



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on November 9, 2011

Ohio Voters Reject Reining in Public-servant Unions

Voters in Ohio defeated a law on Tuesday that would have reined in the collective bargaining privileges of government employees, granting a rare victory to “Big Labor” after a series of set-backs in states across the nation.

Union bosses celebrated the news, claiming the win represented a resurgence of organized labor and an important indicator for the 2012 elections. And Democrats, whose campaigns receive significant funding and volunteers from public-worker unions, applauded the outcome as well.



“Hopefully, state legislators and governors across the country will look to Ohio and see that they have galvanized us and we’re an organized force that has to be dealt with,” said Secretary-Treasurer Lee Saunders of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union. Big Labor, he added, plans to use the Ohio win “as a springboard to continue into 2012.”

The Democratic National Committee campaign coffers stuffed with government-employee-union dues issued a statement filled with class-warfare rhetoric. It applauded Ohio’s rejection of a “blatantly partisan attempt to lay the blame for our economy on middle class Americans, while letting the wealthiest and special interests off the hook and not asking them to pay their fair share.”

The state Democrat Party also gloated after election results were announced, with Chairman Chris Redfern poking fun at the GOP and Ohio’s Republican governor, John Kasich (pictured above). He literally thought he knew more than everyone else, Redfern commented.

The legislation, known as Senate Bill 5, would have limited the ability of public servants to make demands on taxpayers by, among other measure, prohibiting strikes. Public-employee unions would still have been able to negotiate wages. But the workers would have had to pay slightly more towards their generous pensions and healthcare benefits.

SB5 was passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Kasich earlier this year following an intense showdown with government employees. The measure was touted as a way of cutting the states deficit while protecting taxpayers and bringing compensation for public servants into line with the private sector.

But it had not taken effect by the time so-called Issue 2, which blocked the bill, was rejected in the November 8 referendum. About 60 percent voters were against the measure, with some 40 percent supporting it.

Tens of thousands of affected government workers and [campaign volunteers for President Obamas re-election bid](#) played a key role in prodding Ohio voters. And union front groups like We Are Ohio poured tens of millions into defeating the legislation, outspending the main group supporting SB5 by almost four to one.

Today’s vote shows middle class Ohioans wanted to send a clear and emphatic message to our leaders



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and our nation that Ohioans don't turn our backs on the people who watch ours, claimed the largely union-funded group We Are Ohio in a [press release](#) after the vote. It also quoted a few government employees who celebrated the news.

But the real muscle for the anti-SB5 campaign came from out of state, with union bosses fearful of losing their dues money waging a relentless battle to defeat Issue 2. After several humiliating defeats in Wisconsin, another loss in Ohio could have been devastating to the power of Big Labor nationwide.

Attacking education and other public employees is not at all what the public wants to see, said political director Karen White of the infamous National Education Association, America's largest public-servant union. It should resonate with politicians that they've gone too far.

The AFL-CIO, the largest federation of unions in the United States, also boasted about the election results. Ohio sent a message to every politician out there: Go in and make war on your employees rather than make jobs with your employees, and you do so at your own peril, he said, omitting the fact that public servants are supposed to be employed by taxpayers, not politicians. The fact that many young public servants could lose their jobs due to budget constraints after SB5 was rejected was also glossed over.

Unlike in Wisconsin, where a bill reining in the plush benefits and bargaining privileges of taxpayers employees [excluded](#) public safety workers, Ohio's SB5 included everyone employed by taxpayers. So labor groups for firefighters and police lobbied particularly hard in Ohio to kill the union law.

"I think the outcome is an absolute momentum-shifting victory for the labor movement," claimed International Association of Firefighters President Harold Schaitberger. "Now you're talking about having significant impact in the 2012 election cycle for many politicians and putting two battleground states in strong play for our candidates."

In Wisconsin, where government-employee union bosses are still smarting from a crushing defeat earlier this year, Big Labor activists are now working to [recall Gov. Scott Walker](#). But recent months have witnessed several humiliating losses for union chieftains and their Democrat allies in the state.

First they staged [massive protests](#) to kill the bill as Democratic state senators fled to Illinois to block a vote. The legislation was approved anyway. Unions and Democrats then tried to unseat a conservative state Supreme Court Justice. That failed, too. Finally, they tried to turn control of the state Senate over to Democrats through a series of recall elections. But the [GOP still has the majority](#).

In Ohio, Gov. Kasich conceded defeat, though he warned local governments not to expect a bailout because the state is out of funds. "It's clear that the people have spoken," he told the press following the referendum. "I've heard their voices, I understand their decision and frankly I respect what people have to say in an effort like this as a result of that, it requires me to take a deep breath and to spend some time reflecting on what happened here."

But conservative activists did not take the news so well. The unions spent several boatloads on dishonest class warfare, and Ohio voters failed to see through it," summarized Ohio analyst Jason Hart, who broke down the [financing and blatant dishonesty in Big Labors campaign](#) to kill the reforms.

They released a radio ad saying Issue 2 would take us back to the days of Jim Crow, misrepresenting at every turn the effort to limit union power as an attack on Ohio's middle class, noted Hart. They just keep doing what they do every day painting themselves as victims and taxpayers as villains. It worked, to the detriment of everyone except the union bosses. Sadly, a majority of Ohio voters chose to ignore fiscal



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reality.

But even though Democratic and union strategists and analysts painted the Tuesday referendum as a victory for Democrats, the reality is far different. An initiative to nullify ObamaCare and health-insurance mandates in Ohio Issue 3 was overwhelmingly approved by voters.

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