



# On The Move

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## What is the Fairness Center?

It's a law firm, with offices in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania---a law firm that targets public employees and their unions.

One may ask, how can anyone have a problem with a law firm calling itself the "Fairness" Center? Afterall, "fairness" is a goal most people support. However, what "fairness" means is not necessarily the same for everyone. So, we need to take a closer look at the so-called "Fairness Center," because it is currently involved with a lawsuit against Local 234 and the TWU International Union.

The work of the Fairness Center is modeled off of the Right to Work foundation.

The President & General Counsel of the Fairness Center served as an attorney with the National Right to Work Foundation. The goal of the National Right to Work Foundation is the weakening of labor unions and a loss of union power at the expense of rank-and-file employees who depend on collective bargaining to secure a decent standard of living for themselves and their families. The National Right to Work Foundation seeks to accomplish its anti-union agenda through lawsuits filed against unions and by spreading misinformation about labor unions.

The Right to Work Foundation focuses on private sector unions. The Fairness Center focuses on public sector unions like Local 234. As an example, the litigation counsel for the Fairness Center claims that he wants to fight for the rights of public-sector employees who have been wronged, *not by their employer*, but by their union representatives. The Fairness Center provides free legal services to public employees who want to sue their union.

## Free legal services, paid for by billionaires

According to "Spotlight PA," an independent, nonprofit newsroom for investigative and public-service journalism:

"The Fairness Center is a front group for billionaire donors which include the Koch Brothers and other defunct billionaires' right-wing foundations including Pennsylvania's Scaife Foundation. They are partially funded through 'Donors Trust' which has been described as a 'murky money maze' of corporate influence and unaccountable money that creates a disinformation campaign and outright lies, particularly targeted at labor unions.

Spotlight PA goes on to state that:

"The Fairness Center's sole purpose is to drive frivolous lawsuits against labor unions through the courts in Pennsylvania in hopes to create new regulations and strike down pro-worker laws making it harder for working families to get ahead."

The Fairness Center has filed lawsuits against many public sector unions including Transport Workers Union Local 100 in New York; the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 825; AFSCME, District Council 37, United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 1776; SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania; the American Federation of Musicians Local 45; the Civil Service Employees Association, Inc., Local 1000; the Pennsylvania State Education Association; AFSCME Local 2206; Service Employees International Union, Local 668; AFSCM Council 13; and other public employee unions, and TWU, Local 234 (more on the case later).

The Center for Media and Democracy, a national organization that investigates corruption that undermines our democracy and economic prosperity, describes the Fairness Center as a right-wing litigation center based out of Harrisburg and an associate member of the State Policy Network. According to the Center for Democracy, the State Policy Network is a collection of right-wing “think tanks” and tax-exempt organizations in 50 states, serving as the tip of the spear of a far-right, nationally funded policy agenda in the states that attacks unions and undergirds extremists in the Republican Party.

One of the major donors to the Fairness Center is the Bradley Foundation.

According to the Center for Democracy, the Bradley Foundation works to dismantle unions, the most significant force for higher wages and better working conditions in America. Publicly, the Bradley Foundation spins its agenda as “employee rights.” Behind the scenes, newly disclosed documents detail an aggressive anti-union agenda. Similarly, Spotlight PA describes the Bradley Foundation as a “Wisconsin based right wing foundation working to ‘defund Big Labor.’”

In May 2023, the Bucks County Beacon wrote that the Bradley Foundation supports many anti-union groups, including Americans for Fair Treatment, a group that opposes *all public sector unions*, and the Harrisburg-based Fairness Center.

Clearly, the Fairness Center and its big-money donors have a well-established, antiunion reputation.

## **The Fairness Center is not fair to working people**

To accomplish its anti-union objectives, the Fairness Center seeks the help of *disgruntled* employees who can be used as a kind of trojan horse that gets the Fairness Center into the business of the targeted union. With the help of a disgruntled union member, the Fairness Center files lawsuits with a strategic purpose---to erode the foundations of the union’s rank and file support.

Efforts to defund unions relies on a simple proposition---a union cannot perform its job of representing and protecting the rights and interests of its members if it lacks the financial resources to do so. As the Center for Media and Democracy reports, attempts to defund and dismantle unions are also part of a larger attempt to influence elections by defunding the Democratic Party. That’s the purpose of the “Fairness Center” ---defund unions; deprive workers of the fruits of collective bargaining and come to the aid of anti-union politicians.

Here's the bottom line.

The lawsuits filed by the Fairness Center do nothing to improve the wages, benefits or job security of union employees performing a public service. Instead, the Fairness Center pursues its single-minded obsession with legal claims against unions, real or imagined, to weaken and ultimately destroy public sector union representation.