Retailers urge House to reject union 'Card-Check' legislation

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

WASHINGTON - The National Retail Federation today strongly urged the House to reject legislation that would take away the right to secret ballots in union elections, saying the move would subject workers to intimidation and that the bill is moving too quickly for proper consideration.

The House is scheduled to vote Thursday on H.R. 800, the Employee Free Choice Act, sponsored by Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller, D-Calif. The bill would require the National Labor Relations Board to certify a union if presented with signed authorization cards from a majority of employees the union is seeking to organize, eliminating the long-standing National Labor Relations Act requirement for federally supervised secret ballots in union elections. The legislation also includes other anti-employer provisions such as compulsory arbitration of first contracts and enhanced penalties.

"Under this system, the union organizers themselves -- not the federal government -- oversee the process, and the workers' votes are made public to the employer, the union organizers and co-workers," NRF Senior Vice President for Government Relations Steve Pfister said today in a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and all other members of the House. "There are many examples where card check elections have been challenged on the basis of coercion, misrepresentation, forgery, fraud, peer pressure and promised benefits."

By contrast, "The secret ballot election guarantees the right of employees to freely choose whether or not to be represented by a union and it allows for a private, confidential vote by employees based on the principles of the American system of democracy," Pfister said.

Thursday's scheduled vote comes less than a month after the legislation was introduced on February 5 even though the only hearing has been a subcommittee session dominated by union supporters with little input from other workers or business groups.

"If this bill is passed, Congress would be throwing away over half a century of labor law in a single month," NRF Vice President for Government and Political Affairs Rob Green said. "Most lawmakers haven't had a chance to examine what this bill would do, and American workers aren't being given a chance to learn how this bill takes away their rights. When they do, they're going to oppose it. The changes proposed in this bill are too drastic to be pushed through on a fast track that hides the facts from the public."

NRF is leading the retail industry's fight against the card-check proposal. Among other activities, NRF is a member of the management committee of the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace, a broad-based business group formed to oppose the legislation, and co-chairs the group's lobbying committee.

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