



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## IDC's New Legislation Protects the Right to Join a Union and Fights Union-Busting Laws Spreading Across the Nation

JEFFREY D. KLEIN May 1, 2017

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*On May Day Independent Democratic Conference stands with AFL-CIO, UFT, Building Trades, Uniformed Services and other public employee unions to protect collective bargaining*

**Albany, NY** — **New York State Senate Labor Chairwoman Marisol Alcantara (D-Manhattan)**, joined by members of the **Independent Democratic Conference** and leaders of major labor unions, introduced legislation on May Day (International Workers' Day) to combat union-busting tactics used in right-to-work states spreading nationally.

Right-to-work, a misnomer, strips unions of their collective bargaining power and these laws in place in 28 states are being considered on a federal level, which could lead to the erosion of the right to organize for better wages, benefits and workplace environment.

Alcantara's legislation simplifies the process for an individual to join a public employee union and helps the union have the resources to provide services to that member.

"We cannot allow right-to-work to demolish the labor movement that was born in New York. We cherish the right to organize and this legislation ensures that everyone pays their dues to receive the protections and benefits that unions provide. Right-to-work means a right to lower wages and a lower quality of life and we will fight against that for our brothers and

sisters in labor,” **said Senator Alcantara (D-Manhattan).**

“Unions are crucial to protecting the rights of workers in New York and across the country. As we continue to see more states enact right-to-work laws and discussion at the federal level of expanding them we must make it clear that New York will not allow itself to join that list. The IDC will continue to fight for laws that protect unions and the workers they fight for,” **said IDC Leader Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).**

“The Independent Democratic Conference has always supported working men and women and recognizes the importance of protecting worker rights including the right to join a union. This legislation will streamline the ability of individuals to join a union in the public sector and comes at a critical time for working people who are increasingly under attack by those who want to diminish the rights of working men and women. We thank Senator Jeff Klein, Senate Labor Chair Marisol Alcantara and the IDC for sponsoring this important legislation. A strong labor movement raises the standard of living and quality of life for all working people,” **said AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento.**

“Unions defend the rights of workers and built the middle class in the country. This legislation helps safeguard the gains that unions have secured,” **said United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew.** “I want to thank Sen. Marisol Alcantara and the IDC for recognizing that unions level the playing field by giving ordinary New Yorkers a voice.”

This is of pressing concern with new Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch. In a case brought before the Supreme Court, *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, in which California teachers challenged that state’s law allowing unions to collect agency fees, the union prevailed in a 4-4 decision due to a vacancy on the court. That seat is now filled by Justice Gorsuch. Other cases pending including *Janus et al. v. AFSCME Council 31* in Illinois and *Yohn et al. v. California Teachers Association*, all share the aim of the court handing down an anti-union

decision that failed to come with the *Friedrichs* case.

“Our unions bring dignity to the workplace, higher wages and benefits are vital to employees all over our state. The IDC will not allow the rights of our unions to erode in anyway, and I am proud to cosponsor this legislation,” **said IDC Deputy Leader David Valesky (D-Syracuse).**

“As a proud former labor leader, we must continue to fight for workers’ rights that are being threatened on a national level. Unions provide good-paying jobs, benefits and excellent workplaces for New Yorkers and we will not allow anyone to take that away. Our labor leaders go to the bargaining table to make sure that their employees have these rights and this legislation prevents any attempt to chip away at collective bargaining,” **said Senator Diane Savino (D-SI/Brooklyn).**

“Labor unions won victories in workplace safety and fair wages that protect and provide prosperity for countless New York families. I am especially proud, having been a member of DC37 for twenty-eight years, to stand alongside my colleagues in support of ensuring unions continue to play a vital role in building safe workplaces and thriving communities. This May Day, we reaffirm our commitment to the storied legacy of the labor movement, speak out in support of measures that will give unions the tools needed to protect workers, and acknowledge the leadership labor has shown in securing human dignity for workers here in New York and around the world,” **said Senator Jesse Hamilton (D-Brooklyn).**

“The Right-to-Work movement is spreading nationwide like a cancer, and we must ensure we stop it as it represents a clear threat to organized labor and to basic rights to workers. In total, 28 states have implemented Right-to Work legislation and some form of it is being considered on a federal level. This is why it is crucial we combat head on this movement seeking to destroy the right to organize for better wages and better working conditions. Sadly, Right-to-Work has also depreciated consumer base as a result of people spending less

because of lower wages and a lack of healthcare benefits. I applaud Senator Alcantara's efforts to make it easier for employees to join unions if they choose to. Currently, with the growing presence of the Right-to-Work movement, we need this legislation," **said Senator Jose Peralta (D-Queens).**

"The benefits of being a union member make the lives of working New Yorkers substantially better. Their ability to collectively bargain helps ensure that workers are paid fairly and are provided essential benefits. I will continue to fight to protect these important rights for unions in New York," **said Senator Tony Avella (D-Queens).**

"Standing up for men and women who provide vital services to make our communities run is a big priority for the remainder of the session. As they are out doing difficult jobs they must know they have the protections and support that union resources provide their members. This is a matter of health and safety for thousands of people in New York and I look forward to being able to deliver those protections," **said Senator Carlucci (D-Rockland).**

Union leaders praised the legislation.

"New York has a long and proud history of supporting organized labor. This legislation is a first step towards protecting the voice of public sector workers and the labor peace enshrined by the Taylor Law. We applaud Senator Klein, Senator Alcantara and Senator Savino for spearheading this important legislative initiative and look forward to working with the IDC and the many other elected leaders from both houses who proudly stand with working people and their unions," **said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.**

"The Public Employees Federation is grateful for the continued support of the IDC on issues important to our members. At a time when public sector unions are under constant attack, this legislation which streamlines and provides continuity to the process of joining a public sector union, will prove to be more important than ever," **said PEF President Wayne Spence.**

“On behalf of the 32,000 members of the Hotel Trades Council, I’d like to wish everyone a very Happy May Day. May Day is an important opportunity to recognize and celebrate the hard-fought victories led by union members and immigrants throughout history. In the case of New York’s tourism and hospitality industry, these victories are the reason hotel workers are able to enjoy great wages and benefits. Hotel workers also know that the organizing done by the immigrant hospitality workers that came before them is the reason they have a strong union. The Hotel Trades Council and its members are proud to carry on this tradition and to stand together with all workers and immigrants this May Day,” **said New York Hotel and Motel Trades Council President Peter Ward.**

“This important issue is vital to the core ability of unions to function. Without changes that safeguard these rights, working men and women of New York would be the ones that suffer,” **said DC 37, Local 983 President Joseph Puleo.**

“The IDC has always had the back of the working people of New York. Police Officers in particular need unions now more than ever. This innovative legislation helps preserve these protections,” **said NYS Troopers PBA President Thomas Mungeer.**

“For years’ unions have been reacting to changes in our legal system. This Bill, introduced by the IDC, is a preemptive action to protect New Yorkers. Working families in New York need proactive advocates like Senator Klein and the IDC,” **said NYC Subway Surface Supervisors Association President Michael Carrube.**

“Our members work extremely hard keeping New York’s courts safe and efficient. They deserve to be safe in the knowledge that their union and unions throughout New York will continue to operate in a fair and efficient system. This legislation would ensure that unions and all union members are protected in the future,” **said NYS Supreme Court Officers Association President Patrick Cullen.**

“Unions are under constant attack and their ability to operate is being directly targeted. The IDC, knows that our Unions are the circuit breaker that protects the middle class of America. This Bill will guarantee that Unions will continue being the voice of the working men and women of New York,” **said NYC Deputy Sheriffs Association President James Davis.**

“Every day the 9,000 hard working men and women of the Correction Officers’ Benevolent Association go to work in the toughest precincts in this City, the jails. Our members are indeed New York’s Boldest. This year as we celebrate May Day and encourage all workers to come together under the banner of solidarity and workers’ rights, we are reminded that right around the corner there is a very clear danger to the benefits and securities that we enjoy as union members. A national Right to Work law is being discussed in the halls of Washington DC at this very moment. Right to Work is a deceptively named law that hurts all workers. Right to work will decimate agency shop and gravely damage our union as well. We reject the right to work for less, we reject losses to our health insurance and we reject curtailing service to our members when they need us the most. This May Day we resolve to continue our fight to protect and defend the rights we have fought so hard to gain because workers’ rights are human rights,” **said Correction Officers’ Benevolent Association President Elias Husamudeen.**

“May Day is the International Worker’s Holiday. It is a day founded by U.S. workers and it has been celebrated for over 100 years. May Day this year is truly significant in America. The anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies coming out of Washington D.C. are something we have not seen in this country in decades. But now is the time for action and not fear. May Day should embolden all of us now more than ever to stand tall for the rights of workers and for the rights of immigrants. We will come together to celebrate a day of solidarity and unity with all workers, union and nonunion alike. May Day is a day for all of us. We all belong here and we will fight for the rights of all our brothers and sisters to live and work in the City they love with the dignity and respect that they deserve. Let’s show

Washington our resolve to say no to Right to Work laws. Let's uphold legacies left behind by our labor leaders of the past and fight like hell for the living," **said Communications Workers of America Local 1182 President Syed Rahim.**

"On behalf of the Uniform Sanitationmen's Association Teamsters Local 831 and the Municipal Labor Committee, I would like to wish the workers in New York City and across the country a Happy May Day. This International Worker's Holiday of May Day is a day when working people around the world come together to show solidarity in one another's accomplishments and struggles. The worker protections that we all enjoy have been won over many decades of collective bargaining and sacrifice. Our Sanitation Workers know that we must remain vigilant to protect the rights we have fought so hard to gain. As a Constitutional Convention in New York State looms on the horizon, we know how important it is to celebrate our accomplishments and to fight to preserve them. On behalf of New York's Strongest and the Municipal Labor Committee, Happy May Day to all," **said Uniform Sanitationmen's Association Local 831 President and Chair of New York City Municipal Labor Committee Harry Nespoli.**

"On behalf of the more than 40,000 men and women of the New York State Nurses Association, we applaud Senators Savino and Alcantara as well as the Independent Democratic Conference for standing up for middle class families across the State," **said Jill Furillo, RN, NYSNA Executive Director.** "This bill sends a clear message: we will always fight for New York's workers to give them better pay, better benefits, and better protections because it's the right thing to do. This bill gives our nurses a louder voice to advocate for our patients and their families regarding their healthcare needs."

"In light of the recent appointment of an anti-labor Justice to the United States Supreme Court, and in anticipation of a future ruling by that court which would negatively impact the ability of public sector labor unions to represent their respective memberships, I am heartened by the pro-active legislation proposed here today. As the elected leader of a group

representing more than 80 public sector labor unions, I am proud to stand with the bill's sponsor, Senator Marisol Alcantara, and her colleagues from the senate's Independent Democratic Conference, and I applaud their endeavor to forestall the current direction of the federal government to further undermine the ability of public sector labor unions to bargain collectively on a level playing field," **said Chairman of the New York State Public Employee Conference Peter D. Meringolo.**

"The Uniformed Firefighters Association strongly supports this piece of legislation, which will ensure that all new public employees have the opportunity to learn about the benefits of joining a union," **said Uniformed Firefighter's Association President Gerard Fitzgerald.**