



AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY

PENNSYLVANIA

June 2, 2014

Chairman Metcalfe, Minority Chair Cohen, and members of the House State Government committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 1507. I am here today on behalf of more than 115,000 Americans for Prosperity activists in Pennsylvania, to testify in support of paycheck protection, House Bill 1507 in the Keystone State.

I want to talk about what House Bill 1507 does and does not do. I call this bill Paycheck Protection – but it is not like Paycheck Protection in other states. We in Pennsylvania tend to take a national issue and give it a Pennsylvania spin. Paycheck protection, as outlined in House Bill 1507, is a common-sense reform – one which will in no way undermine the First amendment rights of public sector unions in the Keystone State. It will only allow taxpayers to “opt out” of acting as their de facto fundraisers. Paycheck protection is not “Right to Work” legislation that allows workers to voluntarily opt out of unions. Paycheck protection does not prevent unions from collecting money for political purposes. And paycheck protection does not diminish the collective bargaining rights of public employees. Allow me to repeat, House Bill 1507 will not prohibit unions from collecting “fair share” dues, political money or Political Action Committee donations.

All Americans – whether they are members of a labor union or not – possess the First Amendment right to freedom of association, including the right to contribute to the political causes and candidates of their choosing. By the same token, taxpayers deserve to be protected from government coercion that compels them to support – and subsidize – a select few private organizations and their chosen political interests.

Unions should be required to use their own staff, time, and resources to collect dues and underwrite their own political campaign machinery. These organizations should not force taxpayer-supported state and local governments and school districts to shoulder that burden, nor should they force taxpayers to pay for it. The employees of these entities are public servants, not collection agents or political operatives.

Every other such organization and business in the state – including private sector unions – pays for these services on their own. Public sector unions are the lone exception and this must change.

Americans for Prosperity® (AFP) is a nationwide organization of citizen leaders committed to advancing every individual's right to economic freedom and opportunity. AFP believes reducing the size and scope of government is the best safeguard to ensuring individual productivity and prosperity for all Americans. AFP educates and engages citizens in support of restraining state and federal government growth and returning government to its constitutional limits. AFP has more than 2.3 million member across all 50 states, and 36 state chapters and affiliates. More than 92,000 Americans in all 50 states have made a financial investment in AFP or AFP Foundation. For more information, visit www.americansforprosperity.org. Americans for Prosperity does not support or oppose candidates for public office.

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Still, some union bosses continue to object to this broadly supported reform that will simply level the playing field. They argue that compelling taxpayers to collect their dues is acceptable, dismissing the practice as inexpensive. But the cost is less important than the principle. Using government to benefit political activity is corruption –taxpayer-supported corruption, and that’s wrong, regardless of the cost. If something is unethical, it does not matter if the costs are small, it should not be legal.

Despite the fact that a Commonwealth Foundation poll showed that 80 percent of union households themselves in Pennsylvania do not think the government should collect campaign contributions, labor groups continue to stand against reform. It is time to overcome that opposition in the name of fairness. The status quo in Pennsylvania is not fair for workers or taxpayers.

Several other states, including Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio have enacted their own forms of paycheck protection. These reforms have given families greater peace of mind that their tax dollars are indeed going to support the public good, not to fund political activity.

The headlines in Pennsylvania have been filled in recent years with stories of legislators – and more recently a Supreme Court Justice – who have been convicted as felons for utilizing public employee time and equipment for campaign purposes. Why should there be a “legal” exemption for public employee unions to do essentially the same thing?

For these reasons, Americans for Prosperity supports enacting paycheck protection legislation as proposed in House Bill 1507 that would bar state and local governments and school districts from collecting union dues, political money, or PAC funds from employees’ pay.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in front of you today, and Americans for Prosperity looks forward to working with you to make the Keystone State the best place in America to live and work.

Anna McCauslin
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Americans for Prosperity – Pennsylvania

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