

# Unions' Ongoing Assault On Privacy <sup>Ⓟ</sup>

by Danielle Ringwood

(NAPSA)—These days there is more that links labor and politics than just the old belief that Labor Day begins the election season.

There are now eight Democrats running for president, all working to distinguish themselves from the rest of the pack. However, one issue they all agree on should be of great concern for working men and women across the country: The politicians have pledged support for a deceptively named bill called the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA).

If ever signed into law, EFCA would strip away a worker's right to a federally supervised private-ballot election when deciding whether to join a union. Worse yet, it would replace private ballots with a process actually run by the unions themselves—known as card check—which would force workers to make their choice about a union in public. Without private ballots, each worker's choice would be known not only to his or her co-workers but to union organizers and the employer.

This is wrong. We all enjoy privacy at the ballot box and workers deserve the same right to make these important personal decisions in private, without fear of coercion or reprisal from union organizers, their employer or both.

The bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives but was blocked in the Senate. However, the strong support it continues to receive from Democratic presidential candidates and House and Senate Democratic leaders suggests that the fight to protect private-ballot elections is far from over. Indeed, union special interests in Washington have made passage of EFCA their top priority. They view it as a last-ditch effort to circumvent their continued decline in member-

ship. Union bosses have apparently determined that if they can't convince workers to unionize based on the merits, they will instead force through changes in a 72-year-old federal law in order to make it easier to compel workers to unionize.

Never mind that voters and union members themselves are against this idea. According to a recent poll, 89 percent of voters oppose the card-check process and support the continued use of private ballots for union elections. Ironically, with 91 percent opposed, sentiment against card check is even higher among union members.

But the desires of workers and voters can't compete with political largesse. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, unions have given close to \$300 million to Democratic candidates across the country since the 2000 elections. Those numbers will steadily rise. One major union, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), has already announced that it plans to spend some \$25 million next year. Expect others to follow. Given the large role labor union bosses play in the Democratic primary process, no Democratic presidential candidate dares to oppose them on a signature issue like EFCA.

Candidates for president like to talk about "change." But selling out the rights of America's working men and women at the behest of your largest donor is not change; it's, sadly, politics as usual.

*Danielle Ringwood is a senior director of legislative affairs of Associated Builders and Contractors and a member of the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace, which is made up of 500 associations and organizations from a wide variety of U.S. industries.*