

LETTERS & OPINIONS

COLUMN LEFT

Killing Democracy, One Worker at a Time

BY ALON BARLEVY, PHD,
President, Hubert Humphrey Democratic Club

Like a snake oil salesman, Arnold Schwarzenegger is trying to sell Californians a hoax with Proposition 75, which he calls "Paycheck

Protection." Of course, if Schwarzenegger truly wanted to protect Californians' paychecks from rising healthcare costs and rising costs at the pump, he would have signed into law the increase in the minimum wage. Schwarzenegger's real intentions with Proposition 75 are to protect his corporate cronies who have given him millions of dollars (after he promised that he is wealthy enough to be independent of special-interest money).

Proposition 75 would require unions to get permission from each of their members before making political contributions from members' dues. This may sound good, but this is not how democracy works. In a democratic form of governance, the people take a vote, and the outcome of the vote is binding on all, not just the side that won. Government would not be able function otherwise.

With a 35% approval rating, if George W. Bush had to get permission from all taxpayers before spending our tax dollars in Iraq, he would have had to bring the troops home years ago. If taxes were to be collected only from voters who supported them, the entire government would collapse (conservatives such as Grover Norquist have actually stated such a desire, to shrink the government down to a point where they could "drown it in a bathtub").

The corporate world also acts in a similar manner. When stockholders vote to elect members for the board of directors, they are bound by the decisions that the boardmembers make. If the board chooses to make a political contribution, they do not need to go back to the shareholders and ask each shareholder for permission. Unions operate the same way.

Members vote for the leadership, which then acts in the members' best interest.

So why does Schwarzenegger want to impose such a requirement on unions but not on corporations? Since money is the lifeblood of politics, he knows that by placing restrictions on unions he will put them at a disadvantage when it comes to legislation being passed. But this is only half the story. There is a more sinister plot being hatched here. Republicans are trying to kill our democracy.

In general, corporations tend to support Republicans and unions tend to support Democrats (but not always - Cerritos Mayor John Crawley, a Republican, won union endorsement during the last election). Therefore, restricting money that unions can give will generally weaken the Democratic Party, and prevent voters from having a real choice at the ballot box.

Republicans claim to be in favor of freedom and democracy. Proposition 75, though, shows that, to the Republicans, freedom and democracy are nothing more than empty rhetoric. When it comes down to implementing these concepts, Republicans are actually closer to their old nemeses, the communists. They want only one viable party on the ballot.

Text of Article

Killing Democracy, One Worker at a Time
Alon Barlevy, PhD.
President, Hubert Humphrey Democratic Club

Like a snake oil salesman, Arnold Schwarzenegger is trying to sell Californians a hoax with Proposition 75, which he calls "Paycheck Protection". Of course, if Schwarzenegger truly wanted to protect Californians' paychecks from rising healthcare costs and rising costs at the pump, he would have signed into law the increase in the minimum wage. Schwarzenegger's real intentions with Proposition 75 is to protect his corporate cronies who have given him millions of dollars (after he promised that he is wealthy enough to be independent of special-interest money).

Proposition 75 would require unions to get permission from each members before making political contribution from members' dues. This may sound good, but this is not how democracy works. In a democratic form of governance, the people take a vote, and the outcome of the vote is binding on all, not just the side that won. Government would not be able function otherwise.

With a 35% approval rating, if George W. Bush had to get permission from all tax payers before spending our tax dollars in Iraq, he would have had to bring the troops home years ago. If taxes were to be collected only from voters who supported them, the entire government would collapse (conservatives such as Grover Norquist have actually stated such a desire, to shrink the government down to a point where they could "drown it in a bathtub").

The corporate world also acts in a similar manner. When stockholders vote to elect members for the board of directors, they are bound by the decisions that the board members make. If the board chooses to make a political contribution, they do not need to go back to the shareholders and ask each shareholder for permission. Unions operate the same way. Members vote for the leadership, which then act in the members' best interest.

So why does Schwarzenegger want to impose such a requirement on unions but not on corporations? Since money is the lifeblood of politics, he knows that by placing restrictions on unions he will put them at a disadvantage when it comes to legislation being passes. But this is only half the story. There is a more sinister plot being hatched here. Republicans are trying to kill our democracy.

In general, corporations tend to support Republicans and unions tend to support Democrats (but not always, Cerritos Mayor John Crawley, a Republican, won union endorsement during the last election). Therefore, restricting money that unions can give will generally weaken the Democratic Party, and prevent voters from having a real choice at the ballot box.

Republicans claim to be in favor of freedom and democracy. Proposition 75, though, shows that to the Republicans, freedom and democracy are nothing more than empty rhetoric. When it comes down to implementing these concepts, Republicans are actually closer to their old nemeses, the communists. They want only one viable party on the ballot..