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... Schrader turns hostile to union rights

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U.S. House of Representatives, he became chair of the Blue Dog coalition, a group of 15 “conservative Democrats” who often defy the Democratic mainstream on tax and budget policy. Schrader was re-elected three times since 2008, with labor’s endorsement. Over the years he has appeared at labor events and picnics, while his votes earned him an 84 percent rating from the national AFL-CIO.

But the relationship soured this year when the national AFL-CIO ramped up its campaign against Fast Track — a set of rules in which Congress enables quick passage of trade agreements like the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership. Schrader has long been a supporter of such trade deals, and voted for Fast Track. When the national AFL-CIO ran TV ads critical of Democrats who support Fast Track and threatened to withhold support from those who voted for it, Schrader seemed to take offense. In June, he called AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka a “bully” in an interview with a blog for Wash-

ington, D.C., insiders. The relationship has only worsened since then.

and 2002, when George W. Bush did the same. Schrader’s bill (HR 3932) would make it mandatory for presidents to use the injunction in the case of port disputes — and for slowdowns, not just strikes and lockouts. The bill has 10 other co-sponsors, all Republicans, including Eastern Oregon’s Greg Walden and Eastern Washington’s Cathy McMorris Rodgers.

Then on Nov. 17, Schrader joined 225 Republicans and 23 other Democrats in voting for a bill to eliminate the right of workers at tribal enterprises to unionize. According to the national AFL-CIO, the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act (HR 511) would apply not just to casinos, but to mining operations, power plants, smoke shops, saw mills, construction companies, ski resorts, high-tech firms, hotels,



— Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain

and spas — any commercial enterprise owned by an Indian tribe on Indian land. The bill, which passed the House, seeks to overturn a 2004 decision by the National Labor Relations Board which said workers at an Indian casino have a federally-protected right to unionize. Trumka called it “a union-busting bill” and an attempt to silence the voices of working people.

“The AFL-CIO believes in both tribal sovereignty and worker solidarity,” Trumka said in a press statement. “We don’t have to choose.”

“This isn’t the Kurt Schrader we thought we were getting in 2008, back when he voiced support for the Employee Free Choice Act,” said Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain. “It seems like he went to a different level when he tried to deny collective bargaining rights for casino workers, and the carveout of longshore workers has everybody in labor concerned.”

Schrader’s office did not return a call from the Labor Press. Schrader faces re-election in November 2016.

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