

Government Union Bosses Suffer TSA Setback

Despite Big Labor's Intense Support, Southers Nomination Sinks

President Obama, Big Labor U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), and union-label House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) are all eager to help government union bosses grab monopoly-bargaining privileges over more than 45,000 airport screeners employed at the Transport Security Administration.

At the same time, however, neither the President nor the two congressional leaders seem to want to accept accountability for corralling TSA employees into a union. Mr. Obama, Mr. Reid, and Ms. Pelosi know that foisting a union monopoly on a federal agency that is critical for national security would be very unpopular.

That's why, until very recently, they planned to let Erroll Southers do their dirty work.

Last September, the President named Mr. Southers, a former FBI agent, as his choice to head the TSA.

Had the Senate confirmed him as assistant secretary of the Department of Homeland Security for the TSA, Mr. Southers would have had the discretion to rescind administratively the prohibition on union monopoly bargaining over federal airport screeners imposed in 2003.

Unionization Would 'Make It Harder' For TSA to 'Meet Changing Terrorist Threats'

And, even though Mr. Southers refused to say publicly whether or not he intended to hand government union bosses monopoly power to bargain over airport screeners' working conditions once the Senate had confirmed him, Big Labor was obviously confident he would do just that.

On September 10, 2009, even before the President had officially nominated Mr. Southers, top bosses of the American Federation of Government Employees union (AFGE/AFL-CIO), who expect to be the principal beneficiaries of TSA monopoly bargaining, issued a press release applauding the choice.

The release quoted AFGE union President John Gage: "The question of [monopoly] bargaining . . . at TSA is not a matter of 'if,' but 'when.' We are confident that the appointment of Mr.



CREDIT: FOX NEWS

On the airwaves and in private discussions with pro-Right to Work senators, Mark Mix has made the case

that the current prohibition on union monopoly bargaining at the TSA should remain in place.

Southers as administrator will help put that matter to bed."

By late November, the AFGE hierarchy appeared to be on the verge of having its way. Two Senate committees had already rubber-stamped the nomination in lopsided votes.

But the National Right to Work Committee and its 2.5 million members weren't ready to let AFGE union kingpins coercively collectivize TSA airport screeners without a fight.

Working closely with key pro-Right to Work senators, the Committee moved late last fall to block the confirmation of Erroll Southers, and thus prevent union bosses from obtaining monopoly power to negotiate over how airport screeners do their jobs.

Handing Big Labor this power would, as the respected *Wall Street Journal* editorial page has pointed out, "make it harder for the executive branch to hire, fire, train and reassign workers to best meet changing terrorist threats."

Pro-Right to Work South Carolina Senator Placed 'Hold' on Nomination

On November 29, pro-Right to Work Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) placed a "hold" on the Southers nomination, indicating his intent to prevent the nomination from moving forward until Mr. Southers had stated publicly and plainly whether or not he intended to unionize the TSA, and explained the reasons for his stance.

Subsequently, several other pro-Right to Work senators, including Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) and Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), declared that they also had "serious concerns" about Mr. Southers.

Nevertheless, Senate Majority Leader Reid vowed he would push aside all objections and ram through the nomination, without any additional debate, shortly after the Senate reconvened on January 19.

However, on January 20, beset by questions not just about whether he would impose union monopoly bargaining at the TSA, but also about his improper handling of confidential FBI files while employed there and his false testimony regarding the latter matter, Mr. Southers pulled out his nomination.

Battle Over TSA Employees' Right to Work Goes On

"Thanks largely to the diligence of Right to Work legislative staff and the principled stance of Sen. DeMint, the AFGE union bosses' scheme to seize monopoly-bargaining power over federal airport baggage screeners has been temporarily derailed," said Committee President Mark Mix.

"Unfortunately, it is almost inevitable that President Obama's next nominee to head the TSA, whoever that is, will wear a union label."

"Once again, it will be up to Right to Work allies in the Senate to make sure the nominee provides clear answers on the monopoly-bargaining question before he or she is confirmed." 