

I affirm **Resolved: A just government ought to recognize the unconditional right of workers to strike**

I offer the following definitions:

Ought is defined as “used to express duty or moral obligation”

Just is defined as “based on or behaving according to what is morally right and fair”

Government is defined as “the governing body of a nation, state, or community”

Unconditional is defined as “without restriction by conditions or qualifications”

Strike is defined as “a refusal to work organized by a body of employees as a form of protest”

The value for the round is **justice**, defined as the principle of moral rightness, as implied by the wording of the resolution. The criterion is **minimizing structural violence**. Reasons to prefer:

- 1) Structural violence is based in moral exclusion, which is fundamentally flawed because exclusion is based on arbitrarily perceived differences.

Winter and Leighton 99 |Deborah DuNann Winter and Dana C. Leighton. Winter|~Psychologist that specializes in Social Psych, Counseling Psych, Historical and Contemporary Issues, Peace Psychology. Leighton: PhD graduate student in the Psychology Department at the University of Arkansas. Knowledgeable in the fields of social psychology, peace psychology, and justice and intergroup responses to transgressions of justice~ "Peace, conflict, and violence: Peace psychology in the 21st century." Pg 4-5 accessed 7/20/2019

Finally, to recognize the operation of structural violence forces us to ask questions about how and why we tolerate it, questions which often have painful answers for the privileged elite who unconsciously support it. A final question of this section is how and why we allow ourselves to be so oblivious to structural violence. Susan Opatow offers an intriguing set of answers, in her article Social Injustice. She argues that our normal perceptual/cognitive processes divide people into in-groups and out-groups. Those outside our group lie outside our scope of justice. Injustice that would be instantaneously confronted if it occurred to someone we love or know is barely noticed if it occurs to strangers or those who are invisible or irrelevant. We do not seem to be able to open our minds and our hearts to everyone, so we draw conceptual lines between those who are in and out of our moral circle. Those who fall outside are morally excluded, and become either invisible, or of [lesser worth] demeaned in some way so that we do not have to acknowledge the injustice they suffer. Moral exclusion is a human failing, but Opatow argues convincingly that it is an outcome of everyday social cognition. To reduce its nefarious effects, we must be vigilant in noticing and listening to oppressed, invisible, outsiders. Inclusionary thinking can be fostered by relationships, communication, and appreciation of diversity. Like Opatow, all the authors in this section point out that structural violence is not inevitable if we become aware of its operation, and build systematic ways to mitigate its effects

- 2) Institutionalized biases cloud our view of what is morally right and what is not. We need to see things from all perspectives in order to have a clear and coherent moral discussion.

Mills 05 The crucial common claim—whether couched in terms of ideology and fetishism, or androcentrism, or white normativity—is that all [moral] theorizing, both moral and nonmoral, takes place in an intellectual realm dominated by concepts, assumptions, norms, values, and framing perspectives that reflect the experience and group interests of the privileged group (whether the bourgeoisie, or men, or whites). So a simple empiricism will not work as a cognitive strategy; one has to be self-conscious about the concepts that “spontaneously” occur to [us] one, since many of these concepts will not arise naturally but as the result of social structures and hegemonic ideational patterns. In particular, it will often be the case that dominant concepts will obscure certain crucial realities, blocking them from sight, or naturalizing them, while on the other hand, concepts necessary for accurately mapping these realities will be [are] absent. Whether in terms of concepts of the self, or of humans in general, or in the cartography of the

social, it [is] will be necessary to scrutinize the dominant conceptual tools [as] and the way the boundaries are drawn. This is, of course, the burden of standpoint theory—that certain realities tend to be more visible from the perspective of the subordinated than the privileged

Thus, minimizing structural violence is a prerequisite to morality because we can't know what's good or bad without rejecting these biases, so prefer my framework over any other.

3) Prefer current oppression over “visible” existential threats

Nixon 11 (Rob, Rachel Carson Professor of English, University of Wisconsin-Madison, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, pgs. 2-3)

Violence [and oppression] [are] customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibil[e]ity. We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous

repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales. In so doing, we also need to engage the representational, narrative, and strategic challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence. Climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation, the radioactive aftermaths of wars, acidifying oceans, and a host of other slowly unfolding environmental catastrophes present formidable representational obstacles that can hinder our efforts to mobilize and act decisively. The long dyings—the staggered and staggeringly discounted casualties, both human and ecological that result from war's toxic aftermaths or climate change—are underrepresented in strategic planning as well as in human memory. Had Summers advocated invading Africa with weapons of mass destruction, his proposal would have fallen under conventional definitions of violence and been perceived as a military or even an imperial invasion. Advocating invading countries with mass forms of

slow-motion toxicity, however, requires rethinking our accepted assumptions of violence to include slow violence. Such a rethinking requires that we complicate conventional assumptions about violence as a highly visible act that is newsworthy because it is event focused, time bound, and body bound. We need to account for how the temporal dispersion of slow violence affects the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social afflictions—from domestic abuse to posttraumatic stress, environmental calamities. A major challenge is representational: how to devise arresting stories, images, and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects. Crucially, slow violence is often not just attritional but also exponential, operating as a major threat multiplier; it can fuel long-term, proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions for sustaining life become increasingly but gradually degraded.

Therefore, the winner of this round is the debater who adheres to this framework the best.

Contention 1: Any limitation on the right to strike is a manifestation of structural violence

Government is comprised of members of in groups

Carnes 13 Nick Carnes is an Assistant Professor of Public Policy and Political Science, Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University “How Government by the Privileged

Distorts Democracies” July 1, 2013 <https://scholars.org/contribution/how-government-privileged-distorts-democracies> In most of the world's democracies, wealthy people from business and white-collar professions do most of the work of government, while manual laborers, service sector workers, and people working in the informal sector almost never hold public offices. A fresh look at data from Latin America, for example, underlines these realities: As in most advanced and developing countries, most of the labor force in Latin American countries is working class. In less developed countries like Bolivia and Honduras, the working class makes up close to 90% of the economy. Even in more developed countries like Argentina, more than two out of every three citizens have working-class jobs. On average across Latin American nations, roughly 80% of citizens are workers. By contrast, in the typical Latin American legislature only about 10% of representatives hail from working class backgrounds. In all 18 of major democracies in the region, the gap between the percentage of working class people in the economy and the percentage of legislators from working class backgrounds amounts to at least 60 points. Workers are the backbone of the economies, but barely have a seat at the governing table.

Thus, any restriction on a right, including the right to strike, will be made without consideration for the oppressed, which is inherently structurally violent. In fact, we know governments will continue to unfairly weaponize this restriction.

Xhafa 16 Dr. Edlira Xhafa is the Executive Director of the Global Labour University “The Right to Strike Struck Down?” Study from Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, published October 2016.

<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/12827.pdf> The right to strike is under attack. Workers and their unions are fighting on various fronts to obtain, exercise and defend their right to strike. Suspension and prohibition of strikes, acts of interference and sanctions related to strikes are being reported in a growing number of countries. At the international level as well, the right to strike has been coming under increasing pressure. This reached a new peak at the 2012 International Labour Conference (ILC),

at which the Employers' Group challenged the existence of an internationally recognised right to strike protected by ILO Convention No. 87 and questioned the most authoritative international mechanism for bringing violations of the right to strike to the attention of a global audience. These developments prompt[ing]ed the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) to conduct a global survey on trends and patterns of violations of the right to strike, with a particular focus on the last 5 years (2012–2016). The survey reveals the extent of violations, i.e. restrictions violating obligations established by ILO supervisory bodies both in terms of the legal framework as well as in actual practice. In this report, the key findings of the survey are complemented with insight obtained in a review of recent reports of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The survey findings and the reviewed reports were analysed in terms of 12 areas of violations of the right to strike¹. Of 70 countries covered by the survey[ed], almost all (68) countries have made use of legal provisions (law and/or case law) and have adopted practices which violate one or more areas of the right to strike. The review of the ILO and ITUC reports of the last 5 years shows that such violations are being committed in another 49 countries³, bringing the number of countries where violations in one or more areas of the right to strike are observed either in the legal framework/ case-law rulings and/or the practice of the right to strike to 117. This list, however, is not exhaustive: countries covered by this report may have enacted statutes in violation of the right to strike in more areas than indicated here and there may also be violations of the right to strike in other countries. Figure 1 shows that the most common areas of violation by law and/or case-law among the 117 countries are: 1) exclusion of workers from the right to strike; 2) excessive prerequisites for the right to strike; and 3) excessive sanctions on legitimate strikes. In the last 5 years, new violations in one or more areas of the right to strike have been introduced by law and/or through case-law rulings in 27 countries (24 countries⁴ identified by the survey and 3 countries⁵ by the reviewed reports). Many of these countries have already had in place restrictive legal measures either in the same area or in other areas of the right to strike. Figure 1 shows that most areas of violations which have recently been introduced are: 1) excessive sanctions in the case of legitimate strikes; 2) excessive prerequisites for strikes; and 3) public authorities suspending or declaring strikes illegal. The fact that the most common violation introduced through law and/or case-law rulings is related to excessive sanctions in the case of legitimate strikes[,] is very revealing of the repressive nature of measures introduced in the last 5 years. This is further reinforced by findings relating to violations in the practice of the right to strike. Practices which violate different areas of the right to strike are even more pervasive (Figure 2). During the last 5 years, the vast majority (84) of countries covered by the survey⁶ and the reviewed reports⁷ are reported to have adopted restrictive practices in one or more areas of the right to strike. Here as well, many of the countries introducing practices which violate various areas of the right to strike in the last 5 years had already adopted such practices in the past. Two areas of violations most commonly observed among countries are: (1) acts of interference during strikes; and (2) excessive sanctions in the case of legitimate strikes. Figure 2 also shows that the number of countries which have adopted these restrictive practices has tripled in the last 5 years. This may reflect to some extent the fact that the focus of the survey and of the reviewed reports was on recent years. However, the comparison with violations in law and/or case law (Figure 1), which covers findings from the same sources, suggests that countries have preferred to adopt more restrictive practices than to introduce legal changes. This trend needs to be understood in light of a repressive environment, increasingly precarious work and job insecurity, and an obvious bias of public authorities towards employers, including labour and civil courts. Two-thirds of OECD Countries Violate the Right to Strike The survey findings and the review of the ILO and ITUC reports show that most (23 countries⁸) of the 35 countries which are OECD members have enacted legal provisions and/or case-law rulings and/or have adopted practices which restrict[ed] the right to strike above and beyond established international standards. Whereas these violations took place in these countries prior to the 2012 debates at the ILO, in the last 5 years 9 countries – Australia, Belgium, Canada, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Spain and Turkey – have introduced legal measures which violate the right to strike. Plans to introduce a more restrictive legal framework are also in the pipeline in the United Kingdom. In addition to violations in the legal framework, 8 OECD countries – Belgium, Canada, Germany, Greece, Mexico, Portugal, Spain and Turkey – have recently adopted practices restricting the right to strike. Figure 3 shows that the areas violated by several countries are: 1) exclusion of groups of workers from the right to strike; 2) prohibition of / restrictions on political and sympathy strikes; and 3) excessive sanctions on legitimate strikes. The OECD countries have followed the same trends revealed by general findings with regard to the practice of the right to strike (Figure 3): more countries have adopted restrictive practices in the areas of (1) acts of interference during strikes; and (2) excessive sanctions on legitimate strikes. All emerging countries and economies⁹ are also reported to have enacted legal provisions and/or have had caselaw rulings which violate the right to strike. In the last 5 years, restrictive legal measures have been introduced in Brazil and India, while practices which violate the right to strike have been adopted in all the countries. In summary, the violations of the last 5 years can be better understood as a continuation of the attack on the right to strike. Indeed, the survey and the reviewed reports indicate that a restrictive regulatory framework existed in almost all the countries covered by the survey as well as in many other countries prior to the 2012 controversy at the ILC. At the same time, however, there is noticeable trend towards further restrictions on the right to strike in countries across regions and regardless of their stage of economic development.

Even when “reasonable” restrictions are put into place, governments continually push the boundaries. Thus, structural violence is inevitable unless we affirm.

Contention 2: Effects of strikes help minimize structural violence

Subpoint A: Gender-based oppression

Striking can help pressure governments to follow through on promises of gender equality

Fox 19 [Kara Fox is a reporter with CNN Business, Published: 6/14/19, “Women across Switzerland are on strike. They’re protesting the gender pay gap”, CNN Business, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/14/business/switzerland- women-protest-strike-gender-inequality-intl/index.html>] /Triumph Debate

Swiss women are striking en masse on Friday, in a 24-hour nationwide protest to highlight the country's poor record on gender equality and the gender pay gap. The umbrella movement — which encompasses women from trade unions, feminist groups and women's rights organizations — argues that one of the world's richest nations has given half of its population a poor deal. Minutes after midnight, the first protesters took to the streets under the demonstration's motto: "Pay, time, respect," kicking off a day of events aimed at drawing attention to a gaping divide in gender equality across the workplace and the home. Workshops and demonstrations, flash mobs and stroller marches are scheduled in towns and cities across the country throughout the day, with a nationwide walkout timed for 3:30 p.m. local time (9:30 a.m. ET).

In a show of solidarity, some parliamentarians joined the strike, while other MPs [and] wore purple — the color adopted for the movement — to signify their support. The strike is the first of its kind since 1991, when a similar protest saw some 500,000 women demonstrate against continued gender inequality across all sectors of life, 10 years after gender equality was enshrined in the country's constitution. That movement [which] eventually led to the passing of the Gender Equality Act in 1995, which banned discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. Now, Switzerland ranks first in the UNDP's gender equality index, and in the World Economic Forum's top 20 countries in last year's global gender report. But women's rights activists say that women are still systemically discriminated against in the professional world, that job security and advancement is limited, and protections for women facing harassment, abuse and violence are lacking. Data from Switzerland's Federal Statistics Office supports those claims. On average, in full-time employment, Swiss women earn 19.6% less than men. While that number has dropped by nearly a third over the last three decades, the discrimination gap — the gap in pay that has no explainable reason — is on the rise. Regula Bühlmann, central secretary for the Swiss Trade Unions Confederation, told CNN that although the law is in place to protect equality, women still "haven't achieved equal rights at work." Yet Friday's strike isn't just about the pay gap. Bühlmann added that although the focus of the trade unions' protest was to highlight discrimination in the workplace, there are many reasons for women to strike, including the "everyday sexism" that prevails across many different aspects of society, and the burden that disproportionately falls on women in the home.

"What we really want is that men and women share paid and unpaid work equally, that women and their work is valued equally — or more — because at the moment, unpaid care workers are not valued," Bühlmann said. In a 19-point manifesto The Women's Strike Geneva Committee, who have co-organized the movement, has called for better protections for women facing domestic violence and abuse, migrant women and domestic workers, increased parental leave and support for the LGBTQ community, among others. Group member Kaya Pawlowska, 32, told CNN that she hopes that the widespread action will help to put the pressure on lawmakers to take concrete actions, just as the 1991 protests eventually did. "Inequality is non-negotiable," Pawlowska said. "It's not something that we can continue to consider that we might improve. We have a constitutional article that says we are equal, and there is absolutely no reason and no economic reason (to not be treated as such). We are not at war, we are not living under pressure, we can have this equality effectively."

Another example can be seen in France

Desai 21 "France's women strike for pay, gender equality" Report from the Anadolu Agency, September 3, 2021 Women of all color and ethnicities, some dressed in their work uniforms, others holding colorful flags, banners, posters and armed with musical instruments assembled in Paris on Monday afternoon for a protest march against the deteriorating condition of women amidst the ongoing pandemic on International Women's Day. An estimated 30,000 women and men participated in the march, which several organizations and unions used the opportunity to protest and highlight gender atrocities, sexual abuse at workplace, and demand equity in rights and work payment for women. Around 40 international, local organizations and left-wing, ecology political parties, came together under the collective "feminist strike to denounce pay inequality and exploitation. "The pay gap between men and women persists at 25%... It is as if every day from 3:40 pm, women worked for free... We will be on strike along with women all over the world to refuse to pay the price of the crisis with our jobs, our salaries, our bodies," a statement from the collective said. The Federal Union of State Trade Unions (UFSE) and General Confederation of Labor - (CGT) held demonstrations in front of the ministry of culture, ministry of labor, inside the Paris metro stations holding large banners in support of the "invisible, precarious women workers." In France, women represent 80% of part-time workers, 60% of contract workers, 80% of single-parent families and are often the first victims of precariousness and adverse poverty precipitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, a statement signed by various trade and workers unions said. "Lockdown, work from home, closure of schools and nurseries, have contributed to penalizing women with negative consequences on their careers, physical health, risking them to increased instances of domestic violence and a weakening of access to care," said the statement. They demanded the government to enforce a law guaranteeing "equal pay for work of equal value" in the private and public sectors, upgrading wages in predominantly female occupations and strengthening public services for women. They have also asked employers to widen the scope of convention No. 190 and recommendation No. 206 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) which recognizes elimination of violence and harassment at work places to protect work of victims of domestic violence. The National Union of Midwives, a key cornerstone of safeguarding women's health, continued its strike for the fourth time this year. The government has failed to meet the demands of 23,000 midwives including granting medical profession status to their work in hospitals, increasing salaries and number of staff. The French government has increasingly come under criticism for failing to set an example to protect women's rights. The most visible blunder committed by the President Emmanuel Macron administration is allowing Interior minister Gerald Darmanin who is under investigation for rape, to head the ministry. Women demonstrators held large signs of "get out Darmanin" and posters showing him behind the bars in the march. Elisabeth Moreno, minister delegate in charge of Gender Equality, who is the only minister of color in the current cabinet, criticized Macron for lacking efforts in gender representation. During a TV interview hosted by RTL - Le Figaro - LCI Grand Jury on Sunday, Moreno disclosed she told Macron that he was "not setting an example" when it came to gender parity. Amongst the 13 close members of the cabinet, the deputy chief of staff Cecile Geneste is the only woman. Although women are leading important ministries like defense, culture, environment and labor in the current government, top cabinet jobs are still held by men.

Subpoint B: Class-based oppression

Strikes can push back against monopsony power to ensure workers see the benefits of production

Bahn 19 [Kate Bahn, the director of labor market policy and interim chief economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, August 29, 2019, “The once and future role of strikes in ensuring U.S. worker power,” The Washington Center for Equitable Growth, <https://equitablegrowth.org/the-once-and-future-role-of-strikes-in-ensuring-u-s-worker-power/>] Triumph Debate In the United States, Labor Day, which falls on the first Monday of September, is when we honor the history of the U.S. labor movement in striving for benefits and empowerment of workers across the economy. **Strikes play an important role in empowering workers vis-à-vis their employers. By withdrawing their labor power, workers are able to balance the scales against the owners of capital,** who rely on workers for production and providing services. **Strikes** have declined in frequency, popularity, and success over the past four decades, yet today, amid rising economic inequality, they **are** once again **becoming an important tool** in exercising worker power **to ensure that the gains of profitability and economic growth can be broadly shared.** The history of strikes in the United States Washington University in St. Louis sociologist Jake Rosenfeld examines the role of work stoppages in his recent book *What Unions No Longer Do*, and finds that strikes at large firms began declining in the mid-1970s, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Work Stoppages file. Rosenfeld then digs deeper to estimate the trends of strikes at firms both large and small by calculating a broader measure using data from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service from 1984 to 2002. He finds a peak in strikes in the late 1980s and then a stark decline after. The decline of strikes is a result of a variety of factors. One is the increased use of replacement hires, especially after the PATCO strike of 1981, when President Ronald Reagan summarily fired 11,000 air traffic controllers who were striking for higher pay and a reduced work week. President Reagan quickly replaced those striking workers with 4,000 air traffic control supervisors and Army members, sending a powerful message to U.S. workers about the use of strikes in labor disputes. But even before this historic turning point, the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 limited the ability of workers to strike. This included restrictions on secondary boycotts and picketing, both of which make striking especially difficult in today’s increasingly fissured workplace, where you cannot strike against the corporation that is at least partly responsible for your workplace conditions but not technically your direct employer. For example, workers at the franchises of McDonald’s Corporation who attempt to unionize are not protected by the Fair Labor Standards Act when picketing against McDonald’s because they are, most commonly, the employees of a franchisor, rather than of the main corporation. These factors, along with a general increasing business hostility toward unions and lack of enforcement of labor protections, have ultimately made strikes less effective as a tool for collective bargaining in the United States. Increasing interest in unions among U.S. workers today At the same time, **there is an increasing consensus today that unions are a positive force for** increasing worker power and **balancing** against economic inequality. In polling of support for unions and specific aspects of collective bargaining, Equitable Growth grantee Alex HertelFernandez of Columbia University, along with William Kimball and Thomas Kochan of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, find that support for unions has grown overall, with nearly half of U.S. workers in 2018 saying they would vote for a union if given the opportunity. This is a significant increase from one-third of workers supporting unionization in 1995. According to their research, workers primarily value unions’ role in collective bargaining and ensuring access to benefits such as healthcare, retirement, and unemployment insurance. **Strikes have** historically **been one of the strongest tools used by unions to ensure they have power to engage in collective bargaining.** But striking was viewed as a negative attribute in the survey done by HertelFernandez, Kimball, and Kochan. Yet, when they presented workers with the hypothetical choice of a union exercising strike power with other attributes of unions, such as collective bargaining, support increased. But strikes, of course, do not take place in a bubble. The wider climate of worker bargaining power and institutions that support labor organizing plays a role in making this historically crucial tool effective again. So, too, does the power of employers to resist these organizing efforts when the labor market lacks competition that would increase worker bargaining power. The role of monopsony power in the U.S. labor market Monopsony power is a situation in the labor market where individual employers exercise effective control over wage setting rather than wages being set by competitive forces (akin to monopoly power, where a limited number of firms exercise pricing power over their customers.) In a new Equitable Growth working paper by Mark Paul of New College of Florida and Mark Stelzner of Connecticut College, the role of collective action in offsetting employer monopsony power is examined in the context of institutional support for labor. Paul and Stelzner construct an abstract model with the assumption of monopsonistic markets and follow the originator of monopsony theory Joan Robinson’s insight that unions can serve as a countervailing power against employer power. Their model shows that **institutional support for unions, such as legislation protecting the right to organize, is necessary for this dynamic process of balancing employers’ monopsony power.** In an accompanying column, the two researchers write that they “find that **a lack of institutional support will devastate unions’ ability to function as a balance to firms’ monopsony power, potentially with major consequences** ... In turn, labor market outcomes will be less socially efficient.”

Unionization makes workplaces safer, which counteracts disregard for lower class workers

Zoorob 18 [Michael Zoorob, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Boston Area Research Initiative (BARI), September 25, 2018, “HOW UNIONS HELP PREVENT WORKPLACE DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES,” Scholars Strategy Network, <https://scholars.org/contribution/how-unions-help-prevent-workplace-deaths-united-states/>] Triumph Debate **Between 1992 and 2016, about 138,000 workers in the United States died in on-the-job accidents,** an important if overlooked topic in public health. Worryingly, **the number of workplace deaths has risen in recent years,** reversing earlier trends toward fewer deaths. In 2016, 5,190 US workers died on the job, marking the third consecutive year of increasing occupational mortality, and reaching the highest number of workplace fatalities since 2008. This reversal has **coincid[ing]ed with the uptick in adoption of antiunion legislation,** such as so-called “right-to-work” laws that prohibit labor unions from charging fees to members of the collective bargaining units they represent. If workers who benefit from union-bargained improvements do not join and pay dues, union finances suffer and so do their abilities to perform key functions. Right to work laws have recently proliferated across the United States. Since 2000, seven states – Oklahoma (2001), Michigan (2012), Indiana (2012), Wisconsin (2015), West Virginia (2016), Kentucky (2017) and Missouri (2017) have implemented this legislation. **The U.S. South, a region with**

high rates of workplace fatalities, has had such laws for decades, and now twenty-eight states have right to work rules. Overall, the accelerated passage of right to work laws has exacerbated U.S. union decline, a trend sure to be furthered by the recent Supreme Court decision in Janus vs American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees to ban membership fees for all government employee unions. So what? **Negative effect of union losses on wages and benefits are well established. But unions also organize and work to improve safety and health.** My research explores how union declines – and right to work laws in particular – shape rates of workplace mortality at the state level. How Unions Promote Workplace Safety Scholars have identified several ways that unions promote workplace safety. Unions make complaints to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the federal agency charged with enforcing workplace safety regulations and investigating and fining companies for violations. **Unionized workplaces are more likely to be inspected,** and the threat of unionization may prod employers to improve workplace safety. Unionized workplaces **tend to have better health insurance,** which could improve the overall health of workers **and reduce employee stress about medical expenses. Union collective bargaining agreements** frequently contain language that **restricts excessive shifts and requires safety equipment** like gloves, goggles, and helmets. **Union Density and Variations in Workplace Deaths Across States** My research tracks changes in unionization rates and rates of workplace fatalities across the 50 U.S. states over the 25-year period from 1992 to 2016, the years for which the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries has been conducted. After controlling for other variables, the statistical model finds that unions have a protective effect on workplace fatalities across the states. Specifically, **a one-percentage point increase in the unionized workforce was associated with a 2.8% decline in the rate of occupational fatalities.** By weakening unions, right to work legislation has been associated with about a 14% increase in the rate of occupational fatalities. These results held even when I took into account the industry patterns in states and included an overall index of policy liberalism that can account for variations in state openness to regulation. Though workplace fatalities have declined overall in the United States, the declines were greater in states with more robust unions. **Anti-Union Legislation Jeopardizes Workplace Safety** The implications of my study are stark. In **[the] Wisconsin,** for example, from 2000 to 2016 the percentage of the **workforce that was part of a union declined from about 18% to about 8%.** According to the statistical model, a change of this magnitude **correspond[ing]s to an increase in the predicted rate of workplace fatalities** from about 3.5 to about 5 deaths per 100,000 workers. The decline of unionization – stemming, in part, from antiunion policies like “right-to-work” legislation as adopted by Wisconsin – may undermine workplace safety at the cost of human lives and limbs. As scholars have pinpointed in detail, unions make the workplace safer, and my new study suggests that falling unionization rates are associated with higher rates of death on the job. Union organizers, social reformers, and lawmakers alike would do well to consider how laws that hinder unionization might have harmful consequences for safety on the job.