

‘Big labor’ bill pushes anti-business, anti-worker agenda

By Gene Barr

In these volatile economic times, American workers and businesses are feeling the strain of today's marketplace woes, from skyrocketing energy costs to flagging consumer spending. In the midst of these challenges, the so-called Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) would hand employees and employers a new set of problems. Under the false pretense of “freeing” employees, EFCA would in reality revoke workers' rights to vote via secret ballot in union-organizing elections. This is a fundamental, democratic process that would be senselessly replaced with an open-voting system requiring workers to check a card in plain view of their supervisors, colleagues, and the very union organizers who are lobbying for their vote. In other words, under EFCA, workers can say goodbye to the privacy and anonymity that ensure fair elections, and instead expect a pressure-filled process where petty politics and coercion take center stage. Stripping workers of their right to vote democratically in union-organizing elections, as proposed by EFCA, would expose workers to the aggressive lobbying tactics of union leaders and pro-union colleagues.

In a recent *Wall Street Journal* online opinion column, “My Party Should Respect Secret Union Ballots,” former congressman, senator and one-time Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern, an admitted long-time friend of labor unions, called the proposed EFCA a “disturbing and undemocratic overreach not in the interest of either management or labor.”

McGovern is right.

Taking away workers' rights to vote via private ballot isn't EFCA's only offense. This legislation would create new layers of bureaucracy in the workplace that would place distance between employers and employees. For example, workers would no longer be able to discuss grievances or promotions directly with their supervisors. Instead, a designated union representative would bring Big Labor's interests to the table while handling these important conversations. And they may not always represent employees as they would like. For instance, unions historically push for promotions for those with union seniority, rather than fighting for merit-based advancement. This could leave many hard workers by the wayside and produce an environment that fails to motivate employees to deliver their best work. Ultimately, this policy would hurt businesses and their bottom lines, as well as some of their most talented and dedicated employees.

More meddlesome bureaucracy would also come in the form of contract negotiations. EFCA would authorize a Washington bureaucrat to intervene when employers and labor fail to reach an agreement. All-important decisions, from salary to workplace conditions, would then fall to this government representative's discretion, with no opportunity for employees to weigh in by voting on the contract terms they will be forced to live with. Contrary to the “free choice” EFCA claims to represent, this legislation robs workers of their voice in the workplace, and makes them pay for it too, in the form of sizeable union dues.

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It's a simple fact: EFCA is designed to force the hand of workers in unionization votes, and employees lose out in spades. From the elimination of their democratic vote to the loss of communication and a diminished voice in their workplace, employees not only gain nothing from EFCA legislation...they stand to lose some of the very "freedom" EFCA purports to offer.

Additionally, at a time when our economy is already struggling, EFCA will hit businesses with bureaucratic strains and operational challenges that will make it even harder for them to remain profitable and successful.

On behalf of its more than 24,000 members and customers, the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry firmly opposes this anti-worker and anti-business measure. To protect and encourage a vibrant business economy in Pennsylvania, the chamber urges elected officials to prevent the passage of EFCA, which places Big Labor's agenda ahead of the very workers it claims to help.

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