

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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‘Card-Check’ Forced Unionism Threatens Workers’ Wallets

The national AFL-CIO hierarchy is stepping up its propaganda campaign in support of legislation, now before Congress, that would help union organizers corral millions of now-independent workers into unwanted unions.

Between June 28 and July 4, AFL-CIO union bosses mounted a “National Workplace Week of Action,” during which they turned up the pressure on a handful of targeted senators and House members who hadn’t yet signed on to S. 1925/H.R. 3619, the cynically labeled “Employee Free Choice Act.”

Big Labor’s goal is to get congressional majorities on the record in support of this measure – more accurately labeled as the ‘Card-Check’ Forced Unionism Bill – and thus pave the way for its passage if union-label Sen. John Kerry becomes President in January.

This bill would rewrite the rules for union-organizing drives according to union bosses’ dictates. These rules are actually already heavily tilted in favor of union bosses. For example, under current law, union organizers are free to ask workers to sign a union authorization card and to interrogate them repeatedly about their views on the union.

But similar inquiries from supervisors or company officers are strictly prohibited.

As pro-forced unionism as current law is, S. 1925/H.R. 3619 – authored by Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy and California Congressman George Miller – would go much further. It would effectively rule out the possibility that employees could get the final say on a union-organizing drive in the privacy of a voting booth.

Only the views workers express while being “monitored” by union officials would count.

Union bosses back this expansion of card-check organizing not out of any principle, but because they calculate it will help them secure the power to act as the “exclusive” (monopoly) bargaining agent over and, ultimately, collect compulsory union dues from millions of now-independent employees.

Knowing full well forced unionism in itself isn’t a popular agenda, union propagandists claim that stripping such employees of the few legal protections and privileges they have left vis-à-vis Big Labor will be “good for them.” But their claims are belied by history.

The record clearly indicates that expanding the number of employees under union monopoly control will lead to lower real wages, slower job growth, and reduced access to important job benefits like health insurance for the people whom union officials claim to represent.

The fact is, when interstate differences in cost of living are factored in, the mean weekly earnings in 2001 of employees in the 10 states with the lowest share of private-sector workers under union monopoly rule were \$683.

That’s nearly \$30 a week, or roughly \$1500 a year, more than the mean of \$654 earned by employees in the 10 states with the highest share of unionized employees. (The mean earnings data come from the Bureau of National Affairs in Washington, D.C., as adjusted by the “Interstate Cost-of-Living Index” created for the American Federation of Teachers union by Dr. F. Howard Nelson.)

Low monopoly-bargaining density states also enjoy a long-term advantage in economic dynamism, as one can see by reviewing the subsequent performances of the states that had the lowest and highest monopoly-bargaining densities in 1992.

Over the next decade, the 10 states with the smallest share of workers under monopoly bargaining enjoyed an aggregate job growth of 27.7%, more than double the 13.5% growth among the states where Big Labor wielded the most monopoly power.

For growth in the number of people covered by employment-based health insurance, the advantage for the lowest monopoly-bargaining states was 24.6% vs. 12.5%.

The monopoly-bargaining system has, by all evidence, undermined the very economic goals Organized Labor purportedly favors. Imposing more of the same on employees is no solution.

Fortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court has endorsed an alternative system that is far preferable. In its 1938 *Consolidated Edison* ruling and subsequent decisions, the High Court has established that unions that wish to bargain for members only don’t need to demonstrate they have majority support – whether through a secret ballot or a “card check.”

Therefore, if union officials consider today’s organizing elections to be too contentious, they may licitly circumvent them by requesting recognition as bargaining agents for their members only.

But Congress has no business bestowing even more legal privileges on Big Labor. If Sen. Kennedy, Rep. Miller, and the rest of Congress really want to help employees, they should instead be working to free them from forced unionism.