

Sun **Viewpoint**

Small-business owner asks Foster to fight 'card check'

Pragmatism is a quality I admire in a lawmaker. As the owner of FlagSource, a small flag production business based in Batavia, I greatly respect the thoughtful approach my Congressman Bill Foster (D-14th) has taken on many issues in his first few months in office. In this regard, I would like to ask the Congressman to reconsider his support of an ill-conceived bill that I fear will increase intimidation by union organizers in the workplace.

Congressman Foster is co-sponsoring the misleadingly named Employee Free Choice Act, also known as "card check," which would enable a union to be created once a majority of employees sign cards. Under this legislation, workers' votes would be made public to colleagues, union organizers and employers. The long-held tradition of voting by secret ballot would no longer be necessary, creating a situation where some employees could be denied the chance to make their voices heard on the prospect of unionization. This sets the stage for increased intimidation by union organizers, who would logically focus on influencing a simple majority of workers to sign cards rather than educating the workforce at large.

"Card check" would give organizers free rein to carry out their campaigns in private, without employer input. If the voice of the business owner is excluded, I feel that the question of unionization could be presented improperly to employees. As any college kid who has been misled by a credit card company will tell you, it is rather easy to sign something you don't completely understand. In order for employees to make informed decisions, they

should hear from all sides of the debate and have access to all the facts.

There's an old saying: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Currently, when 30 percent of employees say they want to join a union, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) oversees a secret ballot election over a period of about 40 days. During that time, both the employer and union have ample opportunity to communicate their point of view to employees. If the proposed "card check" legislation were to be enacted, the role of the NLRB in conducting secret ballot elections would be eliminated.

After all that has happened on Wall Street this past year, the idea of decreasing oversight gives me chills. I would hope that such a blunder would also not sit well with Congressman Foster, a member of the House Financial Services Committee which oversees all components of the nation's financial services sector. Now is certainly not the time to do away with the role of the NLRB.

The economic challenges facing our nation cannot be overstated. Our community is counting on Congressman Foster to continue a pragmatic approach to his decisions and votes. Here's hoping he will come through for small businesses in the 14th Congressional District by opposing the "card check" legislation.

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Jeff Ward will return next week