

Big Labor Bosses Target Tennessee Firemen

Committee Fights Back With Legislative Candidate Survey Program

This spring, International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) union President Harold Schaitberger came frighteningly close to imposing union monopoly bargaining on firefighters in jurisdictions across Tennessee.

Although from the outset there was strong grass-roots opposition to the monopoly-bargaining legislation, it took a sustained National Right to Work Committee phone mobilization to derail IAFF bosses' scheme as Tennessee's 2006 legislative session concluded.

On May 26, after H.B.2035 and S.B.1116, the Tennessee House and Senate versions of the Firefighter Monopoly-Bargaining Bill, had already been rammed through legislative committees, the entire House rubber-stamped H.B.2035 in a lopsided 67-24 vote. Within hours, the full Senate took up H.B.2035.

Union Monopoly Bargaining Puts Workers 'Under Powerful Compulsion to Join'

But by then, thousands of freedom-loving Tennesseans, after being informed of the threat by callers from the Committee's Virginia Beach-area phone center, had already contacted their senators, urging them to oppose monopoly bargaining.

Reluctant to defy openly the IAFF brass, but also concerned about the ongoing Right to Work mobilization, senators finally opted to approve two "killer" amendments proposed by pro-Right to Work Sen. Mark Norris (R-Collierville). H.B.2035 subsequently died without a direct Senate vote.

Monopoly-bargaining laws force employees, including union members and nonmembers alike, to grant union bosses the exclusive power to negotiate their pay, benefits, and working conditions. The individual's right to represent himself is legally nullified; he is effectively at the mercy of union officials.

Although monopoly bargaining alone does not formally force a worker to join a union, it obviously does put him "under powerful compulsion to join," as then-top AFL-CIO lawyer Thomas Harris admitted back in the 1960s.

"At least in Right to Work states, Big Labor can't get workers fired for refusal to join or pay dues to an unwanted



International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) union czar Harold Schaitberger wants to expand his already huge

political machine by winning enactment of more state public-safety monopoly-bargaining laws.

union," noted Committee Vice President Matthew Leen.

"But if state law at the same time grants power to represent the public-safety 'employee' perspective in contract negotiations to union officials alone, firefighters are understandably reluctant to oppose or even question the union.

"Many public employees even formally join the union because they conclude that, practically speaking, they have to."

Now Pro-Right to Work Tennesseans Must Hold Politicians Accountable

"That's why Harold Schaitberger and his lieutenants are determined to get public-safety monopoly bargaining written into the laws of all 50 states," Mr. Leen continued.

"For several years now, Right to Work Tennessee has been one of their top targets. Despite their recent setback in the state Senate, they're not about to give up now.

"This fall, Mr. Schaitberger and the AFL-CIO hierarchy are deploying battalions of paid union staffers for electioneering in Tennessee. Their goal is to install a state Senate that will join the House in sanctioning firefighter monopoly bargaining next year.

"The union bosses know that if they can get monopoly control over firefighters in jurisdictions across the

state in 2007, it will then be much easier for them to mount direct attacks on the state Right to Work law and swing Tennessee for Big Labor presidential candidates in 2008 and beyond."

But the National Right to Work Committee and its Tennessee members and supporters are fighting back.

The Committee has already surveyed every major-party candidate for the Tennessee state House and Senate regarding where they stand on public-safety monopoly bargaining and other Right to Work issues.

And this month, the Committee is informing Right to Work supporters across Tennessee about how their candidates answered their surveys, as well as about their candidates' voting records and other relevant facts.

Because of pro-Right to Work Tennesseans' impressive record of activism, at least one nominee for most of the legislative seats being contested this year has already vowed to oppose schemes like H.B.2035 and S.B.1116.

"The last step, now being implemented, is to mobilize Right to Work supporters to keep increasing the pressure on their candidates until Election Day. I'm confident pro-Right to Work Tennesseans will convince many to oppose public-sector monopoly bargaining consistently in the future," said Mr. Leen.

"Right to Work advocates still have a long way to go before the Tennessee battle is over. But I'm confident it can be won." 