



## **Illinois Democrats Warn Rauner Is Trying To Eliminate Unions**

**By Connor D. Wolf**

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Democrat lawmakers in Illinois are warning that Gov. Bruce Rauner's stance against union power is nothing more than an attempt to eliminate them completely.

In the two months since taking office, Rauner has tackled union power in several ways, arguing that many laws that unfairly benefit organized labor hurt the state economically. Fair share dues, a fee nonunion employees must pay to the union to cover the costs of collective bargaining, quickly became the main target of his reforms.

In February Rauner went after fair share dues in two ways. He ordered state agencies to stop collecting them while also filing a federal lawsuit to end the state law that requires them. Democrat lawmakers in the state are now warning, despite his claims he is not anti-union, that these reforms are nothing more than a way for Rauner to rid the state of labor unions.

According to Democrat sources for The Times of Northwest Indiana, the governor expressed his alleged plans to completely destroy unions at a private meeting. They claim Rauner suggested that if his policies are adopted by the legislature, union membership will be eliminated in Illinois within the next four years.

Democratic state Sens. Andy Manar and John Sullivan, who were at the private meeting, argue Rauner is wasting time and energy by fighting unions.

"We ought to be talking more about the budget," Sullivan told The Northwest Indiana. "Instead of traveling around, he ought to be meeting with people about the budget."

"Actions speak louder than words. His actions have indicated that he's not pro-union," Sullivan continued. "I came away from the meeting believing that he believes in what he's saying."

Prior to the executive order, Rauner pointed towards prevailing wage laws and project labor agreements as some of the few examples of how labor unions are hurting the state through unfair laws.

Project labor agreements are deals between owners of construction projects and construction unions in which firms must enter into collective bargaining with a union, hire workers through the union and pay union wages and benefits. In government contracting, a prevailing wage is the hourly wage, benefits and overtime that must be paid to the majority of workers within a particular area.

According to a report by the libertarian Cato Institute, project labor agreements alone can add 12 to 18 percent to the cost of public projects.

Rauner has argued that reforming labor policy and unions will allow the state to overcome some major economic obstacles that have hindered progress in recent years. According to the Illinois Policy Institute, the state is struggling in jobs and education, two areas vital to economic growth and stability.

“Illinois’ low standing for total job growth is unusual given that Illinois has the largest population in the Midwest and the fifth largest nationally,” the Institute noted in a report for 2014. “It takes a particularly toxic combination of bad policy and corrupt dealings to hinder such a large and talented workforce from keeping up with the likes of Kentucky and Connecticut.”

“Illinois tracks last of all states for private-sector job creation in 2014, one of only four states to be negative for jobs on the year,” the report added.