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AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

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Shays-Meehan to Union Workers: Pay Up.

As written, campaign reform bill does nothing to protect union workers from political coercion.

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) announced yesterday that the Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform bill would be taken up next week by the U.S. House of Representatives. But without Paycheck Protection, a measure designed to protect union workers from being forced to pay dues used for political ends, the measure faces a serious lack of credibility in the eyes of unionized workers.

“Campaign Finance Reform without Paycheck Protection is not real reform at all,” said taxpayer advocate Grover Norquist, who heads Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) in Washington. **“Rather, it’s a raw political power play designed solely to benefit one political party at the expense of another.”**

Supporters of the bill saw the scandal surrounding Enron Corporation’s bankruptcy as a chance to move forward with their reform plan. Enron gave roughly \$2 million in campaign contributions to candidates from both political parties in the 2000 election cycle, resulting in a surge of support to bring the bill to the floor.

But in the same election cycle, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) gave roughly \$8 million in campaign contributions – 90% of which went to Democrats. Moreover, while testifying before the Senate Committee on Rules in April 2000, AFL-CIO Associate General Counsel Laurence Gold admitted that most of his union’s political activity doesn’t involve soft money. **Voter identification activities, direct mail to union households, voter turnout activities, union workers receiving paid “holidays” to campaign for union-supported candidates, are all unaffected by the Shays-Meehan legislation.**

“This bill is heralded by the leadership of one party, and for the benefit of one party,” continued Norquist. **“But the bill does absolutely nothing to stem Big Labor’s influence on the political process – influence gained from the money they coerce from employees who often oppose their policies.”**

Campaign reform emerged as an issue in the early 1990s, when many politicians saw an opportunity to brandish a “clean vote” to their constituents. Others, like Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), saw campaign reform as an opportunity to bury skeletons from past years of unethical activity – in McCain’s case, the Keating 5 scandal.

“Politicians who take up campaign reform without addressing Paycheck Protection are running in front of television cameras to flaunt integrity that they, in fact, don’t have,” concluded Norquist.

Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who support tax simplification and oppose all federal and state tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or by email at jcollegio@atr.org