

For Immediate Release

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Corporate-backed, Out-Of-Touch Lawmakers Are The Real Leeches: Alabama AFL-CIO President Responds to Gov. Ivey and Speaker Ledbetter Lies About Unions

Alabama AFL-CIO President Bren Riley releases the following response to lawmaker attacks on the labor movement:

Governor Kay Ivey and House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter's recent comments in the media attacking unions are nothing but outright lies from politicians who are afraid of workers having even a little power to better their lives. They both called the United Auto Workers (UAW) a "dangerous leech" this week, just days after Gov. Ivey released a statement—alongside a couple other bought-and-paid-for lawmakers who are in the pocket of big corporations—claiming unions are special interest groups here to "threaten our jobs and the values we live by."

I'm here to set the record straight as a proud union man born and raised here in Gadsden. My grandfather was a union member, my father was a union member and I was a member of the United Steelworkers for well over 30 years. So, as a third generation factory worker in Alabama who grew up walking picket lines with my dad and listening to my granddaddy's stories about life before he had a union contract, I can tell you this: these out-of-touch lawmakers who collect taxpayer-funded salaries but don't lift a finger to help their hardworking constituents are the real leeches.

For my family, a union card meant a lot of things. It meant better protections from serious injuries or death on the job so you could always make it home safe after a shift to see your kids. It meant equal pay for equal work, no matter who you were, because if you put in an honest day's labor, you deserve a fair wage. It meant regular raises so you could always put food on the table and keep a roof over your head even if inflation was high. It meant dignity at work and getting the basic level of respect you deserve. And it meant job security so you couldn't be fired out-of-the-blue for no good reason and end up on the streets. Those are union values and, if you ask me, they're Alabama values.

When we have union jobs in our towns, it raises everyone's quality of life. If you don't believe me, let's look at the economics real quick. A fair, competitive wage at a stable job means more folks are able to support our local businesses and give their tithings in church. It also means more tax revenue to spend on funding our schools, repairing our roads and paying essential public servants like firefighters. A union-protected job also means the state will be able to spend less on unemployment benefits or food stamps because more and more working families will be able to support themselves with dignity. When I was a Steelworker, my union siblings and I knew that to whom much is given, much will be required. That's why we always donated to United Way, gave back to charities and sponsored local youth sport leagues. Because the benefits of a union don't stop at a member's paycheck. It impacts a whole community, across generations.

Corporations and the politicians they bankroll want to keep workers divided and afraid of demanding the rights and freedoms we deserve. They're working overtime right now to spread

fear and lies so bosses can keep paying poverty wages while they rake in record profits. But the Alabama AFL-CIO sees right through this charade and I know the honest, hardworking people of Alabama can see through it too. When workers stand together in unions to bargain for good wages, quality benefits and their fair share of corporate profits, we have the power not just to change our own lives, but the lives of our neighbors and communities, too.

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The Alabama AFL-CIO is the state's largest labor federation, representing tens of thousands of union members across different sectors of the economy.