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# NLRB says workers need to know their rights; business world flips out

By MIKE HALL

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) issued a new and simple rule Aug. 25. It says employers must display an 11-by-17-inch poster informing workers of their rights under the National Labor Relations Act, where they usually post notices to let workers know their rights.

Saying he applauded the new rule, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said: "Just as employers are required to notify their employees of their rights around health and safety, wages and discrimination on the job, this rule gives clear information to employees about their rights under this fundamental labor law so that workers are better equipped to exercise and enforce them."

Yet, judging from the reaction of the Big Business, the notice is just a step away from the NLRB giving workers the right to drag employers into the street and beat them severely about the head and shoulders.

Keep in mind, this is just a poster.

The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) calls it an "unprecedented overreach of its authority ... a punitive new rule ... a new low ... a trap for millions of businesses."

It's just a poster.

Peter Schaumber, a former NLRB chairman appointed by former President George W. Bush, told Bloomberg News, "It's arbitrary, it's capricious."

It's just a poster.

On the right-wing website GOPUSA, the new rule is "another disgusting government intrusion into private business."

It's just a poster. Just a poster similar to the ones the U.S. Department of Labor requires the thousands and thousands of federal contractors to post.

The NLRB says employers will not be required to distribute the notice via e-mail, voice mail, text messaging or related electronic communications "even if they customarily communicate with their employees in that manner and they may post notices in black and

white as well as in color."

All it needs to say is that employees have the right to act together to improve wages and working conditions, to form, join and assist a union, to bargain collectively with their employer. It also must say, "employees may refrain from any of these activities." Pretty even handed, huh?

By the way, it won't cost employers a penny because the NLRB will provide copies for free or employers can download it.

*(Editor's Note: Mike Hall writes for the AFL-CIO Now blog.)*

## Allstate insurance agents affiliate with OPEIU

GULFPORT, Miss. (PAI) — By a margin of 94 percent, members of the association representing 1,200 Allstate Insurance agents voted Aug. 17 to merge into Office and Professional Employees International Union.

The key issue is the insurer's mistreatment of agents. It classifies them as "independent contractors," unprotected by labor law. But it treats them as "employees," subject to its rules, regulations and sales quotas — including its strong-arm effort to buy veteran agents out at low prices for their supposedly independent franchises.

"With the prospect of a 20 percent cut in agent compensation looming, the time is ripe to affiliate," said Jim Fish, executive director of the National Association of Professional Allstate Agents, based in Gulfport, Miss.

"Many insurers utilizing independent contractor agents manipulated IRS precepts to the point where independent contractors are now employees without benefits or protections," he continued. "Agent morale at Allstate has hit rock bottom, which cannot be good for the company, the agents or the shareholders."

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