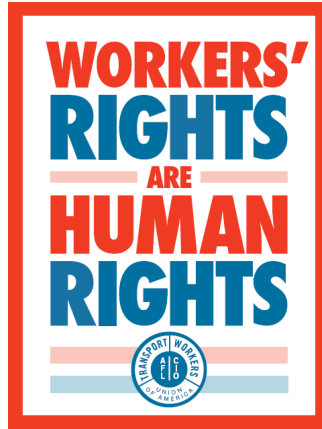


# TWU Workers' Rights=Human Rights Campaign

## TOOLKIT

March 23, 2011





## Talking Points

### ***Wisconsin, Ohio . . . just the tip of the iceberg.***

*Legislation to strip public sector workers of their collective bargaining and other rights has been introduced in at least twenty states. Governors of most of the other states are seeking major concessions from their public employee unions. But working families and their allies all over the country, not just union activists, are fighting back in a big way, from Wisconsin to Indiana to Ohio to Nevada.*

### ***“Ground zero” for democracy – A struggle for the soul of America***

*Getting rid of collective bargaining and permanently weakening unions would leave all working families, not just union workers, completely defenseless and at the mercy of the super-rich. The battle in Wisconsin and other states is a struggle for the soul of America. This is a struggle over whether the American Dream will continue to exist at all for millions of Americans. This is about whether a middle class life will be a realistic possibility or an impossible dream for our children and grandchildren. We are at a defining moment in our history, just like the civil rights movement, where we are being shown that America as a nation cannot be free if any of her people are not free.*

### ***It's not about deficits, it's about democracy.***

*If this was really about deficits, Republican Governors who want to strip collective bargaining rights, from Walker in Wisconsin to Kasich in Ohio to Scott in Florida, wouldn't be giving away multi-million dollar tax breaks to the rich. They wouldn't be turning down hundreds of millions in federal transportation funding and the jobs and tax revenues that come with it. This is about a power grab by billionaires who see taking away workers' human rights and destroying unions as removing the last obstacle to their total takeover of government.*

### ***America's Not Broke.***

*The politicians who call for "shared sacrifice" miss the point. The same people who caused the economic meltdown are now making record profits, while millions of people who had nothing to do with making the mess remain unemployed. Government shouldn't ask ordinary working*

*Americans to pay for a crisis they didn't cause. The federal and state governments can pay for the investments we need to rebuild a green 21st century economy **and** reduce deficits long-term by cutting corporate welfare, and by taxing millionaires, speculative financial transactions and hefty bonuses.*

***Workers' rights = human rights***

*These attacks on workers' rights are illegal. Collective bargaining is what gives working people a voice on the job. It is a fundamental human right for all workers, whether they work in the public or private sector. It is part of the Freedom of Association protected by our Constitution, and by international law that is binding throughout the United States. Nobody, not even the President, let alone the Governor of Wisconsin, has the legal authority to take this human right away.*

***Harming Unions harms all working people***

*A union job is one that gives you a chance to get out of poverty rather than a job keeps you in it. American workers who are members of unions earn significantly more per hour than their nonunion counterparts. Union wages lift everybody's wages. Unions are the reason we have any health care system (such as it is), weekends, any retirement benefits or social security, any sick time, any vacations. Organized workers fought for those rights, which benefitted **ALL** working families. Rich people didn't just hand them to us. Unions made a middle class life possible for millions of people.*

***Unions aren't too powerful, the bosses are.***

*Unions are just ordinary people standing together for justice against powerful financial and political interests.*

*There's a joke floating around the internet that tells the story pretty well:*

*A CEO, a Tea Partier and a union member go out for a dozen cookies. When the three of them sit down, the CEO immediately snarfs 11 of the cookies. Then he leans over to the Tea Partier and whispers, "Watch out. That guy's after your cookie."*

*Unionized workers in the private sector have been under sustained attack since at least the 1980s, when private sector union density (the percentage of workers in unions) began to decline dramatically. During that time, workers' wages have stagnated, but CEO pay has skyrocketed. Union density in the United States is now at its lowest levels in a century. However, wealthy corporations and their political hired guns have not been as effective in stamping out public sector unions as they have in the private sector. Public sector union density is still over 35%. That is why the enemies of democracy are now attacking unionized public servants.*

***It's the super-rich who are overpaid.***

*Right now, just 400 Americans have the same wealth as **half** of all Americans combined.*

*As Michael Moore recently said, “400 obscenely rich people, most of whom benefited in some way from the multi-trillion dollar taxpayer bailout of 2008, now have as much loot, stock and property as the assets of 155 million Americans combined.”*

***Public sector workers are underpaid compared to private sector workers.***

*Public sector workers, at all levels of education, earn less than comparable private-sector workers. According to the Economic Policy Institute, nationwide, comparing apples to apples, state and local employees are undercompensated by about 4% in comparison to otherwise similar private-sector workers. The super-rich and their hired guns on the right are using misleading and fabricated figures to try divide public and private sector workers. Politicians shouldn't be cutting the pay and benefits of already underpaid public workers.*

***The difference between the defenders of the dream and the billionaire plutocrats: we look out for each other, they believe in every man for himself.***

*There is a basic philosophical difference between working people and their allies who are defending the American Dream and billionaires like David Koch and their political hired guns like Governor Walker. We believe that members of a civilized society look out for each other. That's what we mean by solidarity. They believe in every man for himself.*

***Governor Walker and the Koch Brothers have woken a sleeping giant***

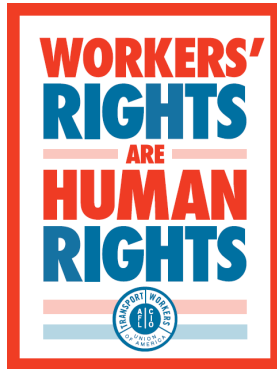
*In some ways, we should be thanking Governor Walker and the tea party movement. We should thank them for waking up the sleeping forces of democracy and justice in this country.*

*We might not have the money that Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's billionaire supporters have, but we do have people power and know how to mobilize for equality and justice. The voice of working people is starting to turn the tide. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have rallied in all 50 states and DC since the Wisconsin uprising began.*

*History will record that the battle of Wisconsin was where the war for the future shifted in favor of America's working people. We will struggle as long as it takes. As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice."*



## **TWU National Priority Events:**



### ***Ohio Referendum***

Proponents will have only 90 days to gather the 231,000+ valid signatures (total goal 500,000) for a referendum after the Governor signs SB 5 into law and files it w/ the Sec. of State. If law is filed before April 6, referendum would be on the ballot in November 2011. AFL-CIO indicates that is likely to occur. The following link provides info. for Ohio referendum volunteers:  
<http://www.putitontheballot.com/node/19>

## TWU National Priority Events:



### *April 4 National Day of Action*

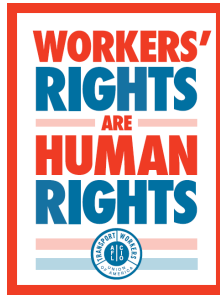
**This April 4, TWU Locals, other unions and our community allies across the country will be standing together** at workplace “walk-ins,” community vigils, teach-ins, public rallies, and many more events. Through the strength of our unity, we will show the Tea Party billionaires and their political hired guns that Workers’ Rights *are* Human Rights, and that we will win the battle for the American Dream.

As you know, April 4 is the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. He was shot in Memphis while supporting a recognition strike by public sector sanitation workers, a struggle that was illegal under Tennessee law at the time. Those workers carried signs that read, “I am a Man.” Dr. King was advised by many not to go to Memphis because many didn’t see this labor struggle as a civil rights struggle. But Dr. King knew that these struggles were connected. He knew that “We Are One.”

Now, enemies of workers’ human rights across the country are engaged in a coordinated assault on the rights Dr. King died fighting for—not just on workers’ human rights to organize and bargain collectively, but on the American Dream of a decent life for all. But across the nation, from Wisconsin to Ohio to Texas to Florida to Pennsylvania to New York, workers and our allies are fighting back. Like Dr. King, we know “We Are One.”

For information about other events planned in your area on April 4, go to this link: <http://local.we-r-1.org/> . April 4 will be the first in a series of national and local actions we are planning as part of our Workers’ Rights= Human Rights campaign.

## TWU National Priority Events:



### *May 1: “Imagine No Workers”*

The purpose of this day, the traditional workers’ holiday worldwide, is to the public, the people who rely on our members every day, to think about what it would be like if our members were not there. It’s a way to get people to be really aware of what cutting all these jobs means. In March, this was really brought home when the workers in those nuclear power plants in Japan had to leave—there was nobody there to prevent a catastrophe. The same thing is true when you start laying off teachers or transit workers or firefighters or rail or airline workers. How does that dishwasher get to work if there is no transit worker to drive the bus to get them there? How do people fly safely when their planes are repaired offshore or by non-union workers in unlicensed facilities? How do people travel safely on Amtrak when there aren’t qualified people to repair the tracks?

May 1 will be the first in a series of days of creative actions designed to get people to really imagine life without the workers they rely on every day. This day is also part of the Workers Rights=Human Rights campaign because it builds our movement by connecting us to a broader coalition, in this case immigrant workers fighting to stop racial profiling and unjust deportation, who have designated May 1 as “A Day Without a Worker.”

Workers could wear buttons that capture this idea in a slogan, such as “Imagine no Workers.”

Commercial ideas: a classroom of kids with no teacher, a plane full of passengers with no pilot or flight attendants, a burning building with no firefighters, a nuclear plant with no engineers... the possibilities are endless!

For more information about May 1 events, go to [www.maydayunited.org](http://www.maydayunited.org).

## Other TWU-Supported Events



### *“Our Communities, Our Jobs.” Los Angeles, CA, March 26.*

“On March 26th, a massive march and rally on behalf of worker rights, with leaders of national labor organizations, supporters from all over the country, and Los Angeles labor, community and religious leaders, workers, students and community members will be held in Los Angeles.

“All over the world, people have been making their voices heard demanding change. Now it’s our turn!”

Event contact on LA AFL-CIO website: Glen Arnodo (213) 381-5611 ext.126 or [glenarnodo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:glenarnodo@sbcglobal.net).

AFL-CIO event info: <http://www.launionaflcio.org/events/304/>

Teamster info.: <http://www.teamster.org/content/attention-western-teamsters-join-general-president-hoffa-los-angeles-march-26>

SEIU info.: [http://www.seiu99.org/March\\_Rally\\_for\\_Our\\_Communities\\_Our\\_Jobs\\_.aspx](http://www.seiu99.org/March_Rally_for_Our_Communities_Our_Jobs_.aspx)



## Other TWU-Supported Events



### *April 5 National Teach-In*

Hundreds of schools and community groups will participate in a teach-in on debt, austerity and how people are fighting back. From 2-3:30 pm (EST) a national teach-in will be streamed live from New York City, followed by local teach-ins and strategy discussions around the country. Read the call to action by Frances Fox Piven and Cornel West, find organizing toolkit and local events at <http://www.fightbackteachin.org>.

TWU will carry information about the teach-in on our Workers' rights=Human Rights web page. We will link to local teach-ins and community meetings by state and include in an overall "Get involved" event listing. Beyond that, we will publicize opportunities to attend or host teach-in events in members' local areas.

## Other TWU-Supported Events



### *April 28: Workers Memorial Day*

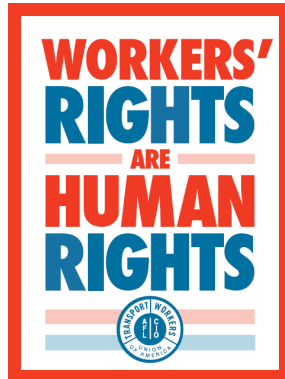
TWU April 28 motto: “No Voice, No Safety!”

This April 28 we remember the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire.

“On April 28, the unions of the AFL-CIO observe Workers Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job and to renew the fight for safe workplaces. This year on the 40th anniversary of OSHA, we will fight to create good jobs in this country that are safe and healthy. We will fight for the freedom of workers to form unions and, through their unions, to speak out and bargain for respect and a better future. We will demand that the country fulfill the promise of safe jobs for all. Our Work’s Not Done.”

Link: <http://www.aflcio.org/issues/safety/memorial/>

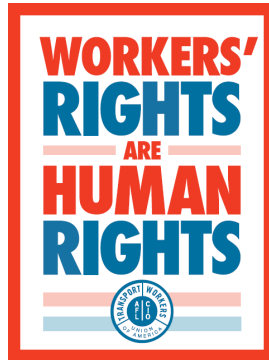
## Other TWU-Supported Events



*Harrisburg, PA, May 3 Rally*

Information in development.

## Resources and Background Information



The Workers' Rights=Human Rights Campaign Working Group is in the process of compiling resources to help TWU members, local leaders, national leaders and staff win this fight.

Available resources include:

TWU Department of Strategic Planning, *Why the Attack on Public Sector Workers is Ground Zero for Democracy in America.*

TWU Department of Strategic Planning, *State attacks on workers' rights: Where are the attacks happening, what form are they taking, and how are workers and their allies fighting back?*

Other resources in development:

Reports on TWU involvement in the workers' human rights struggle.

Reports on other unions and groups in the workers' human rights struggle.

More information about upcoming events, and how and why to get involved.

Research on the people and groups who are funding and formulating this assault on our rights.

Global nature of attack on the public sector, and how to build solidarity for workers' human rights worldwide.

Short history on today's attacks and the crisis in the labor movement.

Arts and the struggle for workers' human rights.