

Dayton Daily News

Virginia group funding pro-Issue 2 effort

Friday, October 14, 2011

By Laura Bischoff

COLUMBUS — A right-leaning Virginia-based group is flooding Ohio mailboxes in support of Senate Bill 5, the contentious collective bargaining law that has divided Ohioans throughout the year and will be on the Nov. 8 ballot as Issue 2.

The Alliance for America's Future, which is based in Alexandria, Va., is mailing millions of fliers to Ohio households, spending "over seven figures" on the effort and micro-targeting their message based on voting records, neighborhoods and other demographic factors, said Barry Bennett, the group's director and former chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Jean Schmidt, R-Cincinnati.

More than a dozen different fliers are being delivered. One flier says "YES on Issue 2 will get POLITICIANS to Do The Right Thing on Spending." Another warns "OBAMA wants us to do things HIS WAY? Yes on Issue 2 is our chance to do things OUR WAY."

The Alliance for America's Future, which is not required to disclose its donors, has gotten involved in political issues in about 30 states, including Ohio, Wisconsin and Massachusetts, Bennett said.

Bennett said his group tied President Obama to Issue 2 because opponents of the collective bargaining reforms and the president want to spend and raise taxes, rather than solve fiscal problems.

Meanwhile, at the Columbus Metropolitan Club on Thursday, Democrat Dale Butland of Innovation Ohio squared off against state Sen. Keith Faber, R-Celina, on the merits of SB 5.

Faber described the 302-page bill as a set of reasonable reforms. It will require public workers to pay at least 15 percent toward their health care costs and 10 percent toward their pensions while introducing a merit pay system so that workers are compensated based on job performance and "not how long they sat in a chair," he said.

Butland, a former aide to U.S. Sen. John Glenn, said the bill goes way beyond those talking points: It outlaws strikes, allows management to impose its last offer if the two sides reach impasse, and prohibits unions from negotiating staffing levels.

"It's not about reasonable reform. It's about busting unions and crushing worker rights," he said.

Also Thursday, police and fire union officials denounced a TV ad from Building a Better Ohio, the campaign committee in favor of Issue 2. The 30-second spot used footage from a We Are Ohio anti-Issue 2 ad that features Marlene Quinn, a great grandmother from Cincinnati who opposes Issue 2. Quinn issued a statement that she didn't give them permission to use her words or likeness, and 30 television stations throughout the state pulled the ad.

Columbus police Officer Rob Barrett, who ticketed Republican John Kasich for a traffic violation in January 2008 and was later publicly called an "idiot" by the governor, appeared at the union-sponsored press conference and said that Senate Bill 5 is a slap in the face to public workers and is "downright disrespectful."

"I voted for the guy. I voted for Kasich. I believed it was a fresh start for the state," Barrett said. "Had I known this was what was going happen, I wouldn't have voted for him."

Original article:

<http://www.daytondailynews.com/news/news/national-govt-politics/virginia-group-funding-pro-issue-2-effort/nMwYt/>