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Impact of Mississippi's right to work laws

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JACKSON, MS (Mississippi News Now) - Working without a union card isn't uncommon in the Magnolia State. Mississippi is one of 23 states with a "right to work" law. But what exactly does that mean?



"In Mississippi, when an employer and a union sit down to bargain a union contract, the employer and the union cannot agree that employees have to be members of the union and pay union dues to work for that company," said Jeff Walker, attorney at Butler Snow.

Union supporters say the law puts up a roadblock. They say it prevents them from having the bargaining chips they need.

"It's going to damage the standard of living for workers because normally unions set the tone, which gave the birth to the middle class, explained Brenda Scott, President of the Mississippi Alliance of State Employees. "And with the unions being on decline, it's really a race to the bottom for workers pay, their benefits, the whole nine yards."

A South African union held a demonstration outside the Canton Nissan plant Monday morning. They're part of the push to create a Nissan union. But Scott says Mississippi workers have to change their attitude before change can happen.

"People here, they got to stop saying I'm just happy to have a job, said Scott. "Hell, make it better. So if you're children want to work for Nissan, they're not second class Nissan workers."

Still, some say the right to work laws attract big business that's good for the state.

"There's something about the economic vibrancy of a state where employees have the chance to choose one way or the other," said attorney Jeff Walker.

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