

## **AFL-CIO chief vows all-out effort to squash SB 5 'We're going to be there every step of the way,' Trumka pledges**

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BY JOE HALLETT

The Columbus Dispatch

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka today promised that the national union will go all out to help repeal Senate Bill 5 at the Nov. 8 election.

Participating in a roundtable discussion at the Ohio AFL-CIO's downtown headquarters, Trumka portrayed the new law that curtails collective bargaining rights as "an assault on civil rights" that must be stopped.

"We're going to be there every step of the way," Trumka said. "We're providing resources, people, strategy, and the will."

He made his comments about an hour before Secretary of State Jon Husted certified the referendum to repeal Senate Bill 5 for the ballot, reporting that 915,456 valid signatures of Ohio voters had been collected, far exceeding the 231,147 needed.

Trumka declined to reveal how much money the national union plans to commit to the campaign, beyond saying, "We're going to have the resources necessary to fight for the middle class and to preserve a way of life for everybody, to preserve a ladder into the middle class."

On a panel of 17 that included representatives of union veterans groups and retirees, minority organizations and a pair of churches, Trumka assailed Republican Gov. John Kasich and GOP lawmakers for doing the bidding of the rich by passing Senate Bill 5.

"Instead of them creating good jobs and helping put back the unemployed to work so they have a fair chance of getting ahead, they decided to scapegoat public employees, and decided to punish workers that really weren't responsible for the recession and the downturn that we've seen," Trumka said.

He hoisted the front page of today's Dispatch and trumpeted a story about a Quinnipiac University poll showing that if the election were held today Senate Bill 5 would be repealed, 56 percent to 32 percent.

"Our message is starting to get out and it's only the beginning," Trumka said. "Now we really have to drive home the notion that this is about defending the middle class."

But the poll's findings also suggest that Ohioans support parts of Senate Bill 5, including requiring public employees to chip in more for their health-insurance premiums and pensions, and to replace automatic pay increases based on longevity with merit pay for public employees.

Asked whether those findings provide opportunities for backers of Senate Bill 5, Trumka replied: "There's no equivocation, people say it should be repealed because it takes away peoples' ladder into the middle class. They think that this governor and those who supported him overreached. That's what that poll says and it's our job to continue to get the information out."

Ohio AFL-CIO President Tim Burga said the Quinnipiac Poll shows that Ohioans see Senate Bill 5 as "a politically motivated, unprovoked attack on nurses, fire fighters, teachers, all those delivering essential services."

Forecasting the campaign strategy of Senate Bill 5 proponents, Trumka said, "They'll do a tremendously large media buy for the last month or so and try to scare people and they'll distort the truth."

Former Ohio Sen. Eugene Branstool, a Utica Democrat who sponsored Ohio's collective bargaining law 27 years ago, said the law has worked by limiting public employee strikes and providing thousands of equitable contracts between government employers and their workers.

"Believe me, the big time money people with big time money will hire people who know every trick of emotion and deception," Branstool said.

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