WORKERS' RIGHTS & THE PRO ACT

Jason Knapp for Congress • Candidate, Virginia's 1st Congressional District

The deal in this country used to be simple. If the company did well, the people working there did well too. That is not how it works anymore. Since 1979, net productivity in the U.S. economy has grown by about 90%. Hourly pay for the typical worker has grown by only 33%. The gains from all that extra work went somewhere, but not to the homes of the people doing it.

That is not bad luck. That is what happens when one side of a deal has all the leverage and the other side has none. Every protection working Americans now take for granted — the weekend, the forty-hour week, employer health insurance, workplace safety standards, the minimum wage itself — was won the same way: by workers standing together and forcing the system to give ground. None of it was handed down out of corporate generosity. And it can be taken back the same way it was won — one piece at a time, while no one is paying attention.

Why Unions Exist

One worker, alone, has very little power against a corporation that employs ten thousand people. Hundreds or thousands of workers, acting together, have real power. That is what a union is.

This is not a foreign idea. A single colony, alone, could almost certainly not have defeated the British Crown. Thirteen colonies, banded together, defeated an empire. The country was founded on that principle: the only reliable way for ordinary people to stand against concentrated power is to stand together.

So when someone tells you unions are un-American, ask them to read the Declaration of Independence again. It is the same idea — applied to work.

Who Is Actually Fighting Unions

It is not workers. In Gallup's most recent annual reading, 68% of Americans say they approve of labor unions — the fifth consecutive year of support in the 67–71% range, a level last sustained in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

It is not the small businesses of this district. It is not the watermen of Northumberland. It is not the farmers in Hanover, the contractors in Chesterfield, or the marina owners on the Northern Neck. The small business owners of Virginia's 1st District treat the people who work for them with respect because those people are their neighbors. They do not need a federal labor lawyer to remind them their workers are human beings. They already know.

The strongest opposition to unions comes from large corporations — the ones that want to demand more of a worker's time while paying less for it, lock workers in with non-compete agreements, fire them without cause, and replace them whenever the math favors management. And it comes from the trade associations and lobbying groups those corporations pay to make the public argument for them.

So when the anti-union argument gets made, notice who is making it. And notice who pays if they win.

The Honest Part

The PRO Act would override Virginia's right-to-work law, which has been on the books since 1947. I support the PRO Act anyway. I would rather tell you that here, in writing, than have you find it in someone else's mailer.

You can disagree with me on that provision and still know exactly where I stand, and why. That is the deal I am offering. I will not lie to you about what I am for. You may end up voting for someone else — but you will not be surprised by anything I do once I am elected.

What I Will Do in Congress

- **Co-sponsor and vote for the PRO Act.** H.R.20 — the Richard L. Trumka Protecting the Right to Organize Act, introduced by Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA) and carrying 215 House co-sponsors, including Republicans, as of introduction — streamlines union elections, prohibits captive-audience meetings (the mandatory anti-union sessions employers run during organizing drives), and imposes real penalties on companies that illegally fire workers for organizing. It is the most significant update to labor law since the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.
- **Twelve weeks of federal paid family and medical leave.** Built as social insurance, the way Social Security and Medicare are built. A new parent or a caregiver should not have to choose between a paycheck and their family.
- **Defend the National Labor Relations Board.** The NLRB is the referee. It lost its quorum after the President fired Member Gwynne Wilcox in early 2025, operated without one for most of the year, and only regained a working majority when two new members were sworn in on January 7, 2026. The backlog of cases from that year is still being worked through. Workers who filed legitimate complaints waited — and many are still waiting. The Board has to function. That means a full slate of confirmed members, the budget to do the work, and the legal protections that keep board members from being fired at will.
- **Real OSHA enforcement.** More inspectors. Meaningful penalties for repeat offenders. A safety law only works if breaking it costs more than ignoring it.
- **Defend the federal civil service.** The administration's "Schedule F" order — reinstated on January 20, 2025 and now relabeled "Schedule Policy/Career," with a final OPM rule issued in February 2026 — would strip job protections from federal workers in policy-influencing roles and make them fireable at will. Estimates of the affected workforce run into the tens of thousands. That apolitical workforce has served

administrations of both parties. Many of the people affected live here — at Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, across the civilian Defense workforce in the Historic Triangle, and in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula communities that send commuters across the river to Dahlgren and across the bay to Langley. I will vote against every effort to politicize their jobs.

- **Crack down on misclassification.** A worker who functions as an employee should be classified as one. Calling someone a “contractor” when they are not strips away overtime, workers’ compensation, unemployment insurance, and the right to organize. It is a legal trick, and it is used because it works. It should not.
- **Ban non-compete agreements for most workers — in statute.** The Federal Trade Commission tried to ban them by rule in April 2024. In August 2024, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas struck the rule down in *Ryan, LLC v. FTC*. The current FTC voted 3–1 in September 2025 to drop the appeal. That leaves Congress as the only durable route. A worker stocking shelves or cutting hair should never be sued for taking a better job. A law the courts cannot erase is how that protection lasts.
- **Refuse corporate PAC money.** I do not take corporate PAC money from any source. I will name three categories explicitly: corporations whose business model depends on suppressing worker organizing; union-busting consulting firms; and private equity firms that extract value by cutting wages and benefits. Those are the checks that decide most of these votes in Washington. They will not decide mine.

The country was built on the idea that ordinary people, standing together, can stand up to power far bigger than themselves. Thirteen colonies did it against an empire. Workers did it against the conditions of the last century and won the weekend, the eight-hour workday, and the safety standards we now take for granted.

That work is not finished. Whether it gets finished depends on who you send to Congress to do it.

I am running to be on the side of the people doing the work.