

Sample Policy Statement
on
Union Recognition Procedures

Membership in labor unions has dropped sharply and steadily over the past several decades, particularly in the private sector where less than one worker in 11 now belongs to a union. There are numerous reasons for the decline, among them the long-term rise in living standards and the shift from a manufacturing to a service-oriented economy. In the last several Congresses, allies of organized labor have proposed to reverse this decline by changing the rules used to decide whether workers want to be represented by a union. They have introduced bills to make it easier for unions to gain recognition as bargaining agents for eligible employees.

The concept behind these bills is simple: union would be certified as the bargaining agents for workers once they get a majority of eligible employees to sign authorization cards. This new system would replace secret ballot elections, which have been the primary means for granting unions recognition since the National Labor Relations Act was amended in 1947. The new process would be open-ended in terms of time, leaving unions as long as they need to collect signatures. That is, it would remain open until they win. There would seem to be endless ways to get workers to sign cards for reasons other than wanting a union to represent them, opportunities for intimidation and coercion from having close personal friends solicit workers to more heavy-handed tactics.

Secret ballots, on the other hand, have served this country well since its founding as a way to make important decisions. They allow the people affected to decide between competing options on the merits rather than in response to outside pressure. They also have the benefit of finality: when the issue is settled, it is done.

This issue affects businesses of all sizes, but especially smaller companies. In 2005, the National Labor Relations Board conducted 2649 union representation elections. More than 20 percent of those elections involved bargaining units of fewer than 10 employees and a full 70 percent of them involved bargaining units of fewer than 50 employees. Should the bills under consideration become law, union organizing would be cheaper and easier than ever before, allowing unions to target even smaller companies.

For these reasons, the _____ Chamber of Commerce opposes changing the rules used to decide whether workers want to be represented by a union that would replace secret ballot elections. Issues of such importance to employees and their employers should be decided on their merits only, and the best way to ensure that is already the law of the land. No change is needed in this area.