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Seeking Justice for All

Veto of workers' rights bill “profoundly disappointing”

CAOC-backed AB 465 would have put workers, employers on equal ground

SACRAMENTO (Oct. 11, 2015) – Calling Gov. Jerry Brown’s veto today of a bill to protect the legal rights of California workers “profoundly disappointing,” Consumer Attorneys of California president Brian Chase said the governor missed a chance to protect the rights of California working women and men.

“We’re disappointed that Gov. Brown’s veto statement mischaracterizes AB 465,” Chase said. “Contrary to the claims of corporate interests that have consistently misled Californians about the bill, AB 465 would not have prohibited the use of arbitration in California employment agreements. What it would have done was put employers and employees on equal footing, eliminating employers’ ability to offer workers no choice in giving up their legal rights in order to take a job. This veto is a slap in the face of working Californians.”

AB 465, sponsored by the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO and authored by Assemblyman Roger Hernandez (D-West Covina), would have ensured that crucial employment rights and procedures could not be surrendered without the knowing and voluntary consent of employees. Employers routinely force workers to sign contracts requiring that labor disputes be settled through arbitration, a process that many studies have shown favors the employer. AB 465 would have allowed workers to have a choice to settle labor disputes through an unbiased forum, such as a jury trial or the state Labor Commissioner.

“This veto is another example of big corporations and rich executives getting their way in government,” Chase said. “Corporations can now write the Labor Commissioner out of business through arbitration clauses in employment contracts. Workers with a grievance can be required to go before an arbitrator who is not required to follow the facts or the law and whose decisions are not open to public review or appeal. Employers shouldn’t be the only ones who have a choice as to whether to use arbitration to resolve disputes.”

Consumer Attorneys of California is a professional organization of plaintiffs’ attorneys representing consumers seeking accountability against wrongdoers in cases involving personal injury, product liability, environmental degradation and other causes.

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