



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 6, 2012

Okla. Constitutional Amendment Pits Taxpayers Against Unions

When Oklahoma State Senator David Holt (left) discovered that Oklahoma was ranked the “most anti-taxpayer state in the southern United States” by the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), he decided to propose amending the state’s constitution to stop the unions’ gravy train of collective bargaining contracts without taxpayer approval. His amendment says nothing about unions or collective bargaining. All he did was explain, in his press release, that if the amendment were passed, the constitution would allow local taxpayers to approve all spending of their tax dollars by local authorities for any purpose. He stated:



Oklahoma’s Constitution already makes it very difficult to raise taxes, and that’s a good thing. But every new tax starts with a new expense, and the Oklahoma Constitution, remarkably, does not give taxpayers or their local elected representatives the absolute power to spend tax dollars.

There are dozens of examples in recent years of local taxpayers being forced to take on new financial obligations, not only without the consent of either the taxpayers or their representatives, but actually over their objections.

And though he never mentions unions or dues extracted from union members’ paychecks to be spent for political purposes or benefits or pensions or job security — they are his target. Because of collective bargaining agreements, unions have routinely overridden taxpayers’ wishes and good sense in Oklahoma.

The CEI’s [Big Labor vs. Taxpayers Index](#) “comprehensively ranks each state on 23 individual aspects to determine the degree to which states favor organized labor ... [or] favor taxpayers.” Some of those aspects include the following:

- Collective bargaining
- Paycheck protection laws
- Secret ballots, and
- Public employee pension underfunding

It’s collective bargaining that forces taxpayers to fund contracts that taxpayers don’t like. As ECI explains: “Collective bargaining combined with political activity enables unions to act as unelected government officials who [then] lobby and negotiate for more government jobs and greater government employee pay and job security.”

According to the Index, Oklahoma ranks 24th, worst in the south, and worse than the average ranking of 18 of all states in protecting taxpayers against unions.



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The CEI noted in its Index that government-employee unions' spending is massive. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) was the largest outside spender in the 2010 elections, doling out more than the National Education Association (NEA) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in promoting its policies and its favorite politicians.

In addition to the amendment offered by Senator Holt, the state senate is also considering a bill to require the Office of Personnel Management to allow automatic deductions from workers' paychecks to an organization only if "the primary function of the organization is nonpolitical and nonpartisan." If this passes, payroll deductions to teachers' unions would be turned off and would prevent Oklahoma municipalities from putting payroll deduction requirements into their labor contracts. As Jack Mann [noted](#) on the CEI's blog:

Taken together, these bills will fundamentally redefine the relationship between the State of Oklahoma and its employees ... public employee unions will no longer be able to use Oklahoma's Office of Personnel Management to raise money.

One wonders if Senator Holt has any idea of the trouble he is making for himself. Once the unions discover that they are his target, he could get "Walkerized." For details on what happened to the courageous Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, Holt [should read this](#).



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