

# State lawmaker Roegner to introduce 'right-to-work' bills

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State Rep. Kristina Roegner hasn't made her desire to introduce "right-to-work" legislation a secret.

In fact, Roegner, R-Hudson, talked about the goal in a meeting with Akron union leaders two years ago.

They tried to talk her out of it, but apparently weren't persuasive. Roegner plans to introduce the legislation today and has scheduled a news conference at 1 p.m., according to an aide in her Columbus office.

The Ohio AFL-CIO informed its members about the planned legislation in a text message and tweet Tuesday afternoon. The union said two bills, one for private and one for public workers, will be introduced this morning.

Roegner and Rep. Ron Maag, R-Lebanon, circulated separate co-sponsor sheets for the two proposed bills, the union said.

The legislation to ban forced union memberships or dues deductions was a hot topic in Columbus on Tuesday, where George Johnson, president of the Akron chapter of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) was attending a union conference.

Johnson recalled two years ago when he and John Wagner, executive secretary-treasurer of the Tri-County Regional Labor Council, met with Roegner just as the debate on Senate Bill 5 was heating up. (Senate Bill 5 — a state law that limited collective bargaining by public employees — later was defeated in a referendum that unions and Democrats spearheaded.)

Johnson said Roegner had research showing why she favors right to work, while he and Wagner tried to convince her it "would be detrimental."

"She will be well-prepared," Johnson predicted of Roegner.

The lawmaker's aide said Roegner was too busy to comment Tuesday.

Johnson on Tuesday questioned whether right to work has enough support in the House and Senate to pass. He said he talked to numerous lawmakers during a lobbying day two weeks ago and found "little to no" support for the issue.

Right-to-work proponents have been circulating petitions to try to get the issue on the ballot. Akron and Summit County councils recently passed resolutions opposing the right-to-work effort. City Councilman Jeff Fusco called the measure "union busting."

Republican-led efforts for right-to-work legislation have been successful recently in Indiana and Michigan.

Ohio would be the 25th state to adopt it, according to the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation's website.

Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald, the Democratic candidate for governor, issued a news release Tuesday afternoon blasting the effort.

"I strongly oppose this deceitful, misleading, so-called 'right to work' agenda that will hurt every community in Ohio," he said. "I stood against these attacks on everyday heroes and Ohio's middle class when I voted against Gov. [John] Kasich's Senate Bill 5. As governor, I promise to stand up for the working families in Ohio, and stand behind the middle class that keeps our economy strong."

Johnson said the unions again would band together to try to defeat right-to-work legislation or ballot issues, just as they did with Senate Bill 5. The threshold has been changed, with a narrower time period for gathering signatures starting later this year. Still, Johnson said, it's "doable."

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