

...Big business behind group bashing unions

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be exposed to intimidation at work and at home. So contact Jeff Merkley and ask him this one simple question: Shouldn't your vote still be private?"

Berman's groups have run print and television ads bashing unions for several years, but only this year did they begin to run candidate-specific ads targeting states that have competitive congressional races. The ads have run in eight states, in each case against Democratic congressional candidates who support the Employee Free Choice Act.

One ad, which aired in Maine and Minnesota, uses actor Vince Curatola, who played "Johnny Sack" in the HBO series *The Sopranos*. Playing to the union-Mafia stereotype, Curatola replaces a candidate who supports "the secret ballot for union elections" with one who doesn't. "Problem solved," says Curatola in the ad. Those ads are run by a related group calling itself the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace.

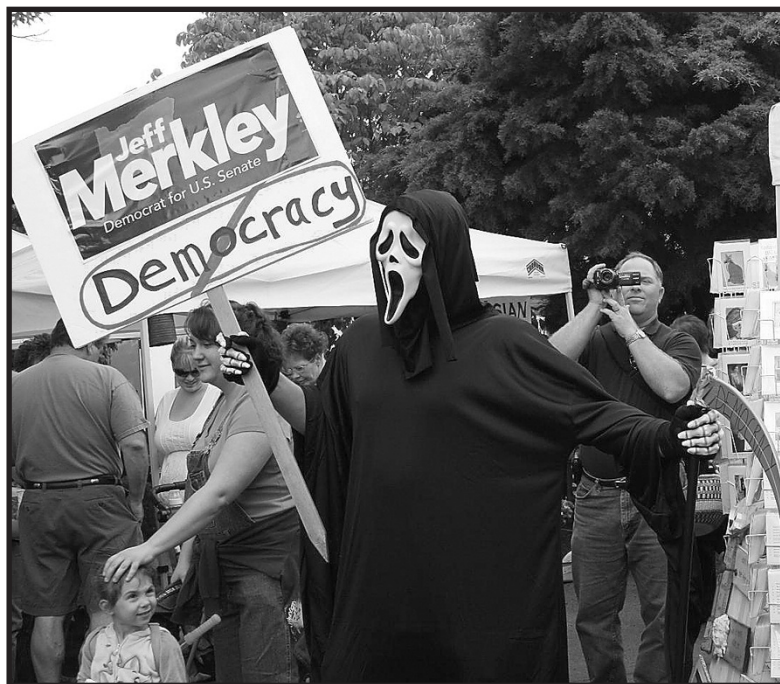
Berman's groups don't disclose their supporters, but the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace does — giving a glimpse at who will be lining up to oppose the Employee Free Choice Act when it comes up again. The group's Web site lists 488 groups in support: industry associations, state and local

chambers of commerce, and chapters of Associated Builders & Contractors, an open shop contractors organization.

In Oregon, besides the TV ads, Merkley has been hounded at his campaign events by a tall "Grim Reaper" wearing the scary mask from the movie *The Scream*. "Death," accompanied by a man with a video camera, carries a picket sign bearing a Merkley campaign logo and slogans like "Merkley kills democracy." The encounters then show up on a Web site that describes itself as the joint blog of the Employee Freedom Action Committee and the Center for Union Facts.

They know where to find Merkley because he's been campaigning in a "100 Towns for Change" tour, announcing his events in advance. Merkley's opponent, incumbent U.S. Senator Gordon Smith, has not been similarly accessible.

Publicly, Berman and his groups' spokesperson Tim Miller have maintained that they are neither pro- nor anti- union, just concerned that workers' rights be protected. But that was contradicted by the late July discovery of court documents that show Berman was a key adviser to Smithfield Foods, a North Carolina pork processor that has waged a decade-long battle against a union campaign by the United Food and Commercial Workers.



An anti-union group has been dogging Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Jeff Merkley at campaign events around the state with a costumed "Grim Reaper."

On July 31, the independent union-supported group American Rights at Work posted documents on its Web site which showed that Berman did work for Smithfield, and was offered a high-priced retainer through his for-profit firm, Berman and Company. Berman was able to get the court to

seal the documents, and threatened American Rights at Work with legal action if they didn't remove them from their site. They took the documents off, but a section detailing what is known about Berman and his groups remains on the site, www.american-rightsatwork.org.

Unions help USS Ranger raise funds

A non profit group seeking to preserve the aircraft carrier USS Ranger as an educational center, museum and memorial on the Portland waterfront is reaching out to organized labor.

The USS Ranger Museum Foundation is lobbying city leaders and the Port of Portland to allow it to purchase, rent or lease one of two terminals along the Willamette River to locate the massive Navy carrier. If successful, the USS Ranger would be the world's largest floating museum — and a must-see tourism destination in the Pacific Northwest.

The Museum Foundation is holding a "Ranger Hog Raffle" to help raise funds. The prize is a 2008 Harley-Davidson FXDB motorcycle.

To buy a ticket, call 503-799-5093 or go to winthisharley@yahoo.com.

The Foundation is governed by an all-volunteer board of directors, made up of former officers and crew of the USS Ranger as well as civilians.

Kenneth Morgan, business manager of Laborers Local 296, and Lynn Lehrbach of Teamsters Joint Council No. 37, are serving on the foundation's advisory committee.

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