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The Key Backers

Who's really behind the nationwide campaign to silence working families and their unions?

The key backers of the state legislation and ballot initiatives are the same groups that consistently try to block increases in the minimum wage, dismantle job safety laws, and cut Medicare, education, and pensions. They are retaliating against working families and their unions for their role in the 1996 elections, and trying to remove them from the political playing field in future policy debates and campaigns. Here's a look at the key players:

■ **John Patrick Rooney.** A former chairman of Golden Rule Insurance Company, Rooney is a conservative businessman who funds political and lobbying initiatives to push school vouchers, medical savings accounts and reductions in state workers' compensation systems. He stands to gain millions of dollars if Medicare is rolled back to allow the implementation of medical savings accounts. Rooney has already contributed \$49,000 to the California initiative -- just under the \$50,000 contribution limit that triggers disclosure of campaign finance. "I don't need the publicity," he said. (*Washington Post*, November 13, 1997)

■ **Golden Rule Insurance Company.** Golden Rule's long-term profitability is threatened by the trend toward managed care, which undercuts the market for the individual (rather than group) health insurance the company provides. That's why Golden Rule is aggressively advocating Medicare medical savings accounts, which would preserve the company's billion-dollar business in the changing health care market. Members of the Golden Rule "family" gave more than \$1 million to the Republican party and Republican candidates in the 1993-94 elections.

■ **Grover Norquist.** This long-time Republican consultant and president of Americans for Tax Reform is one of the leading backers of the initiatives to silence working families. His past accomplishments include "discovering" Willie Horton while working on the Bush campaign. His philosophy: "If you privatize Social Security, if you voucher-ize education, if you sell \$270 billion worth of airports and wastewater treatment plants, eliminate welfare and so on, you can cut the government to basically half its present size." (*Reason Magazine*, February 1997)

■ **Americans for Tax Reform.** This well-known organization laid the foundation for the attack on working families by producing and disseminating a resource and strategy guide for introducing the state ballot initiatives and legislation. In the guide, Norquist gloats: "The more states succeed in placing 'pro-worker' initiatives, the more divided the counterattack by labor union bosses will have to be." During the 1996 elections, Americans for Tax Reform received \$4.6 million dollars from the Republican National Committee to run phone banks and direct mail supporting Republican issues and candidates, as well as attack ads against New Jersey State Senator Bob Torricelli. (*Time Magazine*, November 3, 1997)

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■ **California Governor Pete Wilson.** The governor is actively promoting the California ballot initiative campaign. In response to political consultant Doug Bailey's claim that the AFL-CIO would have to spend \$20 to 25 million to fight the initiative, he crowed: "They're going to have to spend more than that." (C-Span broadcast of Republican Governors Association meeting, November 22, 1997)

■ **American Legislative Exchange Council.** This group, which frequently develops anti-worker legislation for conservative legislators, is coordinating the nationwide effort to introduce state legislation and initiatives to silence working families and their unions. In the past, ALEC has actively supported so-called "right-to-work" bills, the TEAM Act, repealing the minimum wage increase, flat taxes, and, of course, vouchers and medical savings accounts.

■ **Big Business Groups.** For the last several years, big businesses have been working in coalition to diminish the political role of unions on a variety of fronts. Now, as Thomas Donahue, the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, puts it: "You're going to see us everywhere... We will energetically oppose union-led programs to hijack the American political system..." (Donahue speech, November 24, 1997)

■ **National Center for Policy Analysis.** A right-wing think-tank funded largely by Rooney and other business leaders, the Center has been actively promoting the anti-worker legislation. The Center is also a leading proponent of medical savings accounts and endorses "right-to-work" bills, the privatization of Social Security, the TEAM Act and school vouchers. It actively opposed raising the minimum wage. More than 43 percent of the Center's funding comes from corporations and wealthy individuals; the rest comes from conservative foundations.

■ **Newt Gingrich and GOPAC.** One of the charter members of GOPAC, House Speaker Newt Gingrich's political action committee, is Rooney's Golden Rule Insurance Company. That helps to explain why Newt Gingrich has been leading the charge to roll back Medicare to allow for medical savings accounts. Gingrich has been an outspoken critic of union political education and mobilization, and has repeatedly accused unions of coercing members into participating in the political process.

■ **RNC and the Republican Congressional Leadership.** Co-sponsors of the federal version of the attempt to silence working families -- the so-called "Paycheck Protection Act" -- include Congressmen Harris Fawell, Cass Ballenger, Michael Enzi, James Talent and many others who have consistently voted against legislation that would benefit working families. Many of these co-sponsors have aggressively advanced anti-worker legislation designed to gut OSHA and other workplace safety and health standards. The new initiatives have proven to be a fundraising boon for the Republican party. For example, a union-bashing mailer from the Nevada Republican Party "is the most successful fundraising letter we've ever done," said Dan Burdick, executive director of the state party. (*Las Vegas Review-Journal*, January 12, 1998)

The Attempt to Silence Working Families

Initiatives to limit the role of working families and their unions have only one purpose, and that's to further skew the political balance of power in America

■ **As working families and their unions increasingly speak out on important political and legislative issues, a coordinated, nationwide campaign to silence them is mounting.** Corporations, right-wing foundations and national anti-union lobbying groups are introducing initiatives and legislation in all 50 states designed to limit working families' participation in the political process by singling out unions for burdensome restrictions.

Backers of the initiatives claim to be protecting the interests of working Americans and represent their proposals as "campaign finance reform." In truth, the initiatives are designed to silence the voice of working America. They exacerbate -- they don't alleviate -- the flaws and imbalances in a campaign finance system that already heavily favors corporations and the wealthy. And they are a direct response to the AFL-CIO's aggressive education and mobilization efforts among working families that in 1996 increased the minimum wage and prevented cuts in Medicare, pensions and education.

■ **In the political process, corporations already outspend unions 11-to-1.** In the 1996 election cycle, corporations accounted for more than 40 percent of the \$1.6 billion raised by political candidates and parties -- while unions accounted for less than 4 percent. And the disparity is growing. Corporations outspent unions by a ratio of 11-to-1 in 1996, compared to a ratio of 9-to-1 in 1992. In "soft money" contributions (unlimited contributions to parties and committees), the gap is even wider: In 1996, corporations spent 19 times more than unions did. New restrictions on unions' participation in the political process will further tilt the balance of power in favor of corporations.

■ **The initiatives single out unions, proposing tight controls and burdensome regulations that wouldn't apply to anyone else.** They would silence the voice of working families, without limiting political spending by corporations or special interest groups such as the National Rifle Association, Chamber of Commerce or Christian Coalition. And they're just unnecessary: Union members already have more protections than members of other organizations, and unions are already subject to more stringent reporting requirements.

■ **This is a concerted effort to retaliate against working families and their unions for exposing the right-wing agenda.** This is *not* a grassroots movement by union members. The overwhelming majority of union members *support* their union's involvement in political activities. It is a nationwide, coordinated effort by corporations and national right-wing foundations and lobbying groups, who are introducing similar initiatives and legislation in all 50 states. These are the same groups that tried to block the increase in the minimum wage, dismantle job safety laws, and cut Medicare, education and pensions. In 1996, working families -- through the AFL-CIO's "Labor '96" education and mobilization campaign -- stopped them, and now it's pay-back time.

■ **As it stands, union members have a choice.** No worker can be forced to fund a union's political and legislative activities. Union members choose whether to join the union, set their own dues, elect their own leaders and vote on where and how their money will be spent. The minority of workers who disagree with union political activities can choose not to belong to the union. In those states where they still pay a fee to cover the representation the union is required to provide them, they are not required to pay the amount that goes for political and legislative activities. Corporations, by contrast, don't give shareholders, employees or customers any say in their political activities.

■ **Union members want their unions to be active in the political arena.** By a 6-to-1 margin, union members want their unions and the AFL-CIO to speak out about politics and legislation, according to a 1996 poll by Peter Hart Research and Associates. The overwhelming majority of union members support the AFL-CIO's position on working family issues: 86 percent, for example, approved of "fighting to protect Medicare from large cuts" and "fighting to increase the minimum wage." A full 90 percent approved of their union's efforts to educate and involve them in the political process.

■ **Initiatives to further skew the political balance of power are being disguised as "campaign finance reform." They're not.** The current campaign finance system already unfairly rewards wealthy contributors. To be serious, reform efforts can't just limit the role of working families and their unions. Instead, serious reform should limit all campaign spending, provide for public financing to give voters a chance to hear from all candidates, and take other steps to make sure no group has an unfair say in how our government is run.

Common Claims by Proponents of the Initiatives

Below are some of the claims that show up again and again in OpEds and publications by proponents of “paycheck protection act”-type initiatives. Don’t be put off by them. Get clear on the facts by studying the Overview and Fact Sheets. Then practice responding, using our strongest points from all the material enclosed.

- ▶ **Claim 1:** If the chairmen of Fortune 500 companies were forced to turn over a portion of their paychecks to politicians to pay for their election campaigns, a wave of outrage would wash over the nation and Congress would quickly step in. This type of extortion happens to millions of Americans and it’s time to put an end to the extortion and shameful political shakedown of members. It seems that when it’s the middle class or working poor who have their pockets picked instead of those who rely on investments or elected office to provide their income, the silence is deafening. It’s time to protect workers.
- ▶ **Claim 2:** Big Labor claims that current laws already protect union members, but, as we’ve seen, President Clinton has rescinded regulations that were issued by the Labor Department under the Bush Administration requiring unions to publicly reveal what portion of their dues workers could keep. It’s clear that current laws will never be enforced by politicians who are in the pockets of Big Labor. We need new laws to make sure that employees are aware of their rights.
- ▶ **Claim 3:** Many workers who have expressed an interest in obtaining a refund for the non-collective bargaining portion of their dues have been harassed, threatened, or have suffered other repercussions for attempting to exercise their rights under the Supreme Court’s Beck decision. The California initiative places the burden on labor leaders to first obtain the consent of members to use their money for political purposes, instead of continuing to force union members to jump through hoops to obtain a refund after their dues have been paid.
- ▶ **Claim 4:** An increase in mandatory union dues paid for the hostile attack ads that Big Labor ran against Republicans in 1996.
- ▶ **Claim 5:** The AFL-CIO’s Labor ’96 program was completely out of step with union members -- look at the blatantly partisan ads attacking Republicans even though a full 40% of union members are Republicans. That’s wrong. Why should workers be required to support political candidates and causes they don’t believe in?
- ▶ **Claim 6:** These initiatives will put union members back in charge of their own money. The California initiative puts political power back in the hands of the union worker. We believe working people are perfectly capable of deciding to whom they will make political contributions, if at all.
- ▶ **Claim 7:** Union members, not union bosses, should decide whether money should be spent on politics. The use of mandatory member dues for political purposes gives unions the muscle and money to unduly influence elections without the knowledge of the membership.

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To: State Federation Presidents
State and Regional Directors

Fr: Denise Mitchell, Director of Public Affairs, AFL-CIO

Re: Press Materials on the Attempts to Silence Working Families

Dt: January 19, 1998

Attached is an initial set of materials to help your respond to "paycheck protection act"-type bills if they show up in your state on January 21st — as has been threatened by a national consortium of big business and right-wing front groups.

Contents include:

- The Attempt to Silence Working Families
- Corporate vs. Union Spending on Politics
- Union Members and Politics
- Real Campaign Finance Reform
- The Truth About Union Dues
- Unions Are Good for America
- Common Claims by Proponents of the Initiatives
- Sample Press Advisory

We will be developing additional materials over the coming weeks. Please let us hear what activities occur in your state as soon as possible.

Tips for setting up your press activities

If activity is planned in your state, you will either want to:

- Schedule an immediate press conference (in the same “news cycle”) to respond, or
- Issue a press statement and background to local reporters with additional press work to follow.

Remember that any press conference should also feature workers, friendly state legislators and coalition allies such as representatives of women’s, civil rights, religious and consumer groups. Do not have a press conference with union leaders as the sole spokesperson.

If you have a press conference, you should:

1. Line up other spokesperson and share the background information with them.
2. FAX your press advisory to all media outlets in the area, including
 - ▶ Reporters you know, especially political, labor and state capital reporters
 - ▶ City desk and political editors at newspapers
 - ▶ News directors at radio stations
 - ▶ Assignment editors at TV stations
 - ▶ Sympathetic columnists
3. Follow up the FAXES with phone calls to assure press turnout.
4. At the press conference, hand out your release, fact sheets and your press statement.
5. Following the press conference, FAX out the release to any reporters or media outlets that did not attend.

In the days that follow the press conference, you should:

1. Concentrate on generating calls to talk radio shows and letters to the editor
2. Set aside time for one-on-one background sessions with key reporters
3. Work to place op-eds in the paper
4. Book spokespersons onto TV and radio show.

For more information:
(contact, phone number)

MEDIA ADVISORY FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21

**WORKERS, UNION AND COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS
TO DENOUNCE INTRODUCTION OF (HOUSE BILL __)**

Area leaders charge big businesses, right-wing backers and out-of-state lobbying groups with attempting to silence (state's) working families in the political process

(City/State) -- On Wednesday, January 21, 1998, leaders from across (state) will come together to announce their opposition to (House Bill __). (State Representative _____) is introducing the bill as part of a coordinated effort by big business leaders, conservative foundations, right-wing front groups, and the Republican Congressional leadership to use such measures to diminish the political voice of working families and "de-fund" their unions.

WHO: Union members and leaders, community activists, clergy
WHAT: A press briefing outlining the legislative attempt to silence working families
WHEN: [Time]
[Day and Date]
WHERE: [Location]

Although corporations already outspend working families by a margin of 11-to-1, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics, (House Bill __) will widen the gap by singling out unions for burdensome restrictions -- without imposing any such limits on corporations or other organizations. Union and community leaders say the bill is similar to those being introduced in other states as part of a nationwide effort to retaliate against working families and their unions. It comes at a time when increased political activism by union families have successfully challenged corporate-backed attempts to block an increase in the minimum wage, dismantle job safety laws, and cut Medicare, pensions and education.

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Sample Press Release

For more information:
(contact, phone number)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 21, 1998

COMMUNITY AND UNION LEADERS DENOUNCE LEGISLATIVE ATTEMPT TO SILENCE WORKING FAMILIES

By limiting the participation of working Americans and their unions in political issues, (House Bill __) further tilts the balance of power in favor of corporations, critics charge

(CITY/STATE), January 21 -- A group of community, union, women's group and civil rights leaders from across the state joined together today to denounce the introduction of (House Bill __), a measure they said was intended to silence the voice of working families in political and legislative issues.

The state legislation, introduced today by (State Representative _____), is similar to other legislative and ballot measures being proposed nationwide that would single out labor unions and place burdensome new restrictions on their participation in the political process -- without imposing any controls or limits on the political spending of corporations and other organizations.

Backed by a nationwide group of corporations and out-of-state right-wing foundations and lobbying groups, the legislative proposal comes at a time when increased education and mobilization by working Americans and their unions prompted an increase in the minimum wage and prevented deep cuts in Medicare, education and pensions.

"(H.B. __) is part of a concerted, coordinated effort to retaliate against working families for speaking out on important political and legislative issues," said (name, title, organization.) "It has only one purpose, and that's to eliminate working families from the political playing field -- and further tilt the balance of power in America towards corporations."

In the 1996 elections, corporations outspent unions by a ratio of 11-to-1, and new restrictions on unions would further widen the gap, labor and community leaders charged. Ironically, they said, proponents of the legislation are trying to disguise it as an effort to protect workers' interests and as "campaign finance reform."

"It doesn't alleviate the flaws and imbalances in our campaign finance system. It exacerbates them," said (name, title, organization). "If the backers of this legislation were really interested in campaign finance reform, they wouldn't just limit the role of working families and their unions. They'd be proposing to limit *all* campaign spending, and to make sure that no single group has an unfair say in how our government is run."

- more -

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The legislation proposes a complex, cumbersome process requiring unions to solicit written permission from each member before engaging in any political or legislative activity. "That would be tantamount to demanding that elected representatives get written permission from each constituent before voting on every issue," said (name). "The impact would be paralyzing."

Under current law, union members already have a choice, (he/she) added. No worker can be forced to join a union or to fund a union's political and legislative activities. In addition, union members elect their own leaders, set their own dues, vote on how their money will be spent and are covered by more protections and democratic procedures than members of most other organizations. "Can you imagine a stockholder or customer deciding how to spend a corporation's money on political activity?" asked (name).

The vast majority of union members do support their union's involvement in political activities. According to 1996 polls by Peter Hart Research and Associates, for example, 90 percent of union members approved of their union's efforts to educate and involve them in the political process, 86 percent approved of their union "fighting to protect Medicare from large cuts" and "to increase the minimum wage," and three-quarters approved of unions investing "time and money in politics and legislation to counter the influence that corporations and wealthy special interests have."

Portraying the bill as protections for workers and union members is blatantly false and misleading, union and community leaders said. "Just look at who's behind these initiatives," said (name). "They're corporate special interests and their allies and out-of-state lobbying groups -- the same ones who tried to dismantle our job safety laws, raid our pensions, stop the increase in the minimum wage and cut Medicare."

"If they're so concerned about my interests as a working American, why are they trying to destroy the laws that protect my safety on the job?" asked (name), a (occupation) at (workplace) and member of (union). "As an individual, I can't do much to stop them -- and I'll certainly never be able to raise the millions of dollars big corporations do. But through the union, my co-workers and I have a say in the way government is run. I see this for what it is, and that's an attempt to weaken our unions."

Noting that in some states the measures are deceptively being labeled as "paycheck protection acts," (he/she) added: "This isn't about paycheck protection. It's about fat cat protection."

"But we're going to work harder than ever before to make sure the voices of working families are heard," said (name). "We're going to intensify our fight for good jobs, health care, pensions, child care, equal pay for women and safe workplaces."

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Sample Press Statement

For Immediate Release

For information, contact:
(name, phone)

**Statement by (name)
(title, organization)
On (House Bill XX),
An Attempt to Silence Working Families**

January 21, 1998

Corporations, right-wing foundations and conservative lobbying groups are mounting a coordinated campaign all across the country to silence the voice of working families in the political process. Today, that movement came to our state with the introduction of (House Bill __).

Like its counterparts in other states, this bill has only one purpose -- and that's to further skew the political balance of power in America toward corporations. It singles out unions for burdensome regulations -- restricting the only voice working families have for influencing political decisions. It imposes no such limits on businesses or other organizations, at a time when corporations outspend unions in the political arena by a ratio of 11-to-1.

Proponents of the bill would have us believe it's meant to protect the interests of working Americans. It isn't. Just look at who's behind it. They're the same corporate special interests and lobbying groups who tried to block the increase in the minimum wage, dismantle our job safety laws, and cut our Medicare, education, and pensions.

If they were genuinely interested in protecting working families, they'd be proposing real campaign finance reform, such as limits on all campaign spending and checks and balances to guarantee that no group has an unfair say in how our government is run.

In truth, the bill is part of an all-out retaliation campaign against working families and their unions for speaking out and for mobilizing to stop the cuts in Medicare and to raise the minimum wage. It's designed to give big businesses sole control of the political playing field and the nation's policy agenda -- and a clear path to greater profits and higher executive salaries, even if it comes at the expense of working Americans.

As it stands, no worker is ever forced to join a union or pay for political and legislative activities with which he or she does not agree. But the vast majority of union members want their unions to speak out on legislative issues. The polls show that a full 90 percent of them approve of their union's efforts to educate and involve them in the political process.

As more and more corporations downsize, hold wages down, ship jobs overseas and convert good full-time jobs into part-time work with no benefits, the voice of working America needs to be stronger -- not stifled.

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Corporate vs. Union Spending on Politics

There's too much money in politics -- but it's not union money

■ **The political balance of power is already tilted heavily in favor of corporations.** In the 1996 election cycle, corporate interests spent more than \$677 million on political contributions -- 11 times more than unions spent. So while unions contributed less than 4 percent of the \$1.6 billion raised by candidates and parties in 1996, corporations contributed more than 40 percent.

■ **The disparity between corporate and union spending is growing.** Since 1992 (when the ratio was 9-to-1), corporate political contributions have increased by \$229.8 million, while union contributions rose by only \$12.1 million.

■ **In "soft money" contributions, the gap is even wider.** While both corporations and unions have increased their unrestricted, so-called "soft money" contributions since 1992, corporate spending grew twice as fast. In 1996, corporations spent more than \$176 million -- 19 times more than unions did.

■ **Corporate special interests are pushing initiatives that would skew the balance even further.** By backing special restrictions on unions while imposing no such limits on themselves, big corporations are trying to remove working families and their unions from the political playing field.

■ **Corporations, right-wing foundations and anti-union lobbying groups are raising hundreds of millions of dollars to "de-fund" unions.** At a recent meeting of the Republican Governors Association, proponents of the initiatives noted that the de-funding ploy has two strategic benefits: If it works, unions will lose funding. Even if it doesn't, unions will be forced to spend millions of dollars in the fight.

SOURCE: Center for Responsive Politics

Total Contributions			
	Corporations	Unions	Ratio
1996	\$677,442,423	\$60,352,761	11-to-1
1994	\$492,956,181	\$48,319,054	10-to-1
1992	\$447,594,985	\$48,152,256	9-to-1

Soft Money Contributions			
	Corporations	Unions	Ratio
1996	\$176,108,186	\$9,505,745	19-to-1
1994	\$ 64,753,971	\$4,293,459	15-to-1
1992	\$ 66,342,241	\$4,251,334	16-to-1

Hard Money Contributions			
	Corporations	Unions	Ratio
1996	\$501,334,237	\$50,847,016	10-to-1
1994	\$428,202,210	\$44,025,595	10-to-1
1992	\$381,252,744	\$44,067,720	9-to-1

Union Members and Politics

Members solidly support union political and legislative involvement

■ **An overwhelming majority of union members want their unions involved in the legislative and political process.** Three quarters of all union members -- regardless of party affiliation -- approve of unions investing “time and money in politics and legislation, to counter the influence that corporations and wealthy special interests have.”

■ **The AFL-CIO’s positions on key issues reflect the opinions of its membership.** For example, 86 percent of AFL-CIO members said they approve of unions “fighting to protect Medicare from large cuts” and “fighting to increase the minimum wage.” These two issues were the focus of the AFL-CIO’s “Labor ’96” campaign to educate and mobilize working families.

■ **When it comes to issue education, union members approve not only of the “what” but the “how.”** In 1996, 71 percent of union members supported using a small portion (a total of \$1.80) of their regular dues on a one-time basis for education about working family issues and the election. In addition:

- 88 percent of AFL-CIO members said they approved of unions urging members to contact their members of Congress on important issues;
- 84 percent approved of union voter guides comparing candidates’ positions;
- 72 percent approved of running television and radio ads to inform union members and other voters about how their representatives voted in Congress; and
- 90 percent approved of unions communicating with their members about the elections and encouraging them to vote.

■ **Republican-leaning union members support the AFL-CIO’s education and mobilization activities around working family issues.** A full 89 percent of these members said they approved of union activities to get out the vote, 76 percent approved of union voting guides comparing candidates’ positions, and 65 percent approved of television and radio ads informing voters about how their representatives voted. Nearly three-quarters said they approved of unions fighting to increase the minimum wage (73 percent) and to protect Medicare from large cuts (70 percent).

■ **Claims that 40 percent of union members are or lean Republican are blatantly false.** In a survey by an independent polling firm, 18 percent of union members said they were or leaned Republican -- half what Republican leaders claim.

SOURCE: Surveys conducted among union members by Peter D. Hart Research Associates in August 1996, November 1996, and January 1998

The Truth About Union Dues

Questions and answers on workers' rights and current law

Q. Can union dues be used to make contributions to political candidates and campaigns?

A. Under federal law and in many states, the answer is no. The Federal Election Campaign Act forbids the donation of union dues or fees to federal-level candidates or political campaigns, and many states impose the same restrictions on state-level races. Contributions by union members to union political action committees are voluntary and made separately from their dues payments. Union dues may, however, be used for such activities as member education, communication, voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives.

Q. Can any worker be forced to pay for union political or legislative activities with which he or she disagrees?

A. No. Although polls show that the vast majority of members support their union's legislative and political activities, no worker can be required to join a union and help pay for such activities. Workers who so choose may resign and confine any required fees to the cost of bargaining and representation. And unions are required by law to notify workers of that right.

Q. What did the Supreme Court rule in *Communications Workers of America vs. Beck*? Did it prohibit the use of union members' dues for political activities?

A. In decision after decision, the Supreme Court has ruled that the rights of both the majority and dissenters within unions must be protected and balanced. In 1988, in the so-called "Beck" decision, the court reaffirmed the right of union members to require workers who choose not to join the union to pay fees covering the expense of their representation. It also ruled that a union cannot use the fees of non-members for political activities over their objections.

Q. Is it true that the Clinton administration is not enforcing the "Beck" decision and rescinded regulations issued by the Bush administration to protect union members?

A. No. The Clinton-appointed National Labor Relations Board is enforcing the Beck decision and has issued a comprehensive decision that fully defines the various rights and duties contained in it. President Clinton did revoke an order that Bush issued late in the 1992 election campaign to curry favor with business interests. That order required government contractors to make unfair and misleading statements designed to discourage workers from supporting unions.

Q. Who decides whether union dues should be spent on political and legislative activities?

A. Union members do. They elect their own officers and vote on their constitution and bylaws, the amount of their dues and how the money is spent. They and their elected leaders decide what positions their union will support. In the union, majority rules. And the minority of members who disagree can choose not to participate, or to resign from the union and withdraw financial support for political and legislative activities.

Q. So why do critics claim that unions are placing compulsory dues on workers to support political activities?

A. Big businesses and their supporters falsely claim that labor organizations are forcing employees to pay for election-related activities. The true purpose of these misleading statements is not to protect workers or the interests of the minority, but to silence the majority. The burdensome requirements being proposed would effectively circumvent the will of the majority of union members who support their union's legislative and political involvement in working family issues. As America's unions become more aggressive in educating members, exposing the votes of elected leaders and challenging the corporate agenda, big business interests are responding with a concerted effort to restrict union members' participation in political education and mobilization activities.

Q. When it comes to political activities, do unions have special advantages that other organizations don't?

A. In fact, it's quite the opposite. Like other organizations, including corporations, unions have a First Amendment right to inform, educate and express political views. But unions are subject to more stringent financial disclosure requirements than any other organizations, including corporations, the American Medical Association, American Bar Association and the Chamber of Commerce. Furthermore, when it comes to political activities, corporations outspend labor unions by a margin of 11 to 1.

Q. During the 1996 election year, did the AFL-CIO raise members' dues to give \$35 million to political candidates?

A. No. The AFL-CIO launched a grassroots and media campaign focusing on legislative issues, not elections. Through Labor '96, the AFL-CIO educated and organized members around working family issues such as living wages, retirement security, health care, education, job safety and workers' rights. The campaign compared the voting records of Republican and Democratic candidates, and disseminated that information to the public. This campaign was not funded by a membership dues increase, but rather through a reallocation of existing resources adopted by a democratic vote among the member unions of the AFL-CIO. Union members' dues did not go up as a result. And the overwhelming majority of union members supported the campaign and the positions the AFL-CIO took on the issues.

Real Campaign Finance Reform

Genuine reform limits spending and eliminates unfair advantages

■ **Initiatives to impose new restrictions on union members are *not* campaign finance reform.** Instead, they tilt the already uneven balance of power even more sharply in favor of big businesses. Corporate special interests spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year to persuade elected officials to give them free rein to make higher profits, reap obscene executive salaries, hold wages down and ship jobs overseas.

■ **Nothing is more important to our democracy than the integrity of our election system.** The current system unfairly rewards wealthy contributors by amplifying their voice at the expense of ordinary citizens. *Real* campaign finance reform will give all Americans a place at the table, not just the ones who can afford to buy the seat.

■ **Real campaign finance reform makes sure no group has an unfair advantage.** The essential elements of real campaign finance reform are not at all complicated or hard to understand. A fair system would include the following changes:

- Campaign spending should be limited. It is undemocratic to allow those who are able to raise and spend the most to tilt the political playing field in their favor. Corporate interests currently outspend working families by 11-to-1, and the advantage is growing!
- Campaigns should be publicly financed so that narrow private interests cannot exert unfair advantage.
- Unlimited contributions -- so-called soft money -- to political parties and/or independent committees should be repealed.
- The aggregate limit on individual campaign contributions is set way too high. Individual contributions should be limited so that a level playing field exists, not just among candidates, but among citizens.
- Political parties are essential to a healthy democracy. They should be allowed to accept contributions from all sources, but the total that parties may accept from individuals and groups should be limited.
- Voters deserve to hear more information about a candidate's positions than the 30-second sound bites that currently dominate the airwaves. Free television and radio time, as well as reduced postage rates, would go a long way toward ensuring that candidates engage in real and vigorous debate about the issues impacting working families.

Unions Are Good for America

Unions are America's way of giving workers a voice on the job, in the economy and in the political process

■ **A greater share of the wealth workers create.** At a time when the gap between the wealthy and everyone else is growing, unions ensure that working Americans are fairly rewarded for their hard work. Union workers earn an average \$155 (or 33 percent) more each week than non-union workers earn.

■ **A remedy for discrimination in the workplace.** Unions help narrow the wage gap for women and people of color. Compared with the paychecks of their non-union counterparts, union women earn 38 percent more, African American union members earn 42 percent more and Latino union members earn 52 percent more.

■ **Health care, retirement and job security for working families.** Compared with only 74 percent of non-union workers, 85 percent of union members receive health coverage on the job. A full 87 percent of union members earn pension benefits and 79 percent are covered by guaranteed "defined-benefit" pension plans; by comparison, 78 percent of non-union workers earn pensions and only 44 percent are covered by the far superior defined-benefit plans. Union members have more secure jobs: six in 10 of them have been with the same employer for 10 years or more, compared to three in 10 non-union workers.

■ **Higher productivity and thriving businesses.** Studies have proven that, by allowing workers to have input on the job and lowering turnover rates, unions enhance efficiency and productivity in the workplace. For example, unions boost productivity 19 to 24 percent in manufacturing, 17 to 38 percent in construction and up to 16 percent in hospitals.

■ **Stronger communities.** The higher incomes of union members translate into more consumer purchases, healthier local economies, stronger tax bases, better schools and infrastructures and higher living standards for the entire community.

■ **Laws and policies that work for working families.** Historically, unions have fought for protections such as the 40-hour work week, Social Security, equal opportunity and child labor laws. Unions helped win passage of the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act allowing workers to take time off to care for their families. In 1996, unions increased the minimum wage, protected job safety laws, and prevented deep cuts in Medicare, education and pensions.

■ **Enforcement of job safety, civil rights and other laws.** As well as bargaining for safe workplaces, family-friendly policies and anti-discrimination provisions, unions provide a mechanism for enforcing rules and regulations designed to protect workers on the job.

**Brief Analysis of State Legislative Proposals
to Silence Working Families**

January 19, 1998

ARIZONA

House Bill No. HB 2412, "Labor Organizations Deductions Act"

This bill would preclude unions from spending treasury money on lobbying, political activities, independent expenditures, party or candidate contributions and voter registration that aren't directly related to the ratification or administration of collective bargaining agreements. A union could spend for such purposes only from a separate "political activities fund." No dues-based moneys could be contributed to that fund, nor could the union pay the fund's administrative expenses. The fund could be financed only by direct voluntary contributions, but an employee could not contribute via payroll deduction, voluntary or otherwise, to the fund or to any other political action committee.

ALASKA

Senate Bill No. 114 (JUD)

This bill would preclude private and public employers from diverting any portion of an employee's wages for political contributions or contributions to groups unless the employee files at least an annual written authorization. Employers and unions would be precluded from discriminating against officers or employees due to their political activity or failure to make a political contribution, and the authorization form would have to inform employees of this non-discrimination protection.

ALASKA

House Bill No. 181 (STA)

This bill would require at least an annual written authorization from an employee in order to enable an employer to withhold from payroll compensation or a union to withhold from member dues or fees any moneys for the purpose of contributing to a candidate, political party or group, or to influence any ballot issue. Any such moneys withheld would have to be deposited in a separate segregated fund.

MICHIGAN

Senate Bill No. 650, "Contribution Disclosure Act"

This bill would require a union to obtain at least an annual written authorization from any employee who pays dues or fees as a condition of employment under a collective bargaining agreement before the union could spend any portion of the employee's dues or fees for political, social, charitable or other activities that aren't related to collective bargaining, contract administration or grievance processing. The authorization form would have to include an extensive statement of the employee's right not to authorize such a contribution. A union that violates this provision would be liable to the employee for double the amount expended plus interest and attorney's fees, and other equitable relief.

Senate Bill No. 651, "Michigan Campaign Finance Act"

This bill would permit unions and corporations to establish separate segregated funds that could contribute to committees for candidates, ballot questions, political parties and other "political" and "independent" activities. Corporations could secure contributions to such a fund from officers, directors, stockholders and managerial employees, and unions could secure contributions to such a fund from officers or managerial employees, through payroll deduction or another "automatic" basis only upon the person's annual written authorization; the bill does not prescribe the form or content of this authorization. A union could obtain contributions from its members through payroll deduction or another "automatic" basis only if the member executes the annual written authorization form prescribed in Senate Bill 650.

MISSISSIPPI

House Bill No. _____, "Worker Paycheck Fairness Act"

This bill would require unions to secure at least an annual written authorization from any member before it could use any portion of the member's dues or fees for activities that aren't "necessary" to "performing the duties of the exclusive representative of employees in dealing with the employer on labor-management issues." Members would be informed of their right to refrain from making such an authorization by both a statement on the authorization form and a notice posted by the employer. A union that violated this provision would be liable to the member for double the amount expended with interest, attorney's fees, expert witness fees and other costs and equitable relief.

MISSISSIPPI

House Bill No. ____ (untitled)

This bill would preclude unions and employers from increasing the salary of or making any other payments to an officer or employee with the intent that the moneys involved will be contributed or expended to support or oppose a candidate, political party, political committee or ballot measure.

PENNSYLVANIA

House Bill No. 1968 (untitled)

This bill would preclude private and public employees from making any payroll deductions that would support any candidate, separate segregated fund, political action committee, legislative campaign fund, political party or ballot issue, thereby barring even voluntary employee authorizations of such deductions.

WISCONSIN

Assembly Bill No. 624 (untitled)

This bill would preclude an employer from making any payroll withholding for the purpose of making a contribution to a "committee" except upon the employee's consent, which must be secured at least annually. The bill would also preclude a union from using moneys derived from non-members under a union security clause for the purpose of making a contribution or "disbursement" unless the non-member affirmatively authorizes it.