

Trade Union Bill Briefing

This briefing outlines how the TU Bill will hurt workers and hurt the economy. Without members getting active and putting the case directly to decision makers, we can't influence the final outcome, so please read this, then send a message to your MP.

There is a lot in the TU Bill so it is best to stick to a few key issues where the Government is already on the back foot.

Strike ballot thresholds

- A proposed 50% minimum turnout, with an additional hurdle in “essential public services” of 40% of all those eligible voting YES to action.
- 14 days notice of action (up from seven currently)
- UNISON is campaigning for secure workplace balloting and electronic ballots to enable people to vote more easily

Restrictions on facilities time

- Ministers will be able to cap the total spend on facilities time and the amount of time any rep can have off for TU activities. This will be exercised within each Government department
- This will harm partnership working and result in time and money being wasted in tribunals when it could have been solved by active and trained reps in their workplace
- Reps will have less time to support members if they have a problem at work

Political funds

- When you join UNISON you choose to donate to a general political fund, and / or a fund affiliated to the Labour Party, or neither. Only the money in these two pots may be spent on campaigning
- The TU Bill will mean everyone having to re-select their political fund donation options, and do so again every five years.
- This will hit our ability to campaign on issues that members care about, and will give the Tories an even bigger financial advantage over Labour in election.

Check-off

- Many members choose to pay their subs straight from salary. The TU Bill would ban this in public services (including HE and FE)
- The union will have to waste vital resources on signing up all members to direct debits which are more complex
- Employers support check-off and it is useful for workers. There is no good reason to abolish it – the Tories are just trying to make life harder for union members.

This isn't all – the TU Bill would make the Certification Officer (who regulates Trade Unions) judge and jury, and bad employers would be able to bring in agency workers to break strikes. Find out more on UNISON's website unison.org/tubill

What can we do?

Determined campaigning has already won concessions. Plans to criminalise picketing have been dropped, as well as absurd requirements for unions to give notice of social media posts two weeks in advance.

Regulations on each part of the Bill have been loosened from what the Government originally wanted, and every time we get more detail the Tories seem to have taken another step backwards.

You might have seen a leaked letter between Tory ministers that detailed where they expect to have to give ground – clearly the pressure is getting to them.

But make no mistake: the Tories want to hit trade unions hard. They wouldn't be giving up ground without the great efforts UNISON members like you have made so far. If we want to win more and stop this incompetent TU Bill, we have to keep campaigning.

We all need to take action to build the union.

Can you:

- Sign up to be a UNISON contact and put up posters at work?
- Get a co-worker to join UNISON?
- Write to your MP and ask two other people to do the same?
- Write a letter to your local paper explaining why the TU Bill is harmful?
- Go with a group of other UNISON members to your MP's surgery and give them the facts about trade unions and the TU Bill?

Contact Lewis Carson (l.carson@unison.co.uk) for more information.