



NLRB rule changes ensure workers' right to vote

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Just this week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that, rather than addressing the choke points in the current union election process, would mandate a delay—making it even easier for unscrupulous employers to stand in the way of workers getting a vote on whether to form a union.

Why are Republicans so aggressively opposed? It's unionbusting, plain and simple.

Conservatives like Rep. John Kline (R-Minn.) and South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley have been predictably swift to denounce a more efficient system, claiming it will grant "quickie elections" to unions, leaving management insufficient time to raise objections. The truth is that the new rules would not impose any time frame for elections.

Under the current system, American workers who desire to join a union face innumerable obstacles. Workplace surveillance, threats and firings of union activists, and retaliation are all common, though illegal, responses from employers.

Even the law protects the ability of management to block free and fair elections. This means that although opinion polls show most American workers would join a union of their choosing if given the option, the current process ensures they almost never get the chance.

The "Election Prevention Act" passed by the U.S. House of Representatives this week is part of a long Republican tradition of supporting a system that backlogs already overburdened courts with appealed election cases, wasting precious time and taxpayer dollars.

Their opposition to a more democratic process must therefore be considered in light of other recent events: the renewed Republican assault on basic labor rights that began in Wisconsin and spread across the country, and recent episodes of dramatic solidarity between organized labor and the occupy movement, the two most vocal constituencies that have come to embody the 99%.

The NLRB is still the primary legal mechanism that upholds workers' rights

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and allows them to vote. Re-building our economy mandates that we support the rights of workers to have the same democratic choices at work that we enjoy as U.S. citizens. The proposed rule changes are a modest but necessary step in that direction. Yes, democracy can be time-consuming and messy, which is the best reason to eliminate all unnecessary obstacles to it.

These proposed changes will uphold basic democratic rights at work to ensure that Americans have the right to vote—and the legislators opposing these commonsense reforms should be ashamed for attempting to stand in their way.

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