

# Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

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

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National Right to Work Committee® • 8001 Braddock Road • Springfield, Va. 22160  
www.nrtwc.org • (703) 321-9820 • (703) 321-7143 (fax)

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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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## **'It's a Loopy Idea That Came Out of Left Field'**

Late this winter and early this spring, many state and local elected officials from coast to coast suddenly declared their support for slapping a cap on the number of public "charter" schools in their jurisdiction.

If you assume that politicians like Big Labor Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland (D) are committed to serving the interests of schoolchildren, concerned parents, dedicated teachers and taxpayers, their crusade to cap charter schools makes no sense. But if you assume that the goal of Mr. Strickland and his ilk is to advance the agenda of union officials, especially teacher union officials, first and foremost, then this crusade is perfectly rational.

In a March 26 editorial, the *Wall Street Journal* made it clear why millions of parents who care about their children's futures are sending or trying to send them to charters, why many good teachers want to work at charters, and why National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union bosses want to quash the charter movement while it's still relatively small.

Charters, observed the *Journal*, "are public schools freed from the grip of the public education bureaucracy. Charter schools can employ lengthier school days and longer school years than union work rules typically allow. They can pay teachers based on skills and performance rather than seniority. And charter school principals can fire and replace staff who are underperforming."

In forced-unionism states like Ohio, Minnesota, New York, California and Oregon, teachers in the overwhelming majority of public schools are forced to accept a union as their monopoly-bargaining agent in contract negotiations and forced to pay union dues or fees in order to keep their jobs. But NEA- and AFT-affiliated union officials currently wield monopoly-bargaining and forced-dues power at only a small minority of charter schools in these states.

The mere fact that charters are generally free from union monopoly rule is no guarantee they'll succeed, and some don't. However, as the *Journal* noted, there is compelling evidence that charters like the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), Uncommon Schools, Achievement First and others are educating children far more effectively than traditional, Big Labor-controlled public schools.

The successful KIPP program, originally launched by two fifth-grade teachers in Right to Work Texas, has announced it hopes next year to launch an academy in Columbus, the capital of Ohio. But this won't happen if Buckeye State legislators go along with Mr. Strickland's cynical plan, announced March 16, to impose a "moratorium" on charters.

Ohio teacher union bosses are furious about the fact that 76,000 of the state's schoolchildren, mostly in Columbus, Cleveland, Dayton, and other urban areas, have already escaped union boss-dominated public schools by enrolling in charters. After failing last year to get the Ohio Supreme Court to declare all charters "unconstitutional," the teacher union establishment is now focusing on preventing additional children from escaping its strongholds with Mr. Strickland's help.

Also doing teacher union bosses' bidding is the Minnesota state Senate in St. Paul. On March 26, union-label senators voted to cap the statewide number of charter schools at 150.

Given that the state already has 131 charter schools, and the number of students enrolled in charters more than doubled between the 2001-2 and 2006-7 school years, from just over 10,000 to nearly 24,000, this cap is bound to start hurting opportunity-seeking parents, schoolchildren and teachers soon.

Minnesota state Rep. Mindy Greiling, a member of the Democrat-Farm-Labor Party, recently said of the Senate's charter-school cap: "It's a loopy idea that came out of left field." But just like Mr. Strickland, Minnesota's Big Labor senators actually know exactly what they're doing. They're helping teacher union officials protect their turf.

Similarly, union boss-friendly members of the Los Angeles Board of Education made a coolly calculated move on March 29 when they unexpectedly blocked the expansion of Green Dot, one of L.A.'s leading charter school operators. Mike Lansing, one of three pro-Green Dot board members, commented:

"It's really disappointing that we keep talking about wanting to do what's best for children first, when without a doubt that vote was about a teachers union and . . . board members not having the backbone to stand up and do the right thing for kids over their ties to the union."

If politicians in Ohio, Minnesota, California, and other states that authorize union monopoly bargaining in public education really had children's best interest in mind, they would now be targeting that misguided and destructive policy, rather than charter schools.

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