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House Bill 235 - Forced Unionization for Refineries Means Higher Gas Prices

Our country was founded on the principles of opportunity, individual freedom and less government control. The ideals of less government and free markets have been successful strategies in American competitiveness for more than 200 years.

Yet Ohio lawmakers are considering legislation – Ohio House Bill 235 – that could tip the scales, choose winners and losers and allow for additional government control.

House Bill 235 would write into law specific hiring practices for privately-owned oil refineries, limiting who they can hire by mandating ratios of apprentice-trained employees. Even more concerning, it would establish a precedent in law to allow for future government control and overreach in any industry. No matter if it is a refinery or a lemonade stand, the government has no business mandating private employers hire certain employees in specified quotas. Today it is refineries, but tomorrow it could be any other industry if we let House Bill 235 pass.

Adding insult to injury, HB 235 hides a government power-grab behind the guise of improved safety and worker training. In reality, refineries are already highly regulated for safety at the local, state and federal levels. In 2020, the Ohio injury and illness incidence rates for petroleum and coal products manufacturing was 5th lowest of all manufacturing industries at only 1.4 cases per 100 full time workers, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In contrast, food manufacturing in Ohio more than doubled that rate at 3.5 cases per 100 and the forging and stamping sector ranked at 5 cases per 100 employees, which is triple the rate found in the fuel refining sector. It is abundantly clear that safety is merely a false pretense for forced unionization in this bill.

House Bill 235 is essentially a backdoor attempt at forced unionization, creating government-mandated quotas of employees who must have attended approved apprenticeship programs, at a time when Ohio faces crippling workforce shortages.

According to ApprenticeOhio – a publicly funded council that tracks apprenticeships in Ohio – there were 12,932 active construction apprentices in Ohio as of February of this year and 9,787 of those were union based – a 76 percent rate translates into a protected-status of more than three-quarters of the job opportunities. While the bill claims to prioritize worker safety and education, it in fact favors pro-union interests more than traditional tradesmanship, on-the-job experience and practical training.

Quotas, bureaucracy and burdensome compliance costs do nothing to improve worker safety and ultimately translate to higher prices. As gas prices are increasing, additional mandates will cost all of us at the pump.

The indirect costs of HB 235 hinder free enterprise, limit energy independence and punish private business, while giving a free pass to unions and increasing bureaucracy. We urge the legislature to say no to more government mandates, say no to forced unionization and vote no on House Bill 235.

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