

WILLIAM B. RUGGLES RIGHT TO WORK SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

By Miss Valerie Bischoff

The Right to Work is an important piece of legislation that continues to protect our right to unionize, by choice. The Right to Work law should be upheld as it ensures freedom of association in the states where it is implemented. I know this first hand because the Right to Work law has directly affected me. If these statutes weren't in place, it's hard to tell if I would have ended up with the journalistic career skills that I have today.

After graduating from the University of California at Santa Cruz, I was intent on acquiring a job that would provide first hand experience in video production. Through perseverance and hard work, I was fortunate to land a job as a video journalist for the NBC affiliate station in my hometown of Reno, [sic] Nevada. I was immediately thrown into the mix and every day I acquired hands-on skills. Being able to become immersed in the news business so quickly was riveting and launched my career. However, at this time, I didn't realize exactly *how* fortunate I was to acquire a position of this caliber right away. I attribute part of the opportunity to the fact that Nevada is a Right To Work State and the station in Reno was an "open shop." [sic]

Many news organizations are unionized, a reality that can be beneficial for aspiring journalists *if* they have the option to unionize by choice. Twenty-eight states in America implement forced-unionism, requiring all employees of the institution to join unions in order to maintain employment.

I believe that individuals should always have the freedom to make decisions that are best suited for their particular situation. Furthermore, organizations should exist because they are fully supported by their members who participate out of their own free will. After all, an organization comprised of members that are there by choice makes a stronger and more valid organization. Unions shouldn't exist because people will lose their jobs as a result of withdrawing their memberships

From my perspective, this concept personally resonates. If I was trying to start my career in California, a state that forces unionization, I may have found myself trying to break into a union shop. Even as an entry-level employee, I would have been forced to pay union dues and possible, participate in strikes. For me, this would have been a hardship at that time and the cost could have compromised my ability to gain initial experience. This isn't to say that I would never join a union. Perhaps while further along in my career, unionizing might be the right option for me. However, I hope my membership would come from my own desire and not as a forced requirement to keep my job.

In conclusion, the right to unionize should be one of our fundamental freedoms. However, the validity of this right can only be realized if the members of the union are involved because of choice. Thankfully, in twenty-two states, a Right to Work law protects this freedom.