

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Mark DeSaulnier (CA-10)**

Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Hearing

*"Out of Touch: When Union Politics Leave Workers Behind"*

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

Let me start with a simple truth: President Trump's economy is not working for American workers. Inflation has outpaced wage growth in recent months, and American workers are taking home a smaller and smaller share of the economic pie than they have in decades. This is the direct result of corporations and wealthy special interests wielding outsized influence over this Administration and this Congress.

According to a new report from Public Citizen, corporations have spent nearly \$1.7 billion on federal elections since the Citizens United decision in 2010 and \$646 million of that has come in this election cycle alone, a record for any midterm in American history.

Too often, my Republican colleagues in this Congress have sided with corporate interests over working families, and that includes repeatedly attacking labor unions. Workers join unions so they can have a voice, a voice strong enough to be heard. You cannot lift up workers while tearing down the very organizations that represent them, protect them, and bargain on their behalf. While elected officials may not agree with every action or statement that unions make, they work on behalf of their membership, their interests, and [the] beliefs of their members. That includes advocating for policies that benefit their membership and supporting candidates who will fight for their rights, regardless of political affiliation.

In my opinion, it is Committee Republicans, not unions, who are out of touch. Today, union approval in the United States is at a record-high of 71 percent, according to Gallup's annual poll. Americans overwhelmingly understand that unions remain one of the most effective tools workers have to negotiate a better life for them and their families. And yet, union membership remains low: just 10 percent of U.S. workers belong to a union.

Why is this happening? It's not because workers don't want to have unions. Tens of millions say they would join one today if they could. It's because the economy is stacked against them and outdated labor law no longer does enough for the people it was written to protect.

That imbalance shows up everywhere you look. From 1979 to 2023, wages for the bottom 90 percent of Americans rose 44 percent, while income for the top 1 percent skyrocketed by more than 180 percent. Let me repeat that: the lower 90 percent, which almost all of us are— 44 percent, top one percent, 180 percent. It's the largest concentration of wealth in the history of this country, right now. Republicans have prioritized corporate interests over working families and done nothing to lower the cost of living or improve working people's lives. Instead, millions of people are losing their health care while corporations and the wealthy enjoy tax breaks due to Republicans' 'Big, Ugly Bill.'

Committee Democrats have a different vision, one where working people have power instead of billionaires. That's why we must pass the *Protecting the Right to Organize, or PRO Act*, which would ensure workers could freely organize and earn the benefits of union membership [through] a process of democracy—elections and that they are fair. The *PRO Act* ensures workers can freely organize and reap the benefits of union membership—bigger paychecks, better benefits, and safer workplaces—and gives them a voice. And alongside it, we must pass the *LET'S Protect Workers Act*, which holds law-breaking companies accountable [by] raising penalties for worker rights violations.

So today, I hope we can have an honest conversation about the real issues facing workers, rather than the same attacks on unions and American workers we have heard again and again in this Subcommittee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.