

UNDER THE GOLDEN DOME

April 2011

Iowa Legislative Update

What has Iowa become? I sure hope everyone has been paying attention to what has been happening in Wisconsin. The bill in question here in Iowa is House Study Bill 117. This bill is nothing more than a poorly disguised version of UNION BUSTING! For a quick rewind the current law was enacted in 1974 after several years of study and debate in the Iowa legislature. It is a very thoughtfully crafted law with bi-partisan support and was signed into law by Republican Governor Bob Ray. HSB 117 on the other hand is based on recommendations of one person, Leon Shearer. He's a pro-management private sector labor lawyer; he has NO experience in public sector collective bargaining. Shearer says he was asked to look at the law with "fresh eyes" by Governor Branstad, who apparently picked Shearer because he had no firsthand knowledge of how Iowa's public sector collective bargaining system actually works. Sounds familiar? Like a postal supervisor telling a Letter Carrier how to carry mail that's never carried mail!

Let's look at the root cause. When we are throwing money at corporations, it's not about the money. If Iowa can hand out millions of dollars in checks to corporations, this is not about the money. It's outrageous to watch elected officials throw money into corporate coffers, then recoup those costs by slashing the rights and services of preschoolers, snow plow drivers, teachers and hard-working Iowans who are struggling to get by. Slashing public worker's rights to have a voice at work will not rebuild our economy. It will only hurt working people who are already struggling, and the local businesses they support.

Good schools, safe roads, decent jobs, and quality public services – that's what builds a strong Iowa. Iowa doesn't have mountains, or oceans, or major tourist attractions. What we have are safe communities, decent roads and good schools because Iowans value our communities. This is what attracts people to our state, and this is what causes many young Iowans to return. We know the mantra, "It's a good place to raise children." This is a direct result of our investment in public services, and a direct result of the hard work and ideals of our public sector workers. Our state has also spent significant amount of time and resources into determining what is making so many young Iowans leave- and the overwhelming answer is LOW WAGES. HSB 117, along with the proposed cuts in public services would weaken Iowa's most important and exacerbates our state's most important weakness.



Low wages are already, driving our young people away – HSB 117 would make it worse. In the past several years, the state has studied why our young people are leaving. In every category, the top answer was that Iowa jobs have low pay. According to reports, Iowa pay is low for wage earners, its low for architects; it's low for financial occupations, and extremely low for nurses. Further cutting the rights and standards of Iowa's workers, while handing millions to corporations, will only speed our race to the bottom. If we're competing to be Mississippi, we're well on our way. If we're competing for shared prosperity, we're on the wrong track.

Seriously? "Get tough" on children, workers, and the elderly, but cave in to our corporate greed? HSB 117 is part of a radical agenda in Iowa and around the nation to eliminate our most basic protections for workers, children and the elderly. Like Scott Walker in Wisconsin, the officials pushing this agenda are talking about "getting tough." Who are they "getting tough" with? So far, they're "getting tough" with 4 year olds by cutting preschool funding. They're "getting tough" on the elderly – as if cutting nursing home inspectors will force the elderly to stand up for themselves? Now, they're "getting tough" on workers by trying to limit basic union rights – rights enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights. But getting tough on corporate greed? NO, instead we're bending over backwards to offer more tax cuts and benefits to those who already have the most!

Back on February 22, myself along with State VP/Branch 352 VP Stephanie Stewart and Third District CLD Jeff Erickson State Treasurer Barb Sisley along with some other Branch #352 retirees and active carriers attended the "WE ARE ONE RALLY" in support of our Brother and Sister in Wisconsin. It was great to see the large number of Union Activists standing together "IN SOLIDARITY" March 7th I attended the rally inside the Capitol Rotunda. The crowd was estimated at 1,944 Trade Unionist! The rally was held to show support for voting down House Bill 525 which is the child of HSB 117. Afterwards many Union members spoke on the House floor trying to convince the Republicans the errors of their ways in wanting to Gut Iowa's collective bargaining law. The House Democrats have proposed 100 amendments in the open debate which is scheduled to last for days, trying in vain to bring some sanity to the madness. This bill will eventually pass on party line 60-40, but will be dead on arrival in the Iowa Senate. My question is "Where are all the jobs they promised to create"?

3-11-11 as I sat in the Iowa House gallery listening the debate on collective bargaining bill I couldn't help but notice Republican Representative Watts with his head phones on as he was watching a movie for 2 + hrs I sat in the gallery! Today is a sad day for Iowa workers wither you're Union or not. It was despicable to learn the Republicans turned the House switch board off so Union members could not call in to



their Representatives and voice their displeasure on this under handed bill. Former House Speaker Pat Murphy rose on personal privilege and let the Republicans have it for shutting down the House switch board! He “Screamed Shame ON YOU”! It was a site to see when Brother Wilbur Wilson retired USW shouted ‘SHAME ON ALL OF YOU” from the House gallery, Wilbur has a voice that can carry the length of a football field. The truth to all the State House battles going on in the country is this. **BUST THE UNIONS** plain and simple! And if you don’t believe that brothers and sisters, you’re in for a rude awakening! I’ll say this again and stand by what I say, “A Union member voting for a Republican is like a chicken voting for Colonel Sanders” A teacher came to the mike at the Rally on March 7th and said, I’m a Republican and I’m ashamed of my party! That took a lot of guts to come forward in front of all those Trade Unionist and admit the error of his ways. Brothers and Sisters I do not have to tell you how tough things are these days. Do me a favor. Your Union Officers and Stewards are working their butts off trying to make things right. I know many of you don’t see the fruits of their labors, and a lot of what they’re doing takes time. So I ask you to do this one thing. “Tell them **THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO FOR THE UNION.**” **Do yourself a favor donate to COLCPE today, to help save your job tomorrow!**

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