IN Dems: Voters Should Decide Right-To-Work

Tom LoBianco, Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Indiana House Democrats want voters to decide the fate of a right-to-work bill or else they'll continue stall tactics designed to derail the contentious legislation, the House minority leader said Friday.

A statewide referendum should decide whether Indiana will become the 23rd state to ban union contracts that include mandatory representation fees, House Democratic leader Patrick Bauer said.

Republican House Speaker Brian Bosma told The Associated Press he has polled members of the Republican caucus and sees little chance of the push for a referendum succeeding.

"Any proposals to change (the right-to-work legislation) are probably designed to thwart it," Bosma said.

Facing long odds in a chamber where they are outnumbered by Republicans 60-40, the Democrats only tool for stopping the bill has been denying Republicans the 67 members needed to conduct any business through periodic boycotts. Bosma and Bauer reached an agreement Wednesday to end the boycotts in return for a guarantee the House will consider the referendum.

"We're going to do the best we can and the best we can is to hold this up until the public understands what right-to-work is to begin with," Bauer told The Associated Press Friday.

The right-to-work battle has stalled work in Indiana's 2012 House session and drawn hundreds of union protesters to the Statehouse daily. Roughly a dozen House Democrats boycotted Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels' final State of the State speech in a rare protest over the measure.

The divisive measure is all but assured passage in the Indiana Senate where Republicans outnumber Democrats 37-13 and Daniels made its approval his top legislative priority. The House has been the only major obstacle to the measure.

House Democrats have typically made game-time decisions in private caucus meetings this year whether to grant Republicans the numbers needed to achieve a quorum and conduct any business. Last year they left the state for five weeks to block the right-to-work measure and other Republican proposals.

Bauer said Friday he is concerned Bosma may pull a parliamentary bait-and-switch and block a vote on allowing a referendum to be put on the November ballot.

Such referendums have rarely — if ever — been held in Indiana on proposed laws,

but Bosma said he would allow a debate and vote in this case. The House is expected to debate amendments to the bill Tuesday.

Bosma called the referendum request a "very reasonable amendment to offer" but said he believed the Legislature should decide the issue.

"You elect representatives to come and make the hard decisions and not pass them off to the citizens," Bosma said.

If Bosma breaks his end of the bargain, Democrats might boycott again, Bauer said.

"We want an answer before we participate in a shame and a fraud," Bauer said. "We want the answer before we walk in."

Source URL (retrieved on *07/26/2014 - 4:05pm*):
http://www.impomag.com/news/2012/01/dems-voters-should-decide-right-work?qt-recent_content=1&qt-most_popular=0