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State worker dues may spur lawsuit

The Olympian

A national group appears ready to file a lawsuit on behalf of state workers who object to mandatory union dues.

□ Free Conscience, a group of workers upset with the dues requirement in state contracts, announced at the beginning of the year that its members were working with the National Right to Work Foundation on a class-action lawsuit. The foundation is opposed to mandatory union dues, and it advocates so-called "Right to Work" laws that prohibit them.

Free Conscience members could not be reached for comment Monday, but officials with the Right to Work Foundation said they planned to make an announcement about the case today.

Prior to the contracts that went into effect in July, state employees worked in an environment similar to states with Right to Work laws.

Unions represented workers, but employees typically did not have to pay dues or fees for the representation unless they chose to.

The first contracts to include provisions for pay and benefits also included clauses that mandated the fees. The unions have said the requirement is similar to contracts for private sector, city and county employees, but it angered many state workers. At least six workers have been fired for failing to sign up to pay dues.
