

Right to Work House Prospects Improving *But GOP Chiefs' Refusal to Hold H.R.500 Vote Limits Progress*

Come Election Day next month, pro-Right to Work candidates may against all odds actually make a modest net gain in U.S. House strength, regardless of which political party captures a majority of seats.

But the now near-certain failure of House GOP leaders to hold a roll-call vote in this Congress on legislation to abolish federally-authorized forced union dues is putting the brakes on a train that might otherwise be at full speed.

As many Right to Work supporters know, House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) has over the years repeatedly stated his opposition to current federal policies that authorize the firing of workers for refusal to pay union dues or fees.

For example, in an October 2004 letter to a constituent about a then-pending national Right to Work measure, Mr. Hastert wrote: "...I believe workers should have the right to decide for themselves whether to join labor unions."

And well over half of Mr. Hastert's GOP party caucus members are current sponsors of South Carolina GOP Congressman Joe Wilson's forced-dues repeal bill (H.R.500, the National Right to Work Act).

Many other members of Mr. Hastert's caucus have publicly indicated they would support Right to Work legislation if it came up for a floor vote.

Politicians Who Support Right to Work Benefit When Issue Is Voted On

Since the 1940's, scientific opinion surveys have consistently shown that most Americans support the Right to Work principle — and that majority has grown increasingly lopsided over time.

For example, a 2004 poll of 1100 Americans who "always or almost always vote when there is a statewide election" found that 79% support a person's right to hold a job "regardless of whether or not he or she belongs to a union."

(This survey was conducted by Del Ali, president of the well-known Maryland polling firm Research 2000. Over the course of his career, he has conducted polls in more than 2000 political races.)

Holding a vote on H.R.500 should thus have been a no-brainer for Mr. Hastert.

The fact is, every time Congress has voted on a forced-unionism issue, going back 40 years, the result has been a significant gain in Right to Work supporters after the next election cycle.

For example, between 1991 and 1994 both chambers of Congress cast a series of votes on Sen. Ted Kennedy's (D-Mass.) Pushbutton Strike Bill, designed to force employees to strike and, ultimately, to pay union dues.

A total of 40 House and Senate members who voted for the Pushbutton Strike Bill were defeated when they ran for reelection in 1992 or 1994.

Why Divert Attention Away From Winning Issue?

Even without a recorded House vote on H.R.500, the National Right to Work Committee's Survey 2006 program is highlighting the issue of forced unionism and putting the heat on Big Labor House candidates this fall.

Through the federal Survey 2006, hundreds of thousands of pro-Right to Work citizens are contacting candidates in


targeted close races, urging them to pledge support for forced-dues repeal and opposition to union-boss power grabs.

Thanks largely to this program, no matter who controls Congress next year, Right to Work advocates may actually emerge from the November 7 elections with a slightly larger number of House allies than they have going in.

However, using constituent pressure to force politicians to take a stand on an issue they have never had to vote on is much more difficult than putting the heat on politicians who have already voted for forced unionism.

Without a vote, there's a real danger that too many citizens' attention will not be focused on Right to Work.

"Allowing the public's attention to be diverted away from your caucus's winning issue is an odd strategy for a party leader," noted Committee President Mark Mix.

"Mr. Hastert may keep his partisan majority. But the question is, how much greater gains would Right to Work have achieved if forced-unionism proponents had had to vote in accord with their unpopular views?" 



Speaker Hastert has harmed many pro-Right to Work candidates' prospects by refusing to allow a vote on H.R.500.

Nevertheless, House Right to Work allies are expected to hold their own next month.