HAWAII CARD CHECK BILL PASSES GOVERNOR’S VETO

Both the Hawaii House (39-8) and Senate (19-6) vote to override the Republican governor’s veto of a bill (H.B. 952) that would make it easier for certain workers in the state to organize unions. Gov. Linda Lingle (R) vetoed the bill on July 4, but the legislature reconvened to override the veto. The bill originally was passed by the House and Senate, both of which are controlled by Democrats.

The bill is similar to the proposed Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 1409, S. 560), which was introduced in Congress earlier this year. The Hawaii legislation, which goes into effect immediately, requires the Hawaii Labor Relations Board (HLRB) to certify a union as the representative of a bargaining unit if a majority of workers in that unit sign authorization cards. In addition, the law mandates that the parties begin bargaining no later than 10 days from the time a union is certified as a representative.

The HLRB has jurisdiction only over state and local government employees, certain agricultural workers and other workers not under the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Board. The legislation specifies that it only applies to businesses with an annual gross revenue of more than $5 million. In essence, it only applies to workers at eight large agricultural firms who do business in Hawaii, according to Jason Bradshaw, political director for the Hawaii AFL-CIO. Bradshaw says the state labor federation was pleased that the veto was overridden, but that the latest version had been watered down since the time it initially was proposed. Originally, Bradshaw says, the law would have applied to smaller agricultural employers, in addition to those with at least $5 million in revenue.

Gov. Lingle says that the legislature’s override is “detrimental to Hawaii and its residents. Now is the time State legislators should be showing leadership rather than making it harder to create jobs in the private sector.”