



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 21-2065, **Version:** 1

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### PROPOSED RESOLUTION

#### RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE WORKERS' RIGHTS AMENDMENT

**WHEREAS**, labor unions have existed in the United States since the formation of this country with one of the first recorded unions forming in Philadelphia in 1794; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States has had one of the most violent labor histories in the industrial world with hundreds of individuals sacrificing their life in support of workers' rights and labor unions; and

**WHEREAS**, tens of thousands have fought for the benefits workers enjoy today, from the Great Strike of 1877, the Atlanta's Washerwoman Strike in 1881, the Haymarket Riot in 1886, the 1892 Homestead Strike, the Pullman Strike in 1894, to the Great Postal Strike of 1970, and many more, the fight for labor unions continues; and

**WHEREAS**, the efforts of labor unions have led to an 8-hour work day, safer working conditions, health benefits, benefits for retired or injured workers, and was pivotal in ending the abusive practice of child labor; and

**WHEREAS**, there has been a concerted, successful effort by corporate interests and the government to silence working Americans through relentless attacks on collective bargaining and organized labor unions throughout the country; and

**WHEREAS**, fewer workers are in unions now than in 1983 when 20.1% of the workforce was a union member where only 10.8% of the workforce was a union member in 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, Wisconsin was the first state in the United States to provide collective bargaining rights to public employees in 1959; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2011, then-Governor Scott Walker signed Act 10 into law, effectively eliminating public sector collective bargaining, leading to pay decreases and a sharp decline in union membership throughout the state; and

**WHEREAS**, the Supreme Court of the United States, in *Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council 31, et al.*, struck down a 41-year history of unions supporting all workers through the collection of dues, now allowing "bystanders" to receive services, benefits, and representation without paying for it; and

**WHEREAS**, since 2012, purported "right to work" (RTW) laws have been passed in Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Kentucky; and

**WHEREAS**, the number of RTW laws is increasing nationwide at a time when wealth disparity is also expanding; and

**WHEREAS**, Illinois workers are not impervious to attacks on their rights; and

**WHEREAS**, former-Governor Bruce Rauner weaponized the executive branch against organized labor in Illinois; and

**WHEREAS**, former-Gov. Rauner held the budget hostage for two years, targeting our teachers, first responders, and caregivers, causing lasting damage and disproportionately affecting our most vulnerable to satisfy a personal vendetta; and

**WHEREAS**, this year, the Tennessee General Assembly has advanced legislation designed to enshrine RTW in its state constitution and the Missouri General Assembly is once again contemplating enacting RTW, just one year after the voters of Missouri overwhelmingly rejected the measure; and

**WHEREAS**, 27 states now have RTW laws, several of which are cemented into their state constitutions despite a recent Gallup poll finding that almost 65% of Americans approve of labor unions; and

**WHEREAS**, RTW laws undermine workers' freedom to band together and speak with a more powerful voice; and

**WHEREAS**, working people in RTW states earn lower wages and are significantly less likely to have employer-sponsored health insurance or retirement benefits; and

**WHEREAS**, RTW laws are associated with up to an 8.2 percent decrease in worker earnings; and

**WHEREAS**, union membership is correlated with approximately a 12 to 13 percent increase in earnings while also having a positive effect on the wages of non-union workers; and

**WHEREAS**, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. remarked that "[i]n our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as 'right to work.' It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone... We do not intend to let them do this to us. We demand this fraud be stopped."

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County does hereby call on the Illinois Speaker of the House Emanuel "Chris" Welch, Illinois Senate President Harmon, and the other members of the General Assembly to place the Workers' Rights Amendment on the ballot to be voted upon by the people of the State of Illinois at the General Election to be held November 3, 2022.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, in furtherance of this resolution, the Cook County Clerk shall submit a certified copy of this resolution to elected officials at the state level and request that all relevant support and assistance in effectuating this resolution be provided.