



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Published for Labor Activists

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Call The Illinois AFL-CIO at (217) 544-4014 For More Information
On These and Other Legislative Issues Important To Working People

HB 684 - Medicare Patient Reimbursement

Sponsor: Rep. May (D - Highwood)
SUPPORT
Provides that a hospital may not collect from an uninsured patient more than 110% of the Medicare reimbursement rate (rather than just the amount of the Medicare reimbursement rate).
*Passed the House Health Care & Avail Access Committee 6-5-2.
Second Reading.*

HB 742 - Whistleblower Protections

Sponsor: Rep. Fritchey (D - Chicago)
SUPPORT
The Illinois AFL-CIO passed legislation protecting whistleblowers in education fields. Amendment passed this week would exempt the City of Chicago due to identical provisions in their municipal code.

*Passed the House Local Government committee 6-3-1.
Second Reading.*

HB 988 - Firefighter Substitute

Sponsor: Rep. Phelps (D - Harrisburg)
SUPPORT
Amends the Illinois Municipal Code and the Fire Protection District Act. Provides that a person who has not qualified for a regular appointment shall not be used as a temporary or permanent substitute.
*Passed the House Local Government Committee 6-3.
Second Reading.*

SB 1296 - Civil Liabilities

Sponsor: Sen. Cullerton (D - Chicago)
SUPPORT
It has long been the law in Illinois that settled defendants do not appear on the verdict form. The recent hypertechnical interpretation by some Illinois appellate

courts has caused a split among the appellate and federal courts in Illinois, causing a need for the legislation.
*Passed the Senate 34-23-1.
House Rules.*

SB 1704 - Future Gen/Coal Projects

Sponsor: Sen. Forby (D - Benton)
SUPPORT
Creates the Clean Coal FutureGen for Illinois Act for the purpose of providing the FutureGen Alliance with adequate liability protection, land use rights, and permitting certainty to facilitate the siting of the FutureGen Project in Illinois. Provides that locations at Tuscola and Mattoon are the only locations eligible for benefits under the Act.
*Passed the Senate 59-0.
House Rules*

NATIONAL

New Federal Legislation Would Reverse "Kentucky River" Decisions

(Washington, March 23) - AFL-CIO President John Sweeney today joined America's workers in applauding the introduction of legislation that would reverse a Republican-controlled National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decision which opened the door for employers to strip workers in every profession of their union protections.

The bill, dubbed the Re-Empowerment of Skilled and Professional Employees and Construction Tradeworkers (RESPECT) Act, will overturn a September 2006 NLRB ruling that slashed longstanding labor law protections of workers' freedom to form unions. The bill was introduced late yesterday by Reps. Robert Andrews (D-NJ) and Don Young (R-Alaska) in the House and Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT) in the Senate.

The rulings came in three cases, collectively known as the Oakwood cases after the lead case, Oakwood Healthcare Inc., which radically reinterpreted the definition of "supervisor" in a way that greatly expanded the number and types of workers that can be classified as supervisors. The board ruled a worker can be classified as a supervisor if he or she spends as little as 10 percent to 15 percent of his or her time overseeing the work of others. That breaks down to less than an hour a day or one full shift every two weeks. Supervisors do not have protected rights under the National Labor Relations Act to improve their lives by forming and joining unions.

The bipartisan legislation also could help break a procedural logjam that is denying workers the right to join a union. Currently, the NLRB is holding up dozens of cases that address the definition of supervisor, and 60 of those are union election cases.

U.S. Senate to Hold Hearing on Employee Free Choice Act

On Tuesday, March 27, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee will hear testimony from workers and labor law experts on the urgent need to restore workers' free choice to form unions to bargain for better wages and benefits.

The bipartisan Employee Free Choice Act, sponsored by U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA) in the House, would strengthen penalties for employers that violate workers' freedom to make their own choice about a union. Passed by the House earlier this month, the bill would allow a neutral party to determine a first contract if the company and employees cannot reach an agreement. It would also enable workers to form unions when a majority of workers sign authorization forms designating the union as their bargaining representative.

For more information on the Employee Free Choice Act, visit www.employeefreechoiceact.org.