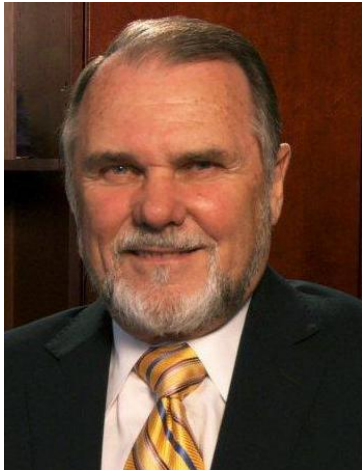


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Like Predatory Insects, Extremists Appear Every Seven Years to Silence California Workers' Voices

There are some species of cicada, a fly-like insect, that emerge from the ground every seven years and attack crops, shrubs and trees, often leaving great damage in their wake. They're known for a uniquely loud and grating buzz.

Similarly, in California, another form of insect-like life, extreme right-wing corporate billionaires, seem to emerge every seven years to attack the voices of California workers. And to workers, their buzz is more annoying than the cicada's.

They were last seen on the California ballot with their "Paycheck Deception" initiatives in 1998 and 2005, and, right on schedule, just like those cicadas, they are returning to attack again in 2012. We workers were united in 1998 and 2005 and we beat them. We'll have to be every bit as united to defeat them again in 2012.

And we had better. The aim of Proposition 226 in 1998 and Proposition 75 in 2005 was to silence workers by prohibiting unions from making political contributions with money collected from paycheck deductions. The effect of either of those passing would have been devastating for working people.

Corporate funds would have continued to flow unabated, with workers left powerless to respond.

The 2012 measure doesn't yet have a number, and it is also unclear at this time whether it will appear on the June or November ballot. But it will try to do the same thing with a sneaky new angle. Opponents of Propositions 226 and 75 argued effectively that those measures would silence workers but do nothing to curb corporate influence over elections. So for 2012, initiative backers have included a provision, that they will emphasize, that says *neither unions nor corporations* may make contributions with money from payroll deductions. Sound fair? It isn't. In fact, far from it.

That provision would have no effect at all on corporations because they don't make contributions with money deducted from employee paychecks. They use funds belonging to their corporate shareholders. And while union workers would be required to sign annual statements and pro-actively write checks to fund political activities, no such burden would be placed on corporate shareholders. So we workers would be crippled and silenced, while corporate billionaires' money would still flow as freely as ever.

Just like their cicada cousins buzzing in unison, these corporate backers are lying in unison. That language about restricting corporate contributions is a lie. It imposes no meaningful restrictions on corporations. It was put there solely to fool working people into thinking that by voting for this thing, they would be voting to limit corporate influence. It does nothing of the sort.

In California, the right-wing corporate billionaires have their reasons to want to silence and tear down the unions who fight to protect workers. In 2010, candidates we workers supported dominated statewide and legislative elections. In 2011, those good leaders passed and signed significant legislation to improve the lot of working people. They acted to protect project labor agreements, to expand and protect prevailing wage, among many other things.

That was made possible because construction workers, firefighters, school employees, nurses, cops, and other workers were able to pool their resources through their unions and be heard. That has infuriated the rich corporate fat cats, who want to make sure we never have the opportunity to enjoy that level of success again.

The other side falsely labels this measure “Paycheck Protection.” But it only protects corporate interests. First, workers who don’t want their dues used for political purposes are already free to opt out of the process. But those who choose to participate through payroll deduction, to protect their right to earn a decent paycheck in the first place, will be silenced.

The right-wing billionaire extremists are back, just like the seven-year cicada, trying to silence your voice again. But other species of cicada stay in the ground and do no damage for longer periods, 13 or even 17 years. Wouldn’t it be great to work so hard, and be so united, and beat these guys so forcefully this time, that they crawl back in the dirt and stay away at least that long?