

...Oregon Legislature fails to pass EFCA resolution

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ity.

To pass, EFCA will need 60 supporters in the Senate — nine more than it had this year.

The vote split very strongly along party lines — Democrats voted for the bill, Republicans against. In the House, out of 201 Republicans, just 13 voted in favor of the bill, and out of 233 Democrats, just two voted against it. In the Senate, just one member voted outside party lines — Pennsylvania Republican Arlen Specter. Oregon's Gordon Smith was a "no" vote, while Ron Wyden and Washington's Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray were "yes" votes.

Smith said it would be very tough to get nine more Senate Democrats elected next year, but it's possible they could pick up five or six seats, and the AFL-CIO would continue to work on Republican senators to support the bill.

At least 18 state governors have signed a letter in support of EFCA, including Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski and Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire. So have over 1,350 state and local elected officials. And 55 cities, counties and state legislatures have voted

resolutions of support.

Oregon's Legislature isn't yet one of them. Democrats control the Oregon House 31 to 29, and House leaders were able to pass three "right to organize" bills. But a non-binding resolution in support of EFCA couldn't find majority support. After it became clear in behind-the-scenes negotiations that at least two Democrats would vote against it, backers withdrew the bill from consideration on the House floor. Portland Democrat Diane Rosenbaum said she intends to bring it up again in a future legislative session.

Finally, for EFCA to become law, it will need a president to sign it. All seven Democratic presidential candidates say they would sign EFCA. None of the Republican candidates have pledged to sign the bill.

But union support won't come just because a candidate checked a box on a questionnaire, says the AFL-CIO's Smith. "We're looking to see which candidate is really going to push this bill."

"All of them talk about how the middle class is waning and we need to strengthen the middle class. In our view, unions are how you do that."

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