

# GOP-led House panel votes to block union-buster disclosure rule

The House Education and Workforce Committee in a 21-10 party-line vote May 18 approved Republican legislation that would block the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) so-called persuader rule. The new rule requires companies that hire anti-union labor relations consultants to report how much they pay those consultants, and disclose the scope of the work they are doing.

That was the law of the land in 1959 when Congress passed the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LM-

RDA). Because of that law, you can go to the DOL web site and get detailed information about union finances and salaries. The law was supposed to apply to labor relations consultants too.

But in 1962, the DOL interpreted the law in a way that created a giant loophole: If consultants didn't have direct contact with workers, they weren't required to file a report. Ever since then, most union-busting consultants have spent their time training managers and supervisors to deliver their scripted anti-union messages, while

themselves remaining "behind the curtain" to avoid disclosure.

Getting rid of that loophole was one of the first things union leaders asked President Barack Obama to do when he was elected in 2008. It took until March 23 of this year for that to happen.

But in a five-hour hearing on May 18, the Republican-controlled House Education and Workforce Committee took the first step to block implementation of the rule with passage of House Joint Resolution 87. Under the Congressional Review

Act, Congress can pass a resolution of disapproval to prevent a federal agency from implementing a rule or issuing a substantially similar rule without congressional authorization.

Committee Chair Rep. John Kline (R-Minn.) said in a press release that the new regulation "will undermine the ability of employers to communicate with employees and deprive workers of the information they need to make fully-informed decisions in union elections."

But Rep. Suzanne Bonimici (D-OR), said the new rule sim-

ply allows workers to know when their employer has hired a consultant—including anti-union firms—to influence what managers and supervisors say to workers, and to report how much they spend for the service.

"The Department of Labor has taken action to level the playing field and provide transparency for workers. Basic fairness dictates that workers should know who is responsible for the information they receive," Bonamici said.

The ranking Democrat on the committee, Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.) told The Hill newspaper the rule would "pull back the curtain" on companies that are looking to block unions from organizing.

"Some opponents argue that the workers have a right to hear both sides of the debate. I agree," Scott said. "But, as they hear both sides, workers deserve to know whether or not what they are hearing is a product of certain well-known consultants hired to influence their decisions and how much their employers are paying them to influence their views."

The DOL predicts it will receive disclosures from about 3,414 employers and 2,601 advisers each year.

According to The Hill newspaper, the resolution is likely to pass in both the House and Senate, but faces an almost-certain veto from President Obama.



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