

# Resist Forced Unionization of Public Safety Personnel

Today, for the first time in American history, a majority of union members work for governments. In January 2009, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the number of union members working for government entities surpassed the number of those working for private businesses. This change in the composition of organized labor's membership is significant for the nation's politics.

As unions have become increasingly government employee-based, public sector unions have become an organized, motivated, and well-funded permanent lobby for bigger government. With the federal and state and local governments facing tightened finances, lawmakers must confront this lobby. The first thing they must do is to not feed it.

The so-called Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, sponsored in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress by Rep. Dale Kildee (D-Mich.) and Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.), would indeed feed this behemoth. The bill would have imposed union collective bargaining on state and local public safety—police, firefighter,

and EMT—personnel. For states and cities struggling to balance their overstretched budgets, higher labor costs are the last thing they need.

Moreover, such legislation would violate workers' First Amendment rights to freedom of association and freedom of speech by forcing them to join unions and to support, through the compulsory payment of union dues, political activity with which they may not agree.

The Kildee-Reid legislation instructs the Federal Labor Relations Authority, which oversees collective bargaining for non-postal federal employees, to promulgate union representation and collective bargaining regulations for state and local public safety employees in states which have not enacted laws giving unions those privileges. Such legislation, by increasing state and local governments' labor costs, would amount to unfunded mandates upon states, counties, and cities. It is terrible policy. Congress should reject any attempt to revive it.

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