



## 6 Bills You Should Know About

Organized labor reclaimed its political leverage in the wake of the 2006 elections, but it hasn't scored ultimate success due to a razor-thin margin of pro-business Senators, and a President with veto pen in hand. What will next month's elections mean for the labor agenda? Here are a few labor policy bills currently under consideration.

### **S.2514 Standing Minimum Wage Earners Act (Sen. Clinton D-NY)**

One of the first acts of the new Congress was an increase in the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour. This legislation sponsored by Sen. Clinton (and cosponsored by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid) would raise the minimum wage again to \$9.50 and then index it each year. Democratic leadership cites the minimum wage increase in the 110th Congress as one of their major accomplishments and may push for another increase early in the next Congress.

### **H.R. 2831 Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (Rep. George Miller, D-CA)**

This bill fell just three votes short of passage in the Senate this past April. The bill seeks to reverse a 2007 Supreme Court decision regarding when an employee can file a claim of wage discrimination. The bill essentially restarts the clock on the statute of limitations every time an employee is paid, would allow an employee to wait until they had taken a new job or retired to file a discrimination claim, and could also apply to pensions, annuities, or for any workplace benefit that is considered compensation for work performed.

### **H.R. 2049, S.1244 Protecting America's Workers Act (Rep. Woolsey, D-CA, Sen. Kennedy, D-MA)**

This bill would make a number of changes to OSHA including covering workers not currently covered. Under this legislation, there would be new criminal penalties for "willful violations" and minimum penalties for violations would be increased. Sen. Kennedy is the Chairman of the Senate committee

that governs OSHA and his support of the bill indicates that it could be a priority in the next Congress, especially since it has 71 cosponsors in the House and 24 in the Senate.

### **H.R. 2693 Popcorn Workers Lung Disease Prevention Act, H.R. 5522 Combustible Dust Explosion & Fire Prevention Act**

While neither of these bills are specifically aimed at the printing industry, they represent a dramatic shift in how OSHA regulates business. Typically, OSHA undertakes a rigorous scientific process to formulate regulations that include input from business. Both of these bills bypass that constructive process to formulate regulations that include input from business. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, seems intent on passing bills that direct OSHA to issue regulations without going through the current policy making process. Both of these bills were in response to specific workplace accidents; such reactive legislation could lead to an OSHA that is constantly forced to issue new regulations in a knee-jerk fashion. What's also worrisome is the fact that both of these bills passed the House by wide margins.

### **H.R. 1369 Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (Rep. Maloney, D-NY)**

This bill, along with dozens of other bills intended to expand FMLA benefits, would extend FMLA to cover worksites with 25 employees, as opposed to the 50 currently required for FMLA. Also, the bill would set up pilot projects for paid family leave, a first step to mandating paid leave on a nationwide basis.

Printing Industries Alliance will continue to keep members advised about the status of these bills.