



NEWS

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Utah Enacts Bush-Style Paycheck Protection

Governor Leavitt signs landmark campaign reform legislation this afternoon

WASHINGTON- President Bush's efforts to enact legislation protecting the first amendment rights of America's working men and women were given a boost today as Utah Governor Michael O. Leavitt (R) signed a new "paycheck protection" bill into law in his state. Utah becomes the sixth state to enact such a measure.

Under the "Voluntary Contributions Act," no Utah worker may have monies deducted from his or her paycheck by an employer or union for political purposes unless the worker has first given written permission. The measure also gets taxpayers out of the business of subsidizing political fundraising by prohibiting the use of public employer resources to collect political contributions.

"Paycheck protection legislation is pro-worker, pro-freedom," said Ron Nehring, Senior Consultant to Americans for Tax Reform, which supports such legislation. "No worker should be forced to choose between retaining his or her rights in the workplace, and making political contributions."

"Some union officials are understandably unsupportive of paycheck protection because it shifts power to individual workers. Paycheck protection gives each worker the power to decide whether to contribute money to politics or to spend that money on shoes for their children," said Nehring. "The new law in Utah recognizes that when it comes to the political use of union dues, the teacher's, or the cop's, or the assembly worker's first amendment rights are paramount."

Other states that have passed some form of paycheck protection include Michigan, Ohio, Washington State, Idaho and Wyoming.

Paycheck protection legislation can be enacted at the state level, or by Congress. State action in this area is permitted when there is a "compelling state interest," in the words of the U.S. Supreme Court. Other courts have ruled that protecting the free speech rights of a worker to not contribute to causes he or she opposes qualifies as a compelling state interest.

According to Nehring, the Utah action blows a hole in the Beltway argument that paycheck protection is some kind of deal-breaker for campaign finance reform. The measure won the support of conservatives and centrists in the Utah legislature before making it to Governor Leavitt's desk. It was supported by the Utah Taxpayers Association, the National Federation of Independent Business, and other groups.

Text of the bill is online at <http://www.le.state.ut.us/~2001/htmdoc/hbillhtm/HB0179S1.htm>. For more information on the issue of paycheck protection, please visit www.paycheckprotection.org.

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