RWDSU: STRONG UNIONS, STRONG COMMUNITIES

The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU, represents approximately 40,000 workers in New York State and around 100,000 nationwide. In New York, our members work in apparel retail and grocery stores, pharmacies, food service, food processing, car washes, nursing homes, airline concessions, non-profit social service organizations and more. For 85 years, the RWDSU has fought for the rights of working people. The roots of the RWDSU were laid down in the 1930s when a group of local unions including retail clerks and warehouse workers in New York City banded together to form the RWDSU.

PROTECT WAREHOUSE WORKERS FROM INJURY BY PASSING S8922 (RAMOS)/A10826 (JOYNER)

Workers at e-commerce distribution centers, particularly Amazon fulfilment centers, are suffering injuries at a greater rate than in other industries. Workers are forced to work under inhumane quota systems.

This bill will require:

- Written description of each quota to which an employee is subject, and any potential adverse employment action that could result from failure to meet the quota.
- An employee be relieved from meeting a quota that prevents compliance with meal or rest periods, use of bathroom facilities, or occupational health and safety laws.
- A prohibition on employer retaliation against an employee for failure to meet a quota that has not been disclosed or for failure to meet a quota that does not allow a worker to comply with meal or rest periods or occupational health and safety laws.
- An annual report on warehouse production quotas.
- Annual ergonomist analysis of each warehouse facility with mandatory recommendations for improving workplace ergonomics.

PREVENT BODY IMAGE DISCRIMINATION IN FASHION AND RETAIL BY PASSING S8153 (HOYLMAN) / A8316 (ABINANTI)

Employment discrimination based on body image is rampant in the retail and fashion industry. Body image, specifically weight, is not protected federally or in New York. It should be illegal for an employer to discriminate against a worker based on weight or height. Pass S8153/A8316.

Michigan is the only state that prohibits discrimination against people due to their weight or height. Enacted in 1977, the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on 10 categories, including weight, in areas such as employment, housing, public accommodations and public service.
New York state gives away billions of dollars each year to businesses in the form of tax breaks and incentives with few standards to ensure communities are strengthened and workers are protected. True economic development provides broad economic benefits to our communities, workers and local businesses.

Require labor peace for certain publicly funded projects. Labor peace requirements require employers to remain neutral to worker organizing, leading to a more harmonious workplace, and raising the floor for workers around the state. In return, unions refrain from strikes and other labor disruptions in order to protect the State’s proprietary interest in such projects.

State agencies annually spend millions of dollars contracting with private companies for their food. Agencies include the Departments of Education, Corrections, Homeless Services and more. The state has a proprietary interest in ensuring that its food is delivered without labor disruption.

The CUNY school system requires its food service contractors to comply with labor peace. Pass S8383 (Skoufis), which requires labor peace for all subsidized retail, food processing and distribution development by directing ESD to incorporate such terms into their subsidy agreements.

Currently, municipalities in NY are severely limited in their ability to source goods and services that are produced responsibly. By law, cities generally can only procure items from the “lowest responsible bidder,” even if that bidder externalizes many costs associated with their production back to taxpayers (e.g. low wage workers receive income supplements through food stamps or housing allowances).

S7534/A8589 would allow municipalities to provide a 10% procurement advantage to contractors who meet certain value categories, including fair conditions and wages for supply and food chain workers, supporting diverse local food production, animal welfare, nutritious menu planning and environmental sustainability.

New Yorkers need a new way to address the rising power of big tech and e-commerce. Our current laws are inadequate at addressing the economic power amassed by these companies. The Twenty-First Century Antitrust Act (S933/A1812) empowers enforcers and private actors to rein in anti-competitive and abusive tactics these businesses use against other firms and workers.

Ensure values-based municipal procurement by passing S7534 (Hinchey) / A8589 (Peoples–Stokes)

Workers currently have no right to review their personnel file. This bill will allow a worker to inspect their personnel file once per year and gives a worker the right to know when negative records are placed in the file. S6502/A8008 is good for workers.

Enact the Twenty-First Century Antitrust Act S933 (Gianaris) / A1812 (Dinowitz)

For more information please contact the RWDSU Political Department political@rwdsu.org or (212) 684.5300.