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House of Representatives

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

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MEMORANDUM

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Doug Reichley

DATE: March 25, 2011

SUBJECT: Co-sponsorship Memo: Require a Secret Ballot Vote by School Employees to Authorize a Strike (Prior HB 1334)

In the coming weeks, I plan to re-introduce a bill to require that school district employees conduct a strike authorization vote by secret ballot. My bill would amend the Public School Code of 1949 to require that a secret ballot vote be conducted at a meeting of the labor organization at which a majority of members are present, and the legislation states that proxies may not be used to establish a majority. The vote would have to be conducted within 72 hours prior to the effective date of the commencement of the strike.

Current law does not require a secret ballot vote, and there are situations where strike authorization votes are made by public declaration of members. I believe this type of vote leads to individuals being intimidated or succumbing to peer pressure when they vote. I believe that there is no more fair means of determining the true will of individuals than allowing them to vote in a manner that keeps their vote confidential.

It is a sad fact that Pennsylvania leads the nation in school strikes, with an average of 12 per year from 2000-2007 (equating it 60% of all strikes in nation). Various proposals have been introduced over the years to prevent teacher strikes, and none have been signed into law; this is a difficult issue. I believe my bill is a common sense measure that could lead to fewer strikes.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact my assistant Kendra Wiederhold at 787-1000 or at kwiederh@pahousegop.com.