

What Is The Illinois Workers' Rights Amendment?

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ILLINOIS - The first thing Illinois voters will see on their ballots this election is a proposal to add the Illinois Workers' Rights Amendment to the Illinois Constitution - but what does that mean, what would it do, and who would it affect?

The amendment would make workers' rights to negotiate wages, hours, and more part of the Illinois Constitution. When you see it on your ballot, this is the exact wording it will use (which we will help translate):

“The proposed amendment would add a new section to the Bill of Rights Article of the Illinois Constitution that would guarantee workers the fundamental right to organize and to bargain collectively and to negotiate wages, hours, and working conditions, and to promote their economic welfare and safety at work.

“The new amendment would also prohibit from being passed any new law that interferes with, negates, or diminishes the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively over their wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment and workplace safety. At the general election to be held on November 8, 2022, you will be called upon to decide whether the proposed amendment should become part of the Illinois Constitution.”

What does it mean?

To “bargain collectively” over wages, hours, and more is also known as unionizing. Essentially, your support of this amendment depends on your support of workers’ right to join and form unions.

If you think every worker in Illinois should have the right to unionize - and that right should be made part of the Illinois Constitution - then you would vote “YES” in support of the amendment. If you don’t believe every worker in Illinois should have the right to unionize, you would vote “NO.”

The rest of the amendment essentially stops Illinois lawmakers from passing any laws in the future that would take these rights away from Illinois workers, also known as “right-to-work” laws.

Who does it affect?

These rights would apply to every worker in Illinois, including both private and public sector employees - meaning both non-government and government workers. That would include all state government employees - not just elected officials, but police officers, firefighters, teachers, and more.

Labor unions across Illinois have expressed support for the amendment. Critics of the amendment say giving collective bargaining power to government employees could allow property taxes to rise to support any wage increases they negotiate.

How could it pass?

There are two ways the amendment could pass:

- If three-fifths (60%) of voters who vote on the amendment - meaning they do not leave that section of their ballot blank - vote “YES”
- If a simple majority (over 50%) of all voters - including those who left the amendment section of their ballot blank - vote “YES”

If passed, the measure would be adopted within 20 days of the election.

Illinois would not be the first state to make workers’ rights part of its constitution if the amendment passed. Currently, three other states - Missouri, New York, and Hawaii - have enshrined employees’ bargaining rights into their constitutions in some form.

The full text of the proposed amendment is available on the [Illinois General Assembly website](#).

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE 1970 ILLINOIS CONSTITUTION

EXPLANATION OF AMENDMENT

The proposed amendment would add a new section to the Bill of Rights Article of the Illinois Constitution that would guarantee workers the fundamental right to organize and to bargain collectively and to negotiate wages, hours, and working conditions, and to promote their economic welfare and safety at work. The new amendment would also prohibit from being passed any new law that interferes with, negates, or diminishes the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively over their wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment and workplace safety. At the general election to be held on November 8, 2022, you will be called upon to decide whether the proposed amendment should become part of the Illinois Constitution.

For the proposed addition of Section 25 to Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

☐ **YES**

☐ **NO**