

March 1, 2007  
Progressive Ponderings  
"Swiftboating"

When I first got involved in politics in the 1960s it concerned a state issue we felt strongly about. To better prepare myself I purchased a book regarding politics written by a major university Political Science Professor. I can't remember the book's name or the author any more but I haven't forgotten the main message: "We have to make it politically possible and feasible for legislators, governors, presidents and all elected officials to vote for the issues we advance. We have to support them in their votes and do the grassroots work to sway public opinion to a favorable position."

Recently two Minnesota Congressmen echoed that political wisdom. Last week 7<sup>th</sup> District Congressman Colin Peterson stated that he received over 100 calls and letters criticizing him for voting against the President's troop escalation in Iraq and only two thanking him for his position. On Monday of this week the SE Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers met with Rep. Tim Walz of the 1<sup>st</sup> District. His plea was the same, "Write me, call my office, e-mail. Don't let me hang out there on my own. I have to know there's support for my positions."

Electing officials favorable to our positions isn't enough. We must do the grassroots work that will encourage and allow them to vote for the positions on which we elected them. Opposition lobbyists outnumber Congressmen and Congresswomen over 10 to 1 in Washington and they work 7/24.

An example of this occurred this week in Minnesota District One. The U.S. House is currently considering House Bill #800, the Employees Free Choice Act. It may be voted on today, Thursday, March 1, 2007. Yesterday morning we heard an advertisement on radio sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In the ad the Chamber claimed that Rep. Walz and this Bill was going to take away the workers' right to vote and their right to privacy. It stated employees shouldn't be subjected to "coercion" and "intimidation" by union "bosses." Further, it told workers to rely on the National Labor Relations Board to conduct union representative elections.

Unbelievable! The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is advocating use of the NLRB which they've taken over and gutted and which currently refuses to enforce labor laws.

Unbelievable! Employers who have intimidated and coerced workers since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution are attempting to transfer their hardness of heart to union officials who have worked to protect labors' rights.

Unbelievable! Chamber members who have used their power to scare, coerce, intimidate, threaten, and discipline now try to paint unions with their own immorality.

Unbelievable! The U. S. Chamber of Commerce dressing itself in labor rights. Hypocrisy knows no bounds.

It all follows the "swiftboat principle" – spend tons of money at the last minute before a Congressional vote or an election so that opposition won't have time to react. This maneuver is meant to thwart democracy.

Constant contact with our elected officials and support for them when they truly represent us is necessary for democracy to survive. Call your representatives or Senators even if – especially if – it's just to say "Thanks."

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