

House approves bills to support rights of working Oregonians

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Bills protect ability to collectively bargain without employer interference or intimidation

SALEM, Ore. — The Oregon House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a pair of bills designed to protect the rights of working Oregonians to organize and collectively bargain without interference or intimidation by employers.

“When employers interfere in workers’ decisions about forming or participating in a union, the whole state loses,” said State Representative Mike Schaufler (D-Happy Valley), Chair of the House Business and Labor Committee.

House Bill 2893, dubbed the Worker Freedom Act, will give working Oregonians the freedom to walk away from political, anti-union, and religious indoctrination meetings required by employers and would bar employers from firing or disciplining workers who choose not to attend or who report unlawful forced meetings. While employers remain free to hold such meetings, express their beliefs, and exercise free speech the bill would prevent them from making meetings mandatory or take retaliatory measures. Faith-based and political organizations are exempted under the bill.

The bill is needed, say Democrats, because currently Oregon workers can be disciplined or fired for not attending meetings that employers call “even when such meetings are intended to instill in employees the employer’s values on politics, unions, and religion.

The second bill, HB 2891, would allow employees to decide whether to form a union and collectively bargain

using a petition or signature system to express majority support of workers. Currently, the decision about whether to use such a process is the choice of the employer.

“Working people should have the freedom to choose to organize and collectively bargain without intimidation from employers,” said State Representative Paul Holvey (D-Eugene). “These bills will help restore that freedom.”

The bills now head to the Oregon Senate for consideration.

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