

News - U.S. House of Representatives

EDUCATION & THE WORKFORCE COMMITTEE DEMOCRATS
Congressman George Miller, Ranking Member

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REP. MILLER TO FORCE HOUSE TO VOTE

ON PRESIDENT'S GULF COAST WAGE CUT

Invokes never-before-used parliamentary procedure to force vote

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep. George Miller (D-CA) and other House Democrats today employed an unprecedented parliamentary procedure that will force the House to vote by November 4 on whether or not to overturn President Bush's Gulf Coast wage cut
<<http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats/katrinainlocalwages.html>> .

In September, the President issued a proclamation suspending the 1931 Davis-Bacon Act for workers in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. Davis-Bacon requires federal contractors to pay construction workers the locally prevailing wage
<<http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats/katrinawageinfo2.html>> for their job function. Suspending the law, as Bush has done at the request of 35 House Republicans and Republican activist Grover Norquist, means that federal contractors can pay workers less than they would usually have to pay for the same work and with no obligation to pass any savings on to federal taxpayers.

Miller introduced legislation in September to overturn the President's proclamation. Every single Democratic lawmaker in the House (as well as one independent) has co-sponsored the bill but not one Republican has done so.

Now, Miller is finally able to force a vote in the House on the wage cut issue. Miller today introduced a Joint Resolution under the 1976 National Emergencies Act, which provides for fast track action by Congress when the President unilaterally suspends a law, as he did with Davis-Bacon. Although the National Emergencies Act is nearly 30 years old, this is the first time that a lawmaker has ever invoked its fast track procedures. By law, Congress must act on Miller's Joint Resolution within 15 calendar days - in this case, by November 4.

"This extraordinary action is necessary because the Republican leadership is failing to fulfill its responsibility to investigate the wages being paid in the Gulf and to honor the will of at least half of the members of the House that oppose the President's wage cut to hard-working Americans helping to rebuild roads, bridges, schools and hospitals," said Miller, the senior Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee that oversees the nation's wage and labor laws. Miller noted that 37 Republicans have written to the President opposing his suspension of the Act.

"The President has exploited a national tragedy to cut workers' wages, a long-sought goal among his right-wing cronies," Miller said. "The prevailing wages along the Gulf Coast were already among the lowest in the country. How does the President think that \$11.01 per hour is too much to pay a dump truck driver in New Orleans or that \$7.45 an hour is too much to pay a pipe layer in Mississippi? It is amazing that the President and Republicans in Congress see no problem with awarding billion-dollar no-bid contracts to cronies like Halliburton, but think that local workers in the Gulf struggling to get back on their feet after Katrina are being overpaid."

Miller's resolution applies only to the President's Davis-Bacon suspension, and has no effect on any other Katrina-related disaster relief actions undertaken by the Bush Administration. The resolution must also be introduced in the Senate. If the House and Senate pass the resolution, it would be sent to the President for his consideration.

Visit <http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats/katrinlocalwages.html> for background information on President Bush's Gulf Coast wage cut.

www.house.gov/georgemiller