appalling, and unbecoming of this hollowed body.

So my message to you today is simple:

Right-to-Work is wrong for Missouri, and my heart breaks for the working class families of this state that will suffer under its impact. Lower wages. Fewer jobs. And an irreparable wound upon the fabric of our nation.

Of course, I realize that everything I've just said has likely fallen on deaf ears.

Some folks seem content with ignoring the facts: That Missouri ended 2016 with record employment; that we led the Midwest in manufacturing growth; and that we created more jobs than any of our neighboring states – yes, even the one with Right-to-Work already on the books.

On this issue, facts do not seem to mean much because lines have been drawn. Sides have been chosen. Any appeal to rational thought, evidence or policy implications stands small against the millions in dark money that have bought this issue passage.

So now, let me speak to you not as the Senator from the 13th District.

Let me speak to you instead as a daughter, raised in a working household. As a wife, widowed too soon. As a single mother of three wonderful, spirited daughters.

A person who in many ways reflects the very families this law will harm.

Growing up, my dad was truck driver. He carried a Teamster card.

He drove trucks for Meadow Gold Dairy in St. Louis, and later he drove a beer truck.

He was probably the only man I knew that spent that much time in a tavern and never drank a drop.

Meanwhile, my mom worked for the state.

They were middle class, working folk.

Together, they raised us six kids.

I laugh now when my kids think it is difficult to both work and run a household.

I watched my mom & dad manage with six of us. I'm sure it was difficult, but you would never know it from them.

They taught me the value of hard work. They also taught me - through their example - how important it is to take care of your family.

A lot of folks call those "the good old days."

I agree.

A working family.

A truck driver and state employee.

One in a union, one in the public sector. Making ends meet. Putting a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs and food on the table.

But even back then, there were some who wanted to tear all that down, and go after working families.

In the late 1970s, I remember my dad and his friends being worried about something called Amendment 23.

It was a ballot initiative that would have made Missouri a Right-to-Work state.

The press was saying it would pass with a 2-to-1 margin.

The thing I remember most about that summer, back in 1978, is going door to door and hand billing with other young people.

We weren't union members then. Some of our parents were. We were mostly just young and passionate about not wanting the government to mess with our families.

I also remember how surprised I was that there were a lot of non-union people supporting us: farmers, lawyers, business owners.

At the time, I didn't get it. I was glad, but I didn't get it.

I do now.

I get that - this isn't just a Union issue. This is a pocket-book issue. Right-to-Work hurts the economy. It hurts the middle class families that drive the economy. It hurts all of us.

In the end, the people of Missouri saw past the empty promises – they saw Right-to-Work for what it really was, and they defeated it 60 percent to 40 percent.

Hanging in my office is the framed front-page of the Labor Tribune, showing a now-yellowed picture of a group of people, all cheering, taken the night Right-to-Work was defeated.

It reads in big, bold letters “Missouri Wins”

“Missouri wins”

My mom found that paper in the top of my dad's closet when she was clearing out some things after his death.

She gave it to me.

It hung in my office in the House to remind me of what is at stake if Right-to-Work ever becomes law.

It now hangs in my Senate office for the same reason.

To remind me that the “Good Old Days”, meant we valued the working class, and we didn't pass laws that hurt them.

To remind me that later, when I was a young widow, it was a Union job that allowed me to raise my three girls with dignity.

To remind me that when an issue like this threatens one group of Missourians – we all come together. Union and non-union.

Pipe coverers and farmers.

Doctors and carpenters.

Autoworkers and business owners.

Everybody. Together. At the ballot box. As it should be.

And when we do, Missouri wins.

Missouri wins.

Thank you.”

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