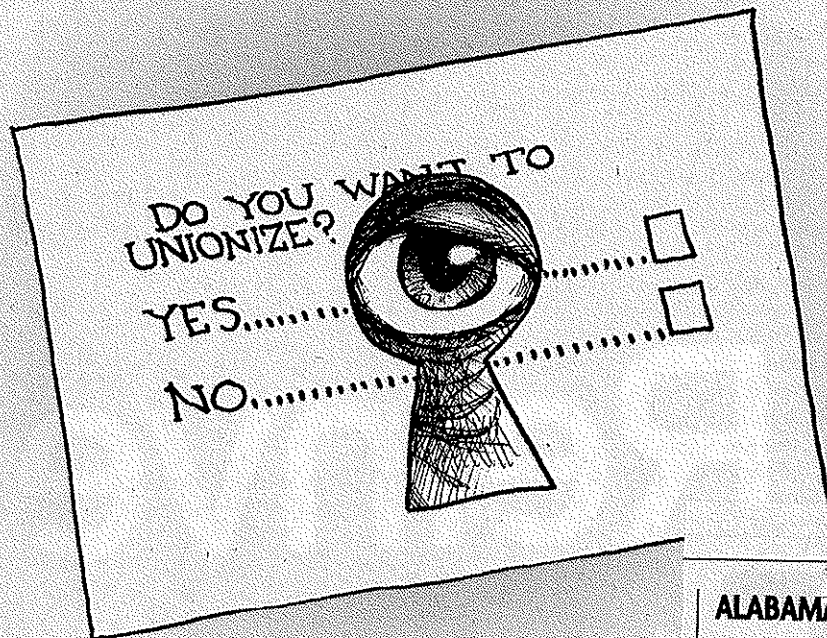


SCOTT STANTIS



CARD CHECK

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ALABAMA

Business groups mount push against union bill

By ROY L. WILLIAMS
News staff writer

A coalition of pro-business groups have formed a new group to lobby against the Employee Free Choice Act, a federal bill that could make it easier for unions to organize.

The Alabama Alliance of Businesses Against EFCA is co-chaired by Jay Reed, president of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Alabama, and Quinton Riggins of the Business Council of Alabama. The group says the free choice act, under consideration in Congress, would take away the secret ballot election process common in organizing campaigns. Reed refers to the act as the card-check bill because it would allow unions to win elections by getting 51 percent of workers to sign a card expressing support.

Greg England, rapid response coordinator for the United Steelworkers in Birmingham, said the bill doesn't end secret ballot elections, but allows employees to decide whether they want to vote by card check or via secret election. "Right now, that decision is made by companies," he said.

Unions have called the issue their top priority in Congress and President Obama, who was backed by organized labor, has expressed support. Reed said the alliance' goal is to ensure Alabama voters and lawmakers "understand that this card check legislation is not right for Alabama or the U.S."

In an e-mail statement, the Alabama Retail Association said defeating the card-check bill is its No. 1 federal legislative goal this year.

"Retailers unequivocally stand by the sanctity of the secret ballot, whether in union votes or at the ballot box on election day," the association said. "Retailers do not want to see a federal bureaucrat placed in the middle of employee contract negotiations as proposed by this legislation."

England countered that the bill is vital to help workers suffering from the economy get representation to speak on their behalf. "Anyone against this bill is not in favor of giving workers better pay and health care coverage," he said.

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