

What Are Prevailing Wage Laws?

- Prevailing wage laws ensure that workers on public construction projects paid for with taxpayer dollars are paid a wage comparable to the local standard or “prevailing” wage.
- They prevent contractors from low-balling bids and undercutting community wages with cheap, unskilled labor, and they make sure work is done by trained workers who know what they’re doing. These requirements ensure high-quality construction work and help prevent cost overruns.
- Prevailing wage requirements have been used in this country since 1891, but were made the law of the land in 1931 when Congress passed the federal Davis-Bacon Act. Today, 32 states and the District of Columbia have prevailing wage laws of their own.

Why Are Prevailing Wage Laws Under Attack?

- Contractors who are more concerned with having a low-wage workforce than in the quality of their projects, along with corporate groups like the notoriously anti-union Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), strongly oppose them. So do the politicians they helped elect.
- They’ve tried four times to outlaw prevailing wage laws at the federal level, but every attempt has failed. Now, with more corporate-backed, anti-worker legislators in Congress and state legislatures, they’re at it again.
- These legislators are repeating ABC’s lies about prevailing wage laws. The truth is, contractors that don’t want to pay fair wages for skilled labor are behind the attacks.