

## Oppose Collective Bargaining for Public Employees

### Issue

Should the West Virginia Legislature grant public employees in West Virginia the ability to bargain collectively with governmental bodies of schools, cities, counties and the state?

### Background

West Virginia is making good strides to enhance its business climate and to make itself a viable location for business and economic development. The last decade has seen good increases in taxes revenue due to economic growth, and these revenues are being used to provide the economic resources and infrastructure to meet the growth and solve some long-standing problems.

The Chamber believes public employee collective bargaining would lead to:

- Increased costs for the governmental bodies resulting in significant tax increases
- Increased inefficiency and lowering of ability of the governmental bodies to effectively carry out their mission
- Increased potential for interruption of community services provided to the general citizenry
- The development of state and local policy by professional arbitrators who are not from our area

An objective examination into the public employee collective bargaining experiences of other states reveals nothing but evidence that argues overwhelmingly against its enactment in West Virginia. Public employee collective bargaining has established a national legacy where strikes and the disruption or diminution of essential governmental services is the norm rather than the democratic worker's paradise promised by politically motivated union advocates.

The West Virginia Chamber of Commerce is concerned that significant tax increases will be an inevitable result of public employee collective bargaining. The predictable direct employee benefit increases associated with collective bargaining, along with increases in government operating costs due to work rule changes, will be magnified by the massive costs associated with administering a system of public employees' collective bargaining. The state and each of its political subdivisions would be forced of necessity to develop a sophisticated labor relations bureaucracy.

Elected public officials at both the state and local levels already have the responsibility to make budget and personnel decisions and should not be constrained in their decision-making by the perceived need to respond to the unelected representatives or arbitrators who formulate abstract judgments about the performance of their duties. Granting employee organizations or arbitrators the same authority as elected officials elevates them to an unjustified equal status without providing citizens an accompanying mechanism to exercise their right of holding decision-makers accountable.

## **The Chamber's Position**

The West Virginia Chamber of Commerce strongly **opposes** the enactment of legislation authorizing governmental bodies to officially recognize and bargain collectively with employee organizations. The Chamber does not believe such a system of labor relations has any applicability to public sector employment and, if enacted, would ultimately prove to be contrary to the best interests of the employees themselves, as well as to those who government serves. Instead, the Chamber recommends that the Governor create a professional Personnel/Human Resources Department so that state employees have access to professional services and established employment policies, which generally are found in most large organizations.