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Group aims to end collective bargaining for public employees

A Santa Barbara-based organization that wants to **end union representation of California government employees** has revved up its campaign contribution collection machinery for a run at putting the idea to a statewide vote.

Although Secretary of State records indicate that **Californians for Public Union Reform** hasn't reported that it has taken in any money yet -- it just filed with the state last week -- it is positioning itself to accept contributions with an aim toward putting **an initiative on the ballot next year**.

Lanny Ebenstein, UC Santa Barbara economist, head of the **California Center for Public Policy** and president of the **Santa Barbara County Taxpayers Association** is named in the state filing as the reform group's treasurer.

If his name seems familiar, it's probably because Ebenstein authored "Reforming Public Employee Compensation and Pensions," a report that purported to show that California public employees' pay and benefits are "unjust." We told you about the report in this blog post.

We spoke to Ebenstein a few weeks ago. His group wants to put up a ballot measure that would **end collective bargaining for all city, county, regional and state employees in California**. The reason, he says, is that **unions have too much influence** and the pay and perks their members receive are **leeching money from government services**, like education.

There is precedent for this: At least 18 states forbid collective bargaining for some categories of government workers, according to the Wall Street Journal. **Virginia** and **North Carolina** prohibit it for all public employees. And GOP governors in **Wisconsin** and **Ohio** are threatening to change state collective bargaining laws if they don't get union concessions.

Of course, **the reverse also is true**: More states allow public employee collective bargaining than don't, and it's

not yet clear what will happen in Wisconsin and Ohio.

Ebenstein figures it will take at least **\$1 million** to collect enough signatures to qualify a measure for the ballot. When asked whether he can raise that much money, plus more for campaign ads, Ebenstein said he believes that moneyed interests in Santa Barbara and elsewhere will step up.

Posted by **Jon Ortiz**
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