

HB 1617 -- LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

SPONSOR: Rehder

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Workforce Development and Workplace Safety by a vote of 8 to 3.

This bill prohibits any sum from being withheld from the earnings of a public employee for the payment of any portion of dues, agency shop fees, or other fees paid by public employee members of a public labor organization or a public employee who is not a member except upon the annual written authorization of the employee.

A public labor organization is prohibited from using or obtaining any portion of dues, agency shop fees, or any other fees paid by member and nonmember public employees to make political campaign contributions or expenditures unless it obtains a written authorization from the member or nonmember within the previous 12 months.

An employee who does not authorize political campaign contributions or expenditures cannot have his or her dues, agency shop fees, or other fees increased in lieu of making the contribution or expenditure.

The requirements of these provisions cannot be waived by the member or nonmember and the waiver of the requirements cannot be a condition of employment or continued employment.

These provisions do not apply to specified first responders or any labor organization that represents them.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill is about fundamental fairness. It is important to protect a union member's wages by ensuring that he or she is not forced to support political candidates out-of-pocket and against their will.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Rehder and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that these contributions already are voluntary and requiring this annual authorization will increase costs to public employers and school districts in particular. This is an unnecessary intrusion into the inner workings of a private organization and is just another administrative burden put onto unions from Jefferson City. There are approximately 75 authorized payroll deductions other than the union deductions, and none of the other payroll deductions require annual reauthorization.

Testifying against the bill were Service Employees International Union, Missouri/Kansas State Council; Plumbing Industry Council; Bradley Harmon, Communication Workers of America, Local #6355; United Transportation Union; United Steelworkers District 11; Missouri AFL-CIO; Missouri National Education Association; Mary Armstrong; and International Union of Painters and Allied Trades.