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# LARRY CRAIG

NEWS RELEASE

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## **HOFFA'S IN YOUR VOTING BOOTH** by Senator Larry Craig

The Democratic leadership in Congress is pushing through a measure to eliminate secret ballots. Yes, you heard me right – the very foundation of our system of government is being shaken up by those elected to serve you.

Is a camera going to record you at the ballot box as you cast your vote for president? No, but if national union leaders have their way, they will eliminate secret ballots for union organization elections.

Employees do, and should, have the right to organize without fear of retaliation or coercion. I have supported and will continue to support this. For the past sixty years, a secret ballot process has been in place for employees to cast a vote on whether or not to unionize. The election is run by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), and strict procedures are in place to prohibit intimidation by either the employer or the union.

Seventy-eight percent of union members want to maintain the current system of secret ballots, but union leaders are bucking their members.

Enter “card check.” Union representatives hoping to unionize workers encourage them to sign cards stating they support unionization. When thirty percent of the employees sign a card, the NLRB deems that sufficient support to hold a secret ballot election. The gray area is that some employers will voluntarily accept a union when more than fifty percent of the employees sign cards. This is certainly an employer’s choice, but it is not the law. National union leaders, though, want this process to be mandatory in order to circumvent secret ballots.

Not surprisingly, supporters of these changes aren’t consistent. Key Congressional supporters requested the Mexican government maintain secret ballot union elections, and the AFL-CIO supports secret ballot elections to decertify union representation, telling the NLRB that secret ballot elections, “provide the surest means of avoiding decisions which are the result of group pressures and not individual choices.”

Why would someone who purportedly supports workers’ rights want to strip workers of one of the fundamentals of our system of government? Simple – they are hemorrhaging membership and need to boost their ranks to stay relevant. Union membership has plummeted from twenty percent in the 1980s to a scant 7.4 percent today. History has shown us that union organizing drives are much more successful when they use card check over secret ballots. They need the intimidation factor of looking over the voter’s shoulder. Instead of intimidation, they should strive to better represent workers.

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Part of the problem with the legislation is that it doesn’t allow only the union representative but also the employer to spy on voters. This is exactly why the rank-and-file want to maintain secret ballots. In fact, virtually no one outside of national labor leaders and Democrats in Congress think this is a good idea. There is one notable exception: the Communist Party, USA has endorsed the legislation. Perhaps it reminds them of the good old days of Stalin, Mao, and Castro.

The national union leadership is struggling for life. They want to strip the workers they claim to represent of a basic right – a right Americans are dying for in Iraq. My only regret when I voted “no” on this bill was that I didn’t have purple ink to dip my finger in first.

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