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State workers sue to help those fired for not paying union dues regain jobs

BY ADAM WILSON

THE OLYMPIAN

State workers opposed to mandatory union dues said Wednesday they were suing to win back the jobs of workers fired for holding out.

“If nothing else, it will let the employees out there know that they are not alone -- there are people who will stand up for them,” said Kimberly Johnson, a Department of Labor and Industries worker involved in the lawsuit.

She and several other workers spoke at a press conference that garnered heavy media attention and was orchestrated by the National Right to Work Foundation, which is handling the suit.

“We would hope we would get all employees who have been terminated their jobs back with benefits,” said James Plunkett, an attorney with the foundation, which is opposed to mandatory union dues.

So far, the state has fired at least six workers for failing to comply with the terms of their contracts, which were the first to include provisions for pay raises, as well as a requirement for dues or fees.

The president of the Washington Federation of State Employees said it's fair to ask all 38,000 workers covered by the contracts to help pay for negotiating them, and accused the national group of exploiting the plight of a few.

“They're preying on our members to push their agenda,” said union president Carol Dotlitch. “I don't think that they care about state employees at all.”
