

# Right to Work Movement Grows in State Capitols

## *Grass-Roots Leaders Find Inspiration in 2001 Oklahoma Victory*

Thanks to the efforts of countless citizen lobbyists who want to protect personal freedom and spur economic growth in their home states, the popular movement to abolish forced union dues and "fees" is gaining momentum across America.

In the wake of the November 2 elections, which resulted in significant Right to Work gains in several states where the forced-unionism issue is heating up, advocates of Right to Work measures are seeking roll-call votes in 10 or more legislatures.

Right to Work proponents are pushing hard for recorded votes early next year in New Hampshire, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, Missouri, Colorado, and Montana.

"Even political strategists in several states that have historically been Big Labor bastions are now giving Right to Work a closer look," said Matthew Leen, vice president of the National Right to Work Committee.

Mr. Leen pointed to recent pro-Right to Work public statements by Michigan GOP Chairwoman Betsy DeVos and state GOP spokesman Matt Davis.

### **With Each Election Year, Right to Work Forces Grew Stronger in Oklahoma**

Regardless of how close their own state is to passing a Right to Work law, savvy proponents are following the successful road map laid out by Oklahoma between 1993 and 2000, which culminated in the approval of a Right to Work constitutional amendment in 2001.

As many National Committee members know, when Oklahoma Right to Work legislation was introduced back in 1993, it was supported by just 34 of 101 state representatives and 12 of 48 state senators.

But from the 1994 through the 2000 elections, activists helped motivate voters to replace 28 pro-forced unionism legislators with Right to Work supporters.

By February 2001, Big Labor state Senate leader Stratton Taylor (D-Claremore) admitted in writing that Right to Work legislation would receive a "majority vote in both houses" and that only putting Right to Work on a statewide



AP/PAT CARTER

**After helping elect GOP Gov. Frank Keating and dozens of other pro-Right to Work statewide officials and**

**legislators, opponents of forced unionism were ready to pass America's 22nd state Right to Work law.**

ballot could give Organized Labor "a fighting chance of defeating" it.

Between 1994 and 2000, freedom-loving Oklahomans also helped elect a pro-Right to Work governor, lieutenant governor, and labor commissioner. Gov. Frank Keating's (R) unyielding support turned out to be especially helpful for enacting the state's Right to Work Amendment.

The course so carefully charted by Oklahoma Right to Work supporters is now providing guidance for Right to Work activists in a host of states.

### **Developments in Missouri Emblematic of Renewed Right to Work Hopes**

To some observers who have long memories, recent Right to Work gains in Missouri may come as a particular surprise.

A quarter-century ago, well-intentioned, but misguided Missouri citizens launched an effort to pass a Right to Work law through a statewide ballot initiative.

Unlike in Oklahoma in 2001, when Right to Work appeared on the ballot in Missouri in November 1978, there had been no foregoing multi-year citizen mobilization effort to put pressure on elected officials to support a state Right to

Work law.

As a consequence, virtually all elected Democratic officials and roughly a third of GOP officeholders publicly opposed the Right to Work initiative in Missouri.

With roughly another third of elected Republicans ducking the issue completely, well-known supporters of Right to Work were few and far between. This gave Big Labor a huge edge in maintaining the forced-dues status quo, which it did by a wide margin.

In contrast, because Oklahoma politicians had been feeling the heat to support Right to Work for years before it appeared on the ballot, the Right to Work referendum was backed by every elected Republican of note and many Democrats, including two former governors.

"Because Oklahoma's Right to Work measure was backed by then-Gov. Keating and other respected statesmen in both parties, a 54-46 majority of citizens could confidently ignore Big Labor's shrill, deceitful propaganda and vote on principle," said Mr. Leen.

"Now Missouri and other states are following the Oklahoma model and building Right to Work strength in every election cycle.

"Passing a ban on forced union dues is never easy. But Right to Work supporters in state after state can now see light at the end of the tunnel." 