



# FACT SHEET

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## School-Age Population Falling In Forced-Unionism States

### Meanwhile, Right to Work States' 'K-12 Contingent' Has Grown by Nearly 1.8 Million Since 2000

The state Right to Work law adopted by the Indiana General Assembly and signed into law by GOP Gov. Mitch Daniels this February does not directly affect teachers. In the Hoosier State, the Right to Work of teachers and other public school employees has already been protected for roughly a decade-and-a-half. Responding to intense pressure from freedom-loving citizens, in 1995 Indiana legislators overrode Big Labor Democratic Gov. Evan Bayh's veto and enacted a Right to Work law that bars the firing of public school employees for refusal to pay union dues or fees.

Top bosses of the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA/NEA) union and its subsidiaries nevertheless ferociously lobbied against enactment of Indiana's 2012 Right to Work law, which safeguards private-sector employees from compulsory union dues. According to Gail Zeheralis, ISTA director of government relations, teacher union bosses' opposition to Right to Work is based largely "on principle."<sup>1</sup>

Neither Ms. Zeheralis herself nor any of her cohorts have offered any evidence that rank-and-file teachers share ISTA officials' ideological commitment to monopolistic unionism, and it is very reasonable to doubt that they do. At any rate, one very apparent practical effect of comprehensive state Right to Work laws is a boon for teachers, regardless of their personal views on voluntary vs. compulsory unionism.

A key factor for sustaining a healthy employment market for teachers and prospective teachers is growth in K-12 school-age population, that is, 5-17 year-olds. In the U.S. as a whole, the "K-12 contingent" has grown only glacially in recent years. In 2010, nationwide, there were just 700,000 more children aged five to 17 than there had been in 2000.<sup>2</sup> In percentage terms, the U.S. population as a whole grew *more than seven times as fast* as the K-12 contingent.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. Zeheralis was quoted in "Is Indiana's Right to Work Bill an Education Issue?" an article for StateImpact (National Public Radio, Indiana) by Kyle Stokes, January 4, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> For 2010 population data, see "Population Under 18 Years of Age," 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau. For 2000 population data, see the 2001 edition of the Census Bureau's *Statistical Abstract*, Table No. 21, "Resident Population by Age and State: 2000."

And a number of states have over the past decade begun to endure European-style declines in their school-age populations.

From 2000 to 2010, the most recent year for which state-by-state U.S. Census data are available, 10 states suffered declines of 30,000 or more apiece in the K-12 contingents of their populations. And, with the sole exception of Hurricane Katrina-ravaged Louisiana, all of these states (Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin) have one thing in common: They don't have a Right to Work law on the books.

Over the same period, 12 states experienced *increases* of 30,000 or more in their school-age population. With the sole exception of Colorado, all of the states with the greatest absolute increases in the number of 5-17 year-olds from 2000 to 2010 (Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Virginia) have comprehensive Right to Work laws.

In the aggregate, Right to Work states' K-12 contingent increased by 1.78 million, or 8.7%, over the past decade, while forced-unionism states' K-12 contingent shrank by 1.06 million, or 3.2%. (For simplicity's sake, Oklahoma, which adopted its Right to Work law in 2001, is counted as a Right to Work state for the entire period here. Since Indiana's private-sector Right to Work law was not adopted until this year, it is included with the forced-unionism states.)

Why does the number of schoolchildren keep rising in states that prohibit Big Labor from forcing employees to join or pay dues or fees to an unwanted union as a condition of employment, even as it falls in states that do not protect employees from compulsory unionism? The reason is not immigration from abroad, which on average affects both Right to Work states and non-Right to Work states more or less equally. In fact, forced-unionism California actually endured a net population loss of 11,000 school-age children from 2000 to 2010, despite taking in far more immigrant families than any other state during that period.

The real reason for the disparity is that parents and prospective parents are moving in droves to Right to Work states. They find these states, with their generally higher real incomes and lower living costs, to be more attractive places in which to live and, particularly, to raise children.

Even data furnished in a 2003 American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union analysis showed that on average living costs, excluding all taxes, were roughly 15% higher in non-Right to Work states than in Right to Work states.<sup>3</sup> Data analyses that factor in such cost-of-living differences show again and again that, on average, earnings and incomes are higher in Right to Work states.

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<sup>3</sup> F. Howard Nelson and Rachel Drown, "Survey and Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2002," American Federation of Teachers (AFT/AFL-CIO) publication, July 2003. See especially the Table on p. 13.

For example, adjusting for regional differences in living costs with the help of indices created by the non-partisan Missouri Economic Research and Information Center,<sup>4</sup> in 2011 the average disposable (after-tax) income per capita in Right to Work states was \$36,821. That's nearly \$2200 more than the average for forced-unionism states.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, couples who are relying on a single income or cutting back their working hours in order to raise children may find the Right to Work advantage especially salient.

Census data indicate that the massive net migration of young adults to Right to Works states shortly before or after they start having children has been going on for decades, and has accelerated in recent years.<sup>6</sup> It's therefore reasonable to expect that Right to Work states will continue to have far greater growth in their school-age population in the future, unless and until Congress adopts a national Right to Work policy.

Consequently, teacher union officials who oppose enactment of Right to Work laws in their states are effectively fighting to reduce the number of 5-17 year-olds that the educators in their unions will have an opportunity to teach. And, over time, fewer schoolchildren means fewer job opportunities for teachers and other education professionals.

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*Nothing here is to be construed as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress or any state legislature.*

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<sup>4</sup> See MERIC's state cost-of-living data series for the four quarters of 2011. The calculation cited here averages the four quarters to obtain an annual 2011 cost-of-living index for each state.

<sup>5</sup> Disposable income per capita data for each of the 50 states were obtained from <http://www.bea.gov> – the web site of the U.S. Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis. To adjust for regional cost of living, the per capita disposable income for each state was divided by that state's annual cost-of-living index for 2011 (see Footnote 4), then multiplied by 100.

<sup>6</sup> For example, from 1991 to 2000, the aggregate school-age population of Right to Work states increased by 18.5%, or 4.4 percentage points more than the aggregate increase for forced-unionism states during that period. That's a significant difference, but far smaller than the 11.9 percentage point advantage for Right to Work states in school-age population growth for the 2000-2010 period. See Table 27 in the 1992 edition of the *Statistical Abstract* and Table 21 in the 2001 edition.