

Fourth time shouldn't be a charm

Measure 64 would hit not just unions, but charities such as United Way, too

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If you believe, as Bill Sizemore does, that public employee unions are the root of all evil, you'll probably vote for Ballot Measure 64. But before you set out to spank the unions, ask yourself if you also want to punish United Way, the Humane Society or food banks across the state.

Measure 64 would prohibit public agencies from performing payroll deductions for their employees if the money would be used for "political purposes." In effect, this would end the ability of unions to easily collect contributions from their members to the unions' political action funds.

Never mind that such contributions are voluntary — union members can opt out if they wish. Sizemore and his biggest backer, Nevada multimillionaire Loren Parks, want to restrict the unions' ability to engage in political activity.

But Measure 64 wouldn't affect just unions. Many charitable organizations, including United Way, rely on payroll deductions to fill their coffers, and they sometimes engage in political activity.

Sizemore says he included an exemption for lobbying to address this concern. but United Way and other organizations are not convinced. They say the measure is so broadly worded that it could threaten activities such as food drives conducted in government offices.

Sloppy wording is a hallmark of Sizemore's measures. In some cases, it's clear no one even bothered to proofread them before submitting them.

Not only does Measure 64 threaten the ability of charitable organizations to raise funds or conduct food drives on public property, it would even restrict the use of meeting rooms in public buildings.

As we read the measure, no group or organization, union-related or otherwise, could use a public meeting room — say, in a public library — to collect or help collect funds for a political purpose, even if the group paid rent for the room.

Sizemore has put measures very similar to this one on the ballot three times before. Each time, voters defeated them.

We recommend telling Sizemore no once again, although we have little confidence he'll get the message.

