



WattsLine from Repr. **Ralph Watts**

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ional updates regarding legislative issues of constituent interest.

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Nothing Fair about Fair Share

Two years ago, after the Democrats took over the Governor's office, the State Senate and the State House, we started getting more labor bills than I had seen previously. The labor unions had put a lot of money into their candidates and they were here for the payoff. One of those bills was the principle called Fair Share. It was passed by the Senate in 2007 and ran aground in the House when several members of the majority party refused to support the measure. After the extreme pressure put on their caucus to support the bill, one of the Democrats changed registration and became a Republican member of the House and was re-elected in 2008 as a Republican. Apparently her constituents appreciated the principled stand that she took. Emboldened by the increase in Democrats after the last election, the measure is being considered again.

Fair Share sounds on the surface like a fair bill. It's anything but fair in a Right to Work state such as Iowa and, in effect, would negate the protections offered by the Right to Work law. What Fair Share would do is to make it mandatory for employees who are part of a work group that is represented by a union to pay union dues, whether that employee desired to be a member or not. In a nutshell, it would be a back door repeal of the Right to Work law. Under that law no person can be compelled to pay dues or belong to a union. It has been on the books since 1947.

In an interesting déjà vu moment, a copy of the February 3, 1959 Mason City Globe Gazette front page was distributed to us Tuesday as a reminder of the tragedy where three rock and roll stars died in a tragic plane crash after performing at the Surf Ballroom in Mason City. On that same front page was a large article that talked about a "fiery debate" in the Iowa House over the Right to Work Law. The Democrats have been trying to repeal, or otherwise get rid of, that particular law for the past fifty years. They have been pushing it hard for a good reason; the membership in unions has been declining over the years.

The reason the unions give for wanting this bill passed is that it will help pay for the costs of supporting those members who do not belong or pay dues to the unions, but they are required to serve. The facts tell a different story. In an article in the Register this week a representative of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) said the forced union dues won't go to cover their costs associated with representing non-paying members, it will go to increased organizing and recruiting.

This is a critical issue for Iowa Taxpayers and the effort spent by unions to get it passed raises another question whether it is time to revisit the issue of public employee unions in Iowa. Since the mid-70's when our current law was passed (Chapter 20) there has been a quantum leap in the cost of state and local government in Iowa. Public employee unions have been successful in organizing most state, county, and local employees and the impact has been a principle reason for taxes of all stripes increasing in the state. I will add that I am not anti-union because there are examples of bad management practices throughout our history that caused the unions to be organized, but like many other issues, there needs to be a balance. Allowing the unions to control our government to the extent they have taken control should be a cause for concern for all Iowa taxpayers.

Legislative Forum: Sat. Feb. 14, 9:30 – 11:00am
Adel Library, Adel, IA
Sen. Jerry Behn and Rep. Ralph Watts