

Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

The facts Big Labor bosses would rather you didn't hear about.

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Compulsory unionism breeds corruption. In each issue of "Exposed," the National Right to Work Committee will highlight yet another example of union-boss abuse spawned and perpetuated by Big Labor's government-granted privilege to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired.

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Big Labor Bosses Put Squeeze on Taxpayers

Last month's U.S. Census Bureau report on population trends in the 50 states contained an astonishing fact about the Golden State: For the first time in memory, if not ever, California is suffering a net population loss due to people moving out of state greater than its net population gain due to immigration from abroad!

Between July 1, 2004 and July 1, 2005, according to the Census Bureau, a net total of 239,000 Californians moved out of state, whereas it's estimated that just 233,000 legal and illegal immigrants moved into the state.

The domestic out-migration from California, which is intensifying even as the national economy improves, is a product of the state's extraordinarily high living costs and overall taxes that eat up a higher share of residents' incomes than in 41 of the 49 other states.

Last year, GOP Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger crafted a measure designed to stop the hemorrhaging of California families and businesses. He sponsored Proposition 76, the "Live Within Our Means Act," to protect Californians from future massive tax increases.

But teacher and other government union officials were enraged by this modest step toward fiscal rectitude. California Teachers Association (CTA/NEA) union bosses imposed a special increase of nearly \$200 apiece over the next three years in teachers' compulsory-dues assessments to bankroll a \$100 million campaign to defeat Prop. 76 and two other initiatives that Big Labor believed threatened its institutional interests.

Union propagandists wielded dues money, which teachers and other public employees are forced under state law to fork over as a condition of employment, to finance an outrageously misleading ad campaign that labeled as a "cut" Mr. Schwarzenegger's proposed multi-billion dollar increase in education spending. And they succeeded in killing Prop. 76 and the two other initiatives they were targeting.

Moreover, the defeat of Prop. 76 is just one in a series of major victories over taxpayers that government union officials have chalked up in the past few years.

In a recent article for the quarterly magazine *City Journal*, published by the Manhattan Institute in New York, N.Y., writer and editor Steve Malanga describes how government union lobbyists across America have succeeded in piling costly new spending mandates on states that are already cash-strapped:

* * * In New Jersey, Big Labor legislators voted in 2001 for a taxpayer-funded public pension overhaul favored by government union lobbyists. This scheme has already “added \$1 billion to Jersey’s deficit riddled budget and will add another \$4.2 billion over the next five years.”

* * * Last year, union-label Washington State Democratic Gov. Christine Gregoire signed a \$500 million tax increase to finance a class-size mandate adopted in 2000 at the behest of teacher union officials. Yet there is no credible evidence this mandate will make the Evergreen State’s schools any better. Indeed, it may well make them worse by pressuring school districts to hire unqualified teachers.

* * * An alliance of union officials and the Greater New York Hospital Association spent \$13 million six years ago – “the largest sum ever for a state lobbying campaign” – to press the Empire State “to pour billions from its share of the federal tobacco settlement” into expanding its Medicaid program. Largely because of its excruciating tax burden, New York lost a net million in population through domestic out-migration between 2000 and 2005.

As the Malanga article (entitled “The Conspiracy Against Taxpayers”) shows, while taxpayers in government union-boss stronghold states are forking over ever more cash for public services, what they get in return is increasingly shoddy.

An especially egregious example is Connecticut, where officials of a Service Employees International Union (SEIU) union local called a strike against nursing homes a few years ago.

Union militants “engaged in vandalism and sabotage aimed at patients, according to an investigation by the state’s attorney, including removing identification bracelets from Alzheimer’s patients, feeding chocolate to diabetics, and loosening bolts on lifts used to support patients.”

With people and businesses now more mobile than ever before, states that impose excessive taxes at the behest of union officials who wield monopoly-bargaining and forced-dues power over public employees can expect to continue to lose millions of citizens to out-migration for years to come.

And the only sure way to break the cycle is to roll back the state laws and policies that authorize public sector forced unionism.

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