

Unions preparing for assault in Nev. Legislature

By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun

Public employee unions are gearing up for a battle against Republicans in the 2015 legislative session.

Conservative lawmakers and activists are rallying to upend some of the state's collective bargaining laws, the rules that guarantee unions the right to negotiate pay and benefits for their membership.

For union workers employed by schools, cities or counties, changes to the laws could mean a shift in how labor leaders negotiate pay raises, benefits and working conditions with local governments. The state's unionized employees do not have the right to collective bargaining in Nevada.

Three Republican lawmakers have submitted bills aiming to change the laws, and the right-leaning Nevada Policy Research Institute has issued a Top-10 list of union reforms that has collective bargaining as a high priority. With the GOP in control of the Legislature and NPRI executive director Geoffrey Lawrence an Assembly policy adviser, unions are not taking any threats lightly.

The Republican push is the latest chapter in a decades-long debate that's carved a divide in American politics. Organized labor says the proposed legislation and NPRI agenda is an attempt to diminish the power of unionized public employees who work in Nevada's schools, cities and counties. Danny Thompson, executive secretary treasurer for the AFL-CIO, said the focus on collective bargaining is a "right-wing, tea party agenda" based on bill models that are shipped across the country from think tanks like NPRI and the American Legislative Exchange Council.

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