

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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Montana Union Bosses Can't Be Trusted With Taxpayer Dollars – Or Workers' Forced Dues

Montana union kingpin Jim McGarvey, the head of the Treasure State's AFL-CIO union conglomerate and a virulent opponent of Right to Work laws and legislation, likes to claim that he and his fellow union bosses are "partners in the community."

But now it seems that even the administration of Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer (D), which has always been tightly allied with Big Labor, no longer wants to have McGarvey and his AFL-CIO lieutenants as its "partner."

On February 11, just hours before the state AFL-CIO hierarchy publicly endorsed Schweitzer for a second term in office, Keith Kelly, the governor's own handpicked state labor commissioner, ended his agency's \$550,000-a-year "job retraining" contract with the AFL-CIO brass. Kelly explained that an audit review had shown, as the *Montana Missoulian* reported February 13, "that for every \$1 spent to help displaced workers in Montana, the AFL-CIO spent \$4.01 on its own staff salaries" for its so-called "Project Challenge: Work Again" program.

"[A]ll the money was going out the door for all the salaries, but we're way behind in getting money to the participants," commented Kelly, obviously exasperated. "Holy smokes! We're upside down."

And this wasn't the first time that the Schweitzer Labor Department had uncovered massive abuse by Montana AFL-CIO bosses of the federal taxpayer dollars that finance the state's job retraining programs. "In April 2006," recalled reporter Charles Johnson in his article appearing in the February 13 *Missoulian*, "the state Labor Department ordered the AFL-CIO to pay back \$47,515 in federal job training funds spent but not properly documented to laid off Flathead Valley workers."

Johnson added that, according to an October 2007 Labor Department announcement, one former "Project Challenge" coordinator had paid for ". . . his stepdaughter's four years of college in Arizona . . . with \$35,111 in job training money." The Labor Department accused other AFL-CIO officials of "gross financial irresponsibility" for their handling of the matter.

McGarvey and his cohorts obviously deserve the lambasting Kelly gave them last month. But the Schweitzer administration also has a lot to answer for. First of all, concerned Montana citizens are undoubtedly wondering why the governor's team long continued handing federal taxpayer money to union bosses who had already displayed "gross financial irresponsibility."

An even more fundamental question for freedom-loving Montanans is why the Schweitzer administration, after publicly demonstrating that it doesn't believe Montana AFL-CIO bosses can be trusted with taxpayers' money, continues to entrust McGarvey and company with millions and millions of dollars in union dues and fees that employees across the state are forced to fork over as a condition of employment every year.

Throughout his political career, Schweitzer has bitterly opposed enactment of a state Right to Work law that would prohibit the firing of employees for refusal to join or pay dues or fees to an unwanted union.

The governor's tacit message has been that the individual employee does not need to have the freedom to resign from a union and cut off all financial support for it as soon as he suspects that union bosses are misusing his dues, because union bosses are moral paragons.

But now the governor's own labor commissioner has acknowledged not only that state AFL-CIO bigwigs have been ripping off taxpayers for years, but also that they refused to stop their abuses after receiving repeated warnings. What possible excuse can the governor have now for continuing to oppose abolition of Big Labor's forced-dues privileges? That for some reason it's less wrong to steal from Montana employees than it is from taxpayers?

As a candidate for reelection, Brian Schweitzer has to face the judgment of Montana voters in just a few months. Therefore, now is the perfect time for the overwhelming majority of Montanans who back the Right to Work principle to raise the heat on him to stop supporting forced-dues privileges for union officials he himself doesn't trust with taxpayers' money.

The only even half-way plausible reason for Schweitzer to continue opposing a state Right to Work law is that AFL-CIO and other union bosses are funneling huge amounts of forced-dues money and manpower into efforts to get him reelected. Montanans who believe that reason isn't good enough may call the governor's office at 406-444-3111 to let him know that.

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