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## More states poised to pursue anti-union legislation

**More than 700 bills, many of them similar to new laws in Wisconsin and Ohio, have been introduced in nearly every state in the country. GOP officials are emboldened, but union supporters are girding for a fight.**

By Richard Simon, Los Angeles Times

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Reporting from Washington

More than 700 bills have been introduced in virtually every state. Nearly half of the states are considering legislation to limit public employees' collective bargaining rights. Unions are girding for a fight.

### FOR THE RECORD:

Unions: An article in the April 2 Section A about anti-union legislation said the House in Washington state approved a bill that would make it more difficult for airline and railroad workers to unionize. It was the U.S. House that approved the legislation. —

Now that the governors of Ohio and Wisconsin have signed bills to limit public workers' collective bargaining rights, their fellow Republicans in other states are expected to gain momentum in their efforts to take on unions.

"Now it's Tennessee's turn," the state's Republican lieutenant governor, Ron Ramsey, said in a recent letter posted on his Facebook page. Citing Ohio and Wisconsin, he urged support for legislation that would "prevent government employee unions from locking taxpayers into long-term union contracts that we cannot afford."

The National Conference of State Legislatures is tracking an explosion of 744 bills that largely target public-sector unions, introduced in virtually every state.

"Almost every week, I read of at least one more bill to restrict union rights at the state level," said John Logan, director of the labor studies program at San Francisco State University.

Nearly half of the states are considering legislation to limit public employees' collective bargaining rights. In New Hampshire, the House last week approved a measure that one union leader assailed as "Wisconsin on steroids."

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But it's not just budgetary concerns driving Republican officeholders to take on unions, traditionally a strong Democratic ally.

In Maine, the newly elected Republican governor ordered the removal of a mural depicting the state's labor history from a state building because, his spokeswoman said, it portrayed a one-sided message supporting organized labor.

A number of states are considering bills that would limit unions' ability to collect dues from public employees. The Florida House approved a bill to ban dues deductions from government paychecks and require unions to obtain their members' permission before using dues for political activity. Similar legislation is under consideration in Kansas. Still other bills would eliminate a requirement that workers covered by union contracts pay union dues or fees.

One day after Ohio Gov. John Kasich signed legislation viewed as tougher than the Wisconsin bill that triggered massive protests, the Republican-controlled House in Washington state approved a bill Friday that would make it more difficult for airline and railroad workers to unionize.

Although collective bargaining in California remains secure with Democrats in control of the Legislature, proposals to roll back pensions are gaining steam. Gov. Jerry Brown on Thursday unveiled a seven-point plan targeting what many experts see as pension excesses.

Adam Brandon, spokesman for the conservative group FreedomWorks, said he expected unions to spend millions of dollars to try to repeal the Ohio legislation and to prevent similar legislation from passing in other states.

"Can you imagine if Ohio's economy starts to grow" in the wake of the bill's passage? he asked. "Defending the status quo in the state of Ohio, I think, is a pretty dangerous place to be."

In the meantime, energized unions are taking their fights to the courts and to the streets.

"What they've done is galvanize our members like they've never been galvanized before," said Kimberly Anderson, director of government relations for the National Education Assn.

Rallies are planned across the country on Monday, the anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who had gone to Memphis, Tenn., to rally striking sanitation workers when he was gunned down on April 4, 1968.

In Wisconsin, unions are gathering signatures to recall Republican lawmakers who supported the new law, whose implementation has been delayed while court challenges are pending.

And in Ohio, unions are gearing up to gather the 231,149 signatures they need to put a measure on the November ballot to repeal their state's new law that limits collective bargaining rights and bans strikes by about 350,000 public employees.

"We're going to be contributing heavily to the recall efforts in Wisconsin and to the referendum efforts to have SB5 in Ohio repealed," said Harold A. Schaitberger, general president of the International Assn. of Fire Fighters.

As the fight intensifies, a Gallup poll released Friday shows that 48% of respondents agreed with public employee unions compared with 39% who backed the governors.