

...Meeting with Gregoire tense, unproductive

(From Page 1)

weren't bold enough to come out and declare the bill dead... with Democrats like these, who needs Republicans?"

As for Boeing, why is the longtime union employer so opposed to the bill? Here's one explanation: Boeing has aggressively outsourced aircraft parts production in the last decade, much of it to local nonunion contractors. The company saves money if parts are cheaper, and parts can be cheaper when the workers who make them make lower pay and benefits. If workers at aircraft suppliers unionize, they might improve wages and benefits, and that might cut into the Boeing profit model.

Mandatory-attendance anti-union meetings are one of the most effective ways employers defeat union campaigns. The Worker Privacy Act wouldn't ban the meetings, but workers would no longer be forced to attend out of fear

they'd be disciplined.

"The fact that there is so much push-back by employers tells us that there's a lot of abuse going on that they want to continue," said Machinists District Lodge 751 spokesperson Connie Kellerher.

WSLC hasn't given up on passing the bill. Democrats outnumber Republicans 64 to 34 in the House and 31 to 18 in the Senate. And ostensibly, the Worker Privacy Act has strong support, with 47 House sponsors and 21 Senate sponsors. In an open letter to the three leaders, WSLC called for "a moment of truth: All we ask is for a fair vote. If it fails, so be it. Our elected representatives are adults. They can explain why they voted 'yes' or why they voted 'no.'"

But when WSLC and a group of labor leaders met with Gregoire, Chopp, and Brown March 25, the fate of the Worker Privacy Act remained unresolved, with WSLC calling on the three to use

their power to give it a vote, and the three not budging.

The meeting lasted 75 minutes, and it was tense. Gregoire, Chopp and Brown gave no kind of apology nor any indication they'd bring it back for a vote, said WSLC spokesperson Kathy Cummings, who took part in the meeting.

"The governor even said in the meeting that she didn't think there were really criminal charges. Then why did she agree to send it to the police?"

"All of labor was offended on this," Cummings added, but the three leaders didn't seem to understand that. "They gave us their word, and they went back on it. They indicated all along to us up until the very end that they wanted to pass this bill."

"It came out plainly in the meeting that it was all about Boeing's position. We talked about it point-blank. [Gregoire] said she was trying to save the Democrats from being blamed if Bo-

ing left the state," Cummings said.

"We're getting a lot of angry e-mails and phone calls from our members," Cummings said. "They're angry."

Union officials have called on legislators in the working families caucus to ask leadership for a vote. But they're not optimistic that the lawmakers will defy legislative leadership.

"We mobilize a lot of volunteers during the election, to knock on doors, make phone calls," Cummings said. "We work very hard to elect working family friendly legislators. Trying to get those volunteers out in the next election is going to be very hard."

The incident has "severely strained" labor's relationship with state Democratic leaders, Bender said in the labor council's official statement.

Says Cummings: "At this point, there's basically a huge schism between labor and the Democratic leadership of Washington."

Majority support making union organizing easier

Gallup Surveys released a poll in March finding that 53 percent of respondents favored a new law that would "make it easier for labor unions to organize workers." Only 39 percent of respondents opposed such a law.

When asked how important it was that Congress pass such a law, 26 percent of respondents said "very," 29 percent said "somewhat," 23 percent said "not too important," and 20 percent said "not important at all."

Added up, the findings provide a boost to backers of the Employee Free Choice Act, with 55 percent expressing some desire to see Congress act on the legislation and 43 percent expressing a level of opposition or ambivalence.

Breaking the response down by political affiliation, more than one out of three Republicans favor such a law (34 percent to 60 percent opposed); Independents support easier unionization by a margin of 52 percent to 41 percent; and Democrats are in support by a 70 percent to 23 percent ratio.

The study was conducted via a poll of 1,024 people across the nation on March 14-15. The survey did not reference the legislation by its name (Employee Free Choice Act) or by the descriptions used by its opponents, like "card check."

Pressure on lawmakers to kill EFCA escalates

Fear, intimidation, and intense pressure by corporate lobbyists have caused some U.S. senators to start waffling on the Employee Free Choice Act.

EFCA is a bill that would make it easier for workers to form a union, while also enacting tougher penalties on employers who violate labor laws during organizing campaigns.

Big Business is spending millions of dollars to distort and defeat the bill.

Last month, Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), an original co-sponsor of the legislation, said that he would support a filibuster this year in order to block EFCA from coming to a floor vote.

The announcement by Specter — who voted for cloture in 2007 — stunned union officials. "It is a rebuke to working people, to his own constituents in Pennsylvania and working families around the country," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

Both the U.S. Senate and House have enough votes to pass the bill. [All congressional Democrats from Oregon and Washington support it.] The problem

lies in the Senate. Since 2003, when EFCA was first introduced, Big Business and its allies have had the hammer of the filibuster — and President George Bush — to block passage. Proponents need 60 votes to end a filibuster (invoke cloture), and Bush promised to veto EFCA if it ever reached his desk.

This year, Democrats are in firm control of both chambers, and Democratic

President Barack Obama says he will sign the bill if it gets to his desk.

This has resulted in a major offensive by Big Business, which launched a multi-million-dollar ad campaign and dispatched its lobbyists to pressure lawmakers to oppose EFCA — or at least support a filibuster.

Specter was the first to cave in. However, several Democrats who

co-sponsored the bill in 2007 have yet to do so this year.

"We do not plan to let a hardball campaign from Big Business derail the Employee Free Choice Act," Sweeney said. Labor will ramp up its campaign during the congressional recess April 6-17 with union members planning events and arranging visits with their lawmakers in support of EFCA.



(International Standard Serial Number 0894-444X)
Established in 1900 at Portland, Oregon
as a voice of the labor movement.

4275 NE Halsey St., P.O. Box 13150,
Portland, Ore. 97213
Telephone: (503) 288-3311

Editor: Michael Gutwig
Staff: Don McIntosh, Cheri Rice

Published on a semi-monthly basis on the first and third Fridays of each month by the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Co. Inc., a non-profit corporation owned by 20 unions and councils including the Oregon AFL-CIO. Serving more than 120 union organizations in Oregon and SW Washington. Subscriptions: \$13.75 per year for union members.

Group rates available to trade union organizations.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID
AT PORTLAND, OREGON.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS NOTICE: Three weeks are required for a change of address. When ordering a change, please give your old and new addresses and the name and number of your local union.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS, P.O. BOX 13150,
PORTLAND, OR 97213-0150



Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family

IBEW & United Workers FCU

Proudly serving union members and their families since 1954.

Please join IBEW & United Workers Federal Credit Union's "Annual Meeting" 55th Anniversary Celebration 2009

Tuesday, April 21st at 7:00pm

Lasagna Dinner will be served at 6:30pm

Please bring your family and fellow union members

For more information call (503) 253-8193 * (800) 356-6507

Special give-a-way will be given to all attendees.

Opportunities to win prizes throughout the meeting!

Located at: IBEW Local 48

15937 NE Airport Way

Portland, OR 97230

Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family