

THE ELECTRICAL WORKER

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Family-wage jobs. Safe workplaces. Retirement security. Tax fairness. Quality, affordable health care. A voice at work.

In these days following President Donald Trump's Jan. 30 State of the Union address, the state of America's working families is in danger.

Pay hasn't kept up with inflation. Rules protecting health and safety on the job are being rolled back daily. The new federal tax law is even more generous to the rich than the original, unpopular proposals, and expiring middle class tax cuts set a financial time bomb for working Americans. Banking laws and consumer protections are being shredded, threatening workers' retirement savings and their dreams for the future.

A YEAR UNDER FIRE



Collective bargaining still protects union members' wages and benefits, but even the strongest contracts can't fend off the torrent of political attacks on workers' rights, safety and livelihoods.

And most employees have no union armor at all. Companies determined to keep it that way are spending wild sums to derail organizing drives, abetted by GOP lawmakers and brazen anti-labor political appointees who can't make worker protections disappear fast enough.

In such a climate, it's little wonder that 61 percent of Americans polled in August 2017 told Gallup that they approve of unions — the highest pro-labor sentiment in 15 years.

And there's the silver lining: the surging backlash against politicians who are hurting American

workers and their families. It's people marching in the streets; millennials joining and organizing unions; voters electing worker-friendly candidates to city councils and state assemblies, even a historic win in Alabama that conventional wisdom said was impossible.

"This victory proves working people are a powerful political force, even in states where most people count us out," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said after the Dec. 12 special election that sent Democrat Doug Jones to the U.S. Senate. "Working people are tired of the status quo, and Alabama proved that we have the power to change it and improve the lives of everyone. This is only the beginning of a potent movement to win back the freedoms of workers in America."

State of the Worker is an overview of the battles unions and our allies are fighting, and some will sound familiar. Many issues are back on the front burner after seemingly being resolved during the Obama years — new policies, rules and laws protecting your wages, retirement, job safety and more. Now they're being undone at a rapid pace by executive orders from the White House and decisions by

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State of the Worker

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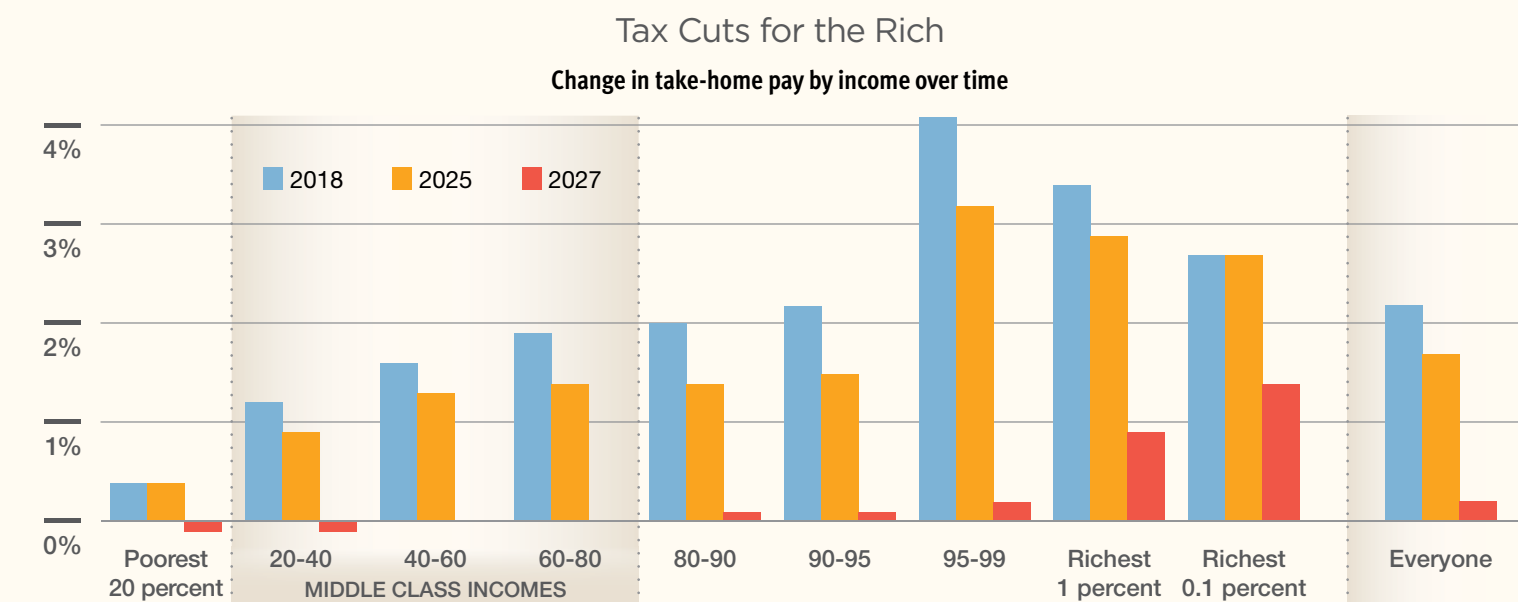
federal agencies and boards filled with appointees hostile to workers.

The single biggest blow delivered to working Americans in 2017 was the GOP tax bill. Passed at warp speed five days before Christmas, it is a bottomless stocking full of gifts for big business and the rich. Any relief that middle- and lower-income Americans see will be temporary. As the Washington Post put it, “In the long run, most Americans will see no tax cut or a tax hike.”

As for the claims that corporate tax cuts will “trickle down” and create new jobs, not even CEOs are playing along with that talking point. “Frankly, I think they are bonkers. It really doesn’t work that way. No CEO sits there and says, ‘When my tax rate goes down, I’m going to hire more people and pay them more,’” said David Mendels, former CEO of software firm Brightcove, speaking to Politico.

A Wall Street Journal event was a letdown for Trump economic advisor Gary Cohn, when he asked a roomful of CEOs to raise their hands if their companies would invest more if the tax bill passed. Only a few hands went up. Cohn asked why and “laughed a little to lighten the mood, but it didn’t cause many more hands to rise,” The Washington Post reported. The same story cited a Bank of America-Merrill Lynch survey in summer 2017 that asked more than 300 executives at major U.S. corporations what they’d do if a “tax holiday” allowed them to bring back money from overseas accounts:

“The No. 1 response? Pay down debt. The second most popular response was stock buybacks, where companies purchase some of their own shares to drive up the price. The third was mergers.



The greatest tax cuts will go to the richest 5 percent of Americans under the GOP tax bill, and the meager tax cuts working families receive decline over time, mostly disappearing or turning into tax increases by 2027. Source: Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center Microsimulation Model (version 0217-1).

Actual investments in new factories and more research were low on the list of plans for how to spend extra money.”

Some of the bill’s harshest critics are conservatives. “It is built on a foundation of lies,” said Steve Schmidt, a former campaign manager for John McCain. “It adds more than a trillion [dollars] to the debt. No real conservative should vote for this.”

Among hundreds of billions in tax breaks for the 1 percent, the bill doubles the amount — to more than \$22 million — that wealthy couples can pass on tax-free to their heirs.

The outsized benefits for the rich are likely to quickly become a burden for everyone else, with looming cuts to Social Security, Medicare and other programs

that keep working families and retirees out of poverty. To many GOP lawmakers, even Social Security — which employees pay into their entire working lives — is an “entitlement” barely removed from welfare. Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch said in December, “I have a rough time wanting to spend billions and billions and trillions of dollars to help people who won’t help themselves, won’t lift a finger, and expect the federal government to do everything.”

Washington Post columnist Jennifer Rubin was among many conservatives who rebuked Republicans for what they did and how they did it.

“The infuriating part of this is that none of the snake-oil salesmanship, the debt creation, the procedural sleights of

hands, the heightened income inequality, the secret deals and the contempt for voters was necessary,” Rubin wrote. “A revenue-neutral corporate tax reform coupled with a payroll tax break for middle- and lower-income Americans was entirely possible — with wide bipartisan support. But that was not what Republicans, their donors and the fleet of lobbyists wanted. Republicans would have earned more respect if they simply fessed up to what they were doing. If they actually believed that leaving the super-rich and corporations richer than ever was good for Americans, they should have just said so.”

You’ll find more details about the tax bill and other assaults on working Americans inside State of the Worker. Undoubtedly, 2018 will bring new challenges, but also new opportunities. Our job and your job is to be vigilant, to stay informed, to educate others and, above all, to get out and vote for candidates who mean it when they say they’ll fight for workers.

Asking candidates where they stand on the issues we explore in these pages is a good place to start. ■

On GOP claims about corporate tax cuts:

“Frankly, I think they are bonkers. It really doesn’t work that way. No CEO sits there and says, ‘When my tax rate goes down, I’m going to hire more people and pay them more.’”

— David Mendels, former CEO of software firm Brightcove

Fighting a ‘Dead-Wrong’ Tax Bill

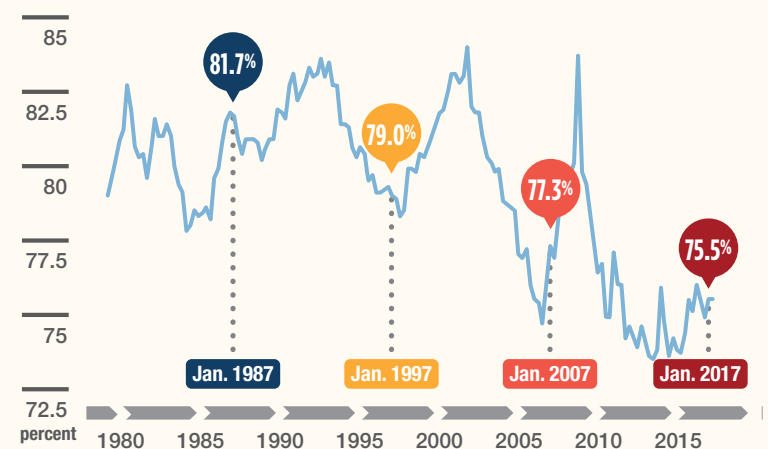


Hoping to change Sen. Susan Collins’ vote on the GOP tax bill, a local IBEW president was among five protesters who staged a sit-in and were peacefully arrested in the senator’s Bangor, Maine, office Dec. 4. “This bill gives massive tax cuts to the rich on the backs of working people. It was written by the rich and powerful for the rich and powerful,” said Nick Paquet, an electrician in his second term as president of Augusta, Maine, Local 1253. “Senator Collins knows right from wrong, and this bill is dead wrong for Maine.” Paquet thought Collins could be persuaded “especially because of who she represents. We’re not well-to-do. We’re a very scrappy part of Maine up here, and good-paying jobs are hard to come by.” Ultimately, Collins voted with the Republican majority to pass the bill,

which President Trump signed into law Dec. 22. Paquet, at left in top photo, is pictured in Collins’ office with three fellow protesters. Left, he smiled when the officer arresting him “asked if I had anything in my pockets. I said, ‘Sure, I’m an electrician. I always have electrical tape in my pockets.’ You can see it in my hands.” ■

Hoarding the Wealth

Workers’ share of corporate income has fallen every decade over the past 30 years, despite occasional peaks above 80 percent. The last was October 2008, when workers received 83.7 percent of corporate income.



Source: Economic Policy Institute

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YOUR SAFETY

The truth about those regulations that White House wants to eliminate is that many of them prevent illness, injury and save lives, protecting American workers and consumers. Here's a sliver of some of the 850 rules that have been withdrawn, reversed or delayed over the past year:

Killed:

- **Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces** required federal contractors to comply with 14 labor and civil rights laws and report violations. It let federal agencies give preference to contractors with clean records and required reporting of sexual harassment.
- **The Workplace Injury Rule** that required employers to maintain illness and injury records for five years has been narrowed to six months. It also bars OSHA from keeping employers' records longer than six months, making it impossible to establish an employer's pattern of violations and correct it.
- **Workplace exposure limits** for 500 hazardous chemicals, including carcinogens and neurotoxins are now gone.
- **The sleep apnea regulation** designed to ensure train and truck drivers are alert and well rested was eliminated, putting both professional drivers and civilian motorists at risk.

“Any delay in a rule like the silica exposure standard means people will get sick. People will die.”

— Safety Department Director Dave Mullen

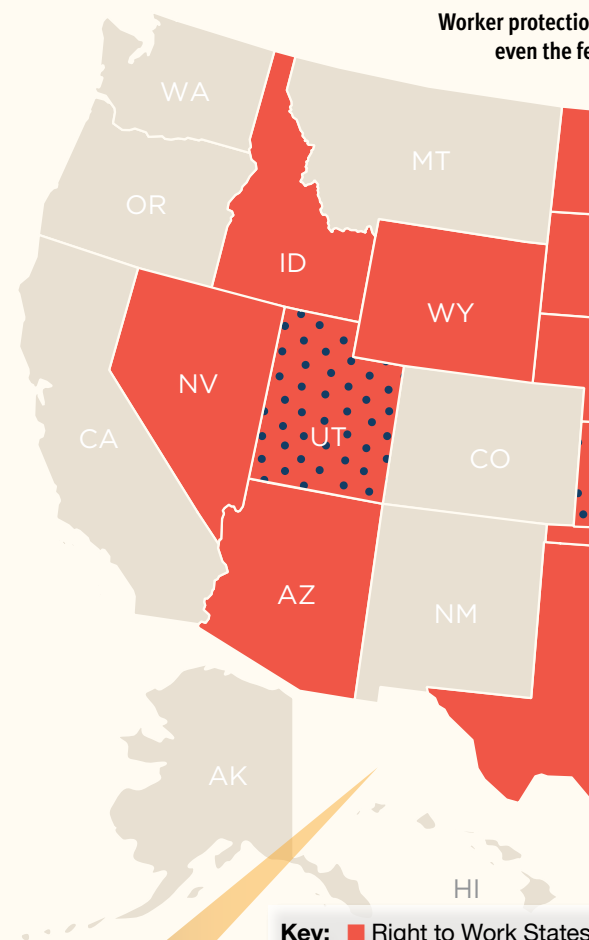
- **The Walk Around Rule** allowed third-party safety experts, specifically union experts, to join OSHA agents on worksite inspections.
- **An Obama executive order** requiring federal contractors to provide paid sick leave was rescinded.

Delayed:

- **Beryllium:** Beryllium, commonly found in sheet rock, abrasive blasting materials and coal dust, is cancer-causing if inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin. Exposure standards were set to go into effect in 2017, but Trump officials reopened the regulatory process to eliminate protections for construction and maritime workers.
- **Silica:** Silica is common in concrete and dust exposure through demolition, drilling and cutting. Inhalation of silica dust affects 2 million construction workers every year, including many IBEW members. The rule has been delayed at least three months.
- **Chemical plant safety reporting.** Required companies to make public the chemicals they store on site and their safety plans in event of emergencies. Delayed until at least 2019.
- **Tracking of workplace injury and illness standards.** OSHA no longer keeps a public list of workplace accident victims, reducing the public's ability to hold repeat safety violators accountable. OSHA now only releases fatalities that a) result in a citation and b) occur in one of the 24 states and U.S. territories it regulates directly. ■

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Worker protection
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Key: ■ Right to Work States

What are Pre-emption laws?

Pre-emption is the use of state law to override local or federal law. It's being employed across the country to undermine election laws and counties to improve the lives of working people. Two states have adopted pre-emption laws that target project labor agreements, the prevailing wage, minimum wage, paid leave and more.

Roadblocks to Your Union Rights

Under President Obama, the Department of Labor passed a number of reforms to level the playing field for working people to join together in union and negotiate for fair wages and working conditions. The new Labor Department under President Trump, by contrast, is stacked with anti-union appointees, putting many of these previous wins in the crosshairs. Among them are:

THE PERSUADER RULE:

Required employers to report the use of “union-busting” consultants hired to stifle organizing and to make public the talking points, scripts and letters produced by those consultants.

DEAD

JOINT-EMPLOYER RULING:

The NLRB ruled in 2015 that franchise employees could hold parent companies — like McDonald's or other large corporations — responsible for workplace violations committed by their franchisees. It was reversed in December.

DEAD

MICRO BARGAINING UNITS:

This Obama-era rule allowed unions to organize smaller groups within a workplace — a group of welders within an automobile factory, for example. Anti-union companies hated the practice because it allowed labor footholds within larger facilities, so the Trump NLRB did their bidding.

DEAD

SHORTENED ELECTION TIMETABLES:

Organizing election timetables were shortened under President Obama's NLRB, but Trump's board is now seeking public input on the rule, the first step in killing it outright.

ON LIFE SUPPORT

YOUR RETIREMENT

After adding more than \$1.5 trillion to America's national debt with tax cuts for the rich, Speaker Paul Ryan has already announced he intends to shift his focus to **cutting bedrock middle-class programs like Social Security and Medicare** to bridge the budget gap. Tens of millions of Americans — among them many members of the IBEW — have been paying into these critical programs for decades, and now they depend on them for their retirement security.

Trump's Department of Labor has also delayed President Obama's so-called “fiduciary rule,” which was finalized in 2016 to protect workers with 401(k)s and IRAs against corrupt financial advisors.

The Economic Policy Institute says **delaying the rule by even 18 months could cost retirement savers \$10.9 billion** over 30 years. “They are calling this a delay, but it's a transparent attempt to weaken or kill the rule,” EPI Policy Director Heidi Shierholz said. “The financial services industry, who has been lobbying heavily for this delay, are the only ones who stand to benefit.”

The rule couldn't be more basic: It requires financial advisors to act in the best interests of their clients, rather than steer them toward decisions that would reward advisors with kickbacks. As we all know, getting trusted advice can be the difference between a comfortable retirement and slipping into poverty.

Meanwhile, a Republican-sponsored bill in the U.S. House aims to do more damage by reopening the loopholes the fiduciary rule would close. ■

YOUR TAXES

The Republican tax bill passed just before Christmas, and the new law will cost working families in the long run. Here's why:

- **The bill grossly favors corporations** and the mega-rich and contains provisions that directly enrich Trump and members of Congress who voted for it.
- **Tax savings for working Americans are miniscule** from the start and will vanish well before the cuts are set to expire in 2027. Some lower-income families will get no relief at all, or even see their tax bills rise.

• **Claiming the American dream** growth and income.
• **Even the best** under the lion, gran

When they do their job, federal agencies keep us safe on the job, protect our retirement plans and keep our air, water and land clean.

This administration's appointees to run those agencies, however, almost always come from the ranks of corporate owners, management or the lawyers who have worked, and will work again, for them.

In thousands of cases, there is no appointee at all. Those ranks include:



Scott A. Mugno

Nominee, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health

- Vice president of Safety, Vehicle Maintenance and Sustainability for FedEx Ground.
- Regulatory attorney for employers.
- Said “We've got to free OSHA from its own statutory and regulatory handcuffs.”



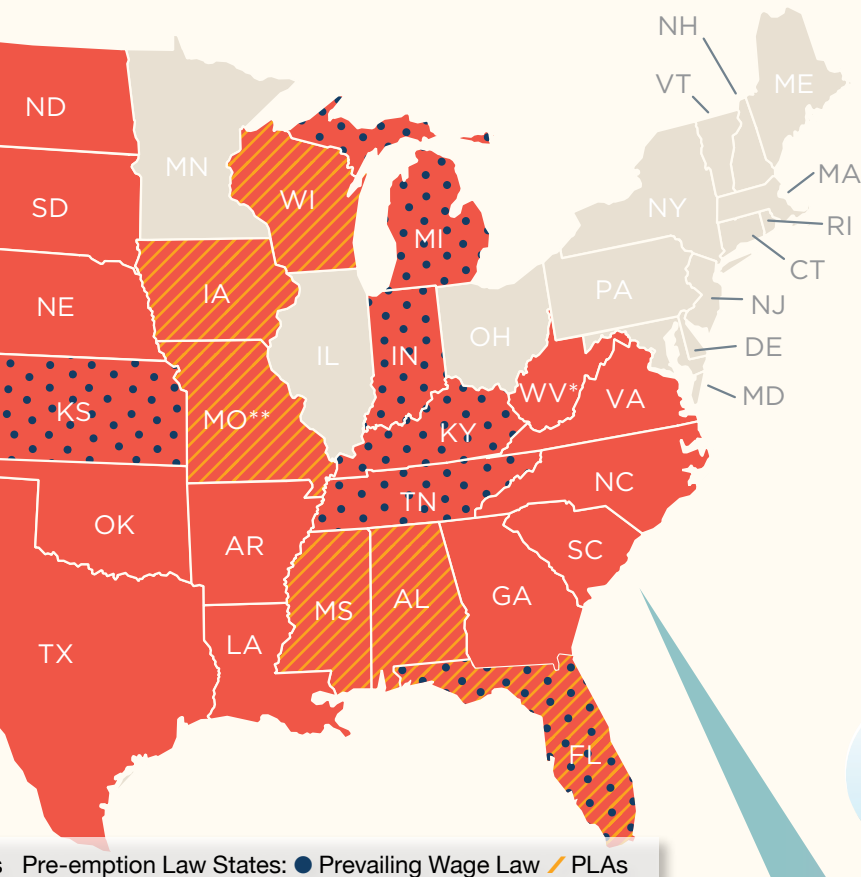
David Zatezalo

Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health

- Retired president and CEO of coal mining company Rhino Resources, known for battling efforts to boost mine safety enforcement.
- Under his leadership, Rhino mines were issued nearly \$2.1 million in fines for almost 160 workplace safety and health violations.

Foxes Guarding

ns are disappearing fast around the U.S., with some states legislatures outpacing federal government when it comes to putting the screws to working families.



ordinances, and efforts by cities in twenty-six states or agreements, more.

Other attacks on working families:

- This year, Iowa passed a bill similar to Wisconsin's Act 10 that **gutted collective bargaining rights** for public sector unions.
- Twenty states have **eliminated prevailing wage** laws that ensure liveable wages on state-funded construction projects, and several more states have weakened them. In those states, median construction wages are far lower — 21.9 percent — than states with prevailing wages.
- An effort to repeal the prevailing wage is underway now in Michigan, funded in large part by the state's chapter of the anti-union Associated Builders and Contractors.

While you may have seen a little extra money in your January paycheck, the consequences of the new law are the key takeaways:

Decisions made about all the money working Americans will save are based on false assumptions about unrealistic economic growth and corporations voluntarily passing increased profits on to their employees.

conservative economists warn that the federal budget deficit will explode under the tax bill by an estimated \$1.5 trillion, passing the mess to our children and grandchildren to fix.

- **Corporate tax cuts will be permanent.** Contrary to claims about job creation, tax breaks in the bill give companies incentive to move jobs offshore.

- **A \$10,000 cap on state and local taxes a person can deduct is a stiff penalty to working families in high-tax states.**

Middle-class families in expensive real estate markets will face the pinch of a \$250,000 cut in the cap for the mortgage interest deduction. ■



YOUR PAYCHECK

Worker productivity is up. Unemployment is down. History says working people should be reaping the benefits.

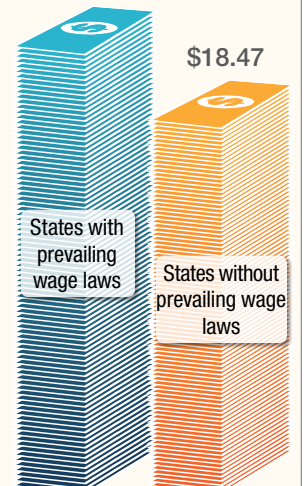
But wages are stagnant, and many economists — even some CEOs themselves — say the tax bill's largesse isn't going to change that. Meanwhile, the White House, Congress and GOP-controlled statehouses are making things worse with new assaults on wage protections, such as:

- **Repealing Davis-Bacon.** Republicans in Congress introduced a bill last year to repeal the law that requires federal contractors to pay construction workers the local prevailing wage, which levels the playing field for union contractors. The bill stalled, but that won't stop them trying again. Similar efforts to cut construction wages are underway at the state level.
- **Overtime eligibility.** U.S. law requires that workers earning less than \$23,660 a year be paid time-and-a-half after 40 hours, a number that hadn't been adjusted for inflation in decades. In 2016, the Obama administration doubled the threshold to \$47,476, giving workers all over the country an immediate raise. After a federal judge sided with big business to block the rule, the Trump administration refused to appeal, taking money out of the pockets of hard-working families.
- **Stealing restaurant workers' tips.** Undoing an Obama-era rule to protect tipped workers, the Trump DOL wants to let restaurant owners collect all tips from wait staff making as little as \$7.25 an hour. Owners could divide the money (fairly or not) or *keep it themselves* without diners having a clue. Critics slam it as “Robin Hood in reverse” and “authorized wage theft.”
- **Refusing to raise the federal minimum wage.** The hourly wage has been stuck at \$7.25 since 2009. While 29 states and Washington, D.C., have raised their minimums, workers elsewhere are stuck with a wage lagging far behind inflation. ■

Prevailing Wage =
\$\$ in Your Pocket

\$22.52

\$18.47



Hourly median wage
Source: EPI Analysis, May 2015



YOUR HEALTH

With Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid under scrutiny following the GOP's corporate tax giveaway, the health security of tens of millions of retirees and working poor is in jeopardy. Meanwhile, **ballooning deficits place increasing pressure on these programs**, which were already under strain due to the retiring baby-boom generation.

House Speaker Paul Ryan is focusing on more cuts. “We’re going to have to get back next year at entitlement reform, which is how you tackle the debt and the deficit,” he said. “Frankly, it’s the health care entitlements that are the big drivers of our debt, so we spend more time on the health care entitlements — because that’s really where the problem lies, fiscally speaking.”

Making matters worse, the tax bill includes a repeal of the Affordable Care Act's individual insurance mandate, which the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office projects **will rob 13 million Americans of health coverage and increase premiums** for those who buy their own insurance by 10 percent each year over the next decade.

More uninsured means more strain on hospitals and emergency rooms, rolling back gains made over the last seven years, and renegeing on the promise of affordable, quality health care for all Americans. ■

TRUMP'S BROKEN PROMISES

Candidate Trump made hundreds of promises about what President Trump would do in office, most prominently in his, “Donald Trump’s Contract with the American Voter.”

Here are just seven of the many promises he's broken or ignored in his first year in office.

1. "Spur \$1 trillion in infrastructure investment over ten years." **BROKEN — NO ACTION IN FIRST YEAR**
2. "Establish tariffs to discourage companies from laying off their workers in order to relocate in other countries and ship their products back to the U.S. tax-free." **THE TAX BILL INCENTIVIZES COMPANIES THAT OFFSHORE JOBS**
3. "Everybody is getting a tax cut, especially the middle class. The largest tax reductions are for the middle class. A middle-class family with two children will get a 35% tax cut." **TAX CUTS ARE AIMED AT THE SUPER-RICH. MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES GET LITTLE**
4. "A Trump Administration will also ensure that we start using American steel for American infrastructure." **BROKEN — THE MARKET IS FLOODED WITH CHEAP CHINESE STEEL**
5. "I would not be a president who took vacations." **BROKEN**
6. "If I'm president, Carrier won't move to Mexico." **IT DID**
7. "We've got to get rid of the \$19 trillion in debt. ... Well, I would say over a period of eight years." **TAX BILL ADDS \$1.5 TRILLION TO DEBT**

g the Henhouse



Cheryl Stanton

**Nominee, Administrator for
the Wage and Hour Division,
U.S. Department of Labor**

- Spent most of her career defending employers charged with violating labor law, including Domino's and FedEx.
- Was sued last year for failing to pay her house cleaners. She has since settled her bill.



Mick Mulvaney

**Acting Director of the Consumer
Financial Protection Bureau**

- Current head of the Office of Management and Budget.
- Called the CFPB “a sick, sad joke” and tried to dismantle it when he was in Congress.



Notable Vacancy

Assistant Secretary for Employee Benefits

- Oversees the security of retirement, health and other workplace benefits of U.S. workers and their families covered by about 685,000 private retirement plans, 2.2 million health plans, and similar numbers of other welfare benefit plans, which have \$9.3 trillion in assets.