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Attend the NASF Washington Forum – Send a Message on “Card Check” Legislation

The Senate and House Democratic leadership on March 10 introduced union-backed “card check” legislation on the heels of the AFL-CIO’s winter meeting in Miami last week. The bill, which sponsors have advanced as the “Employee Free Choice Act” or EFCA, would allow a workplace to be unionized if a majority of workers simply sign cards authorizing a union. It would scrap an employer’s right to request a secret ballot election.

Without the bill, the nation’s union leadership asserts that unions can’t survive and protect worker’s rights. The NASF and other industry groups fear that the bill if enacted will encourage intimidation and coercion of workers by unions and damage small businesses. Last week, President Obama and Vice President Biden both publicly endorsed the legislation.

Legislation Would Transform U.S. Labor Relations – Currently, the National Labor Relations Board only recognizes forming a union through a secret ballot. The EFCA would not eliminate this option, but its new provisions would essentially guarantee that “card check” would be the method of choice for union organization. The measure also toughens up penalties

for businesses for certain infractions and would guarantee arbitration on union contracts if workers and employers are unable to resolve differences within 90 days of commencing negotiations.

NASF Activity – The NASF has been closely monitoring activity on Capitol Hill and communicating with other business groups who are spearheading national opposition on the legislation, including the US Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber spent \$10 million opposing the EFCA in 2008 and will likely spend \$20 million on efforts to turn back the legislation this year. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) turned out protesters this week across Washington to march in front of the Chamber and other business groups and to meet with lawmakers.

Moderates May Pose Challenge to Passage – With the economic downturn, some moderate “Blue Dog” Democrats in the House have backed away from supporting the measure. In the Senate, a handful of Democrats – including Mark Pryor and Blanche Lincoln from Arkansas, as well as Mary Landrieu from Louisiana – are said to be opposing passage of EFCA as well.

Senate Democratic leadership is counting on swearing in Al Franken from Minnesota in short order to help shore up votes for Senate passage, but with moderates peeling off they may have a more difficult path ahead.

Send a Message to Your Lawmakers at the Washington Forum, April 28-30 in DC – To make your voice heard on the future of US labor policy and its impact on small manufacturing, attend the NASF Washington Forum! We will host US Chamber of Commerce Director of Labor Policy Marc Freedman, who will give an update on the latest legislative developments on the bill and help reinforce the message for finishers to bring to Capitol Hill that passing card check is one more burden small manufacturing doesn’t need. Please see this year’s Washington Forum agenda in this month’s magazine for more information on EFCA and other featured topics critical for the future of finishing. To register for the 2009 Washington Forum, please go to www.nasf.org, or contact Christian Richter (crichter@thepolicygroup.com) or Jeff Hannapel (jhannapel@thepolicygroup.com) for more information or assistance.