

Government Union Monopolists Target Colorado

So-Called 'Exclusive Representation' Scheme Would Soak Taxpayers

This spring, Big Labor Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter began quietly meeting with government union bosses to concoct a strategy for enacting a new state law authorizing union monopoly bargaining over tens of thousands of city, county, and state employees.

And officers of the giant American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFCME/AFL-CIO) pushed from the get-go for a monopoly-bargaining scheme that would explicitly empower them to have public employees fired for refusal to pay dues or so-called "agency" fees to an unwanted union.

Under monopoly bargaining, employees lose the individual right to bargain for themselves over their wages, benefits, and work rules, and must allow a union agent to negotiate in their stead, like it or not.

Poll after poll has shown that the vast majority of Americans are opposed in principle to union monopoly bargaining.

Therefore, it's not surprising that, since Mr. Ritter's off-the-record meetings with government union bosses became public knowledge late this summer, freedom-loving Coloradans have expressed strong opposition to the monopoly-bargaining scheme.

Public-Sector Forced Union Dues Linked to Heavier Tax Burdens

Like other Americans, Coloradans overwhelmingly agree that it's just plain wrong to force an employee who doesn't



Gov. Bill Ritter's (D-Colo.) monopoly-bargaining scheme is sparking intense public opposition.

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want to join a union to allow that same union to bargain in his stead over his workplace contract.

Furthermore, a wide array of evidence indicates that public-sector monopoly bargaining and forced union dues lead to ever heavier burdens on taxpayers from all walks of life.

For example, according to data from the nonpartisan, Washington, D.C.-based Tax Foundation, this year the aggregate "Tax Freedom Day" of the seven western states that authorize public-sector forced dues didn't come until May 5.

That's a full week later than in Colorado and eight days later than the aggregate Tax Freedom Day for the six western states that do not authorize or flat out prohibit

public-sector forced dues.

As the Tax Foundation has explained, Tax Freedom Day is the day when the citizens of a state or country "finally have earned enough money to pay off their total [federal, state and local] tax burden for the year."

National Right to Work Committee Vice President Doug Stafford explained that it makes perfect sense that public-sector forced union dues should be strongly correlated with heavier tax burdens:

"In states where union officials have obtained the privilege of forcing workers in the public- and/or private-sector to pay union dues, they have more money and power to advance their legislative agenda, which includes higher taxes, more government spending, and straitjacket regulation of business.

"Therefore, it's not surprising that taxes and also living costs are substantially higher in forced-dues states, and that real incomes in those states suffer as a consequence."

'Instead of Expanding Big Labor's Forced-Dues Powers, Colorado Should Repeal Them'

Mr. Ritter and the likeminded Democratic majority leadership in the state Senate and House are clearly trying to steer the Centennial State in the wrong direction, added Mr. Stafford.

"Instead of expanding Big Labor's forced-dues powers, Colorado should repeal them," he observed.

"And in February, GOP state Sen. Ted Harvey [Douglas] introduced a Right to Work amendment that would have explicitly barred both public- and private-sector forced dues and fees in Colorado. Unfortunately, union-label Majority Leader Ken Gordon [D-Denver] engineered a party-line vote that killed the amendment, 19-13.

"On the other hand, I'm cautiously optimistic that the Committee and its Colorado allies will be able to mobilize sufficient public opposition to the Ritter public-sector forced-unionism power grab to stall it in 2008.

"As powerful as the union political machine is, it can't make ordinary Coloradans support forced unionism. In the foreseeable future, I'm confident freedom-loving citizens will prevail and pass a state Right to Work law."

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