

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

JAMES P. HOFFA
General President

25 Louisiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001



KEN HALL
General Secretary-Treasurer

202.624.6800
www.teamster.org

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United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 1.4 million members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, I strongly urge you to oppose the RAISE Act (S. 3221) which seeks to allow employers to grant wage increases unilaterally to workers of their choosing. Make no mistake. The goal and purpose of this legislation is to end collective bargaining, the institution through which companies and workers come together to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment.

Over the decades, in workplaces across the country, the collective bargaining process has allowed workers to obtain better working conditions and to raise their standard of living. The RAISE Act would give an employer the right to ignore, and in effect nullify, a negotiated and ratified collective bargaining contract and grant pay raises to selected employees in the bargaining unit. S. 3221 would undermine the ability of the union -- the workers' duly selected representative -- to negotiate wage increases for all employees and to create uniform standards for all employees.

Nothing in the bill ties pay or benefit improvements in any way to individual achievement or success. The RAISE Act does nothing to guarantee an improvement of pay or benefits for workers. Rather it eliminates current built-in protections against favoritism and arbitrary action by companies. The RAISE Act is a green light for employers to violate contracts and ignore agreed upon wages and benefits for any reason.

It is a ploy to divide workers. The bill opens the door to discrimination and nepotism by granting employers unfettered discretion to grant wage increases to friends, family members, or other favored employees. Collective bargaining agreements create uniform standards for all employees. This bill would undermine those uniform standards.

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The bill would destroy the gains of decades of collective bargaining which has significantly reduced racial and gender inequality in wages and benefits. Women who are union members or are covered by a union contract earn approximately 34 percent more (or more than \$11,000 a year) than non-union women. African-American and Latino workers are paid 31 percent and almost 51 percent more, respectively, than their non-union counterparts. Overall, union workers or those covered by a union contract, make a median of \$10,400 more annually compared to their non-union counterparts.

For over 80 years, the ability of workers to join together to form unions and collectively bargain has been the path to the middle class for American workers. It has raised the standard of living for millions of workers. S. 3221 does nothing to guarantee an improvement of pay or benefits for workers. The RAISE Act is a road to lower wages for middle class families.

Let me be clear. This bill is not about giving American workers a raise. The RAISE Act should be recognized for what it is -- another in a long line of devices, thinly veiled and sophisticated, to pit workers against each other, to weaken unions, and to destroy collective bargaining and with it the National Labor Relations Act.

The Teamsters Union urges you to oppose the RAISE Act.

Sincerely



James P. Hoffa
General President

JPH/jdo