

Saturday, March 21, 2009

More

News, Quotes, Companies, Videos

SEARCH

BUSINESS

GET 2 WEEKS FREE SUBSCRIBE NOW! THE PRINT JOURNAL THE ONLINE JOURNAL Log In Register for FREE

U.S. Edition Today's Paper Video Columns Blogs Graphics Journal Community

Home World U.S. Business Markets Tech Personal Finance Life & Style Opinion Careers Real Estate Small Business

Asia Europe Earnings Economy Health Law Autos Management Media & Marketing More Industries Columns & Blogs

TOP STORIES IN Business

1 of 10 Barclays Will Fund iShares Sale

2 of 10 Mack Took No Bonus in Fiscal '08

3 of 10 Patent Ruling Sets Back Drug Firms

Goldman Hed

BUSINESS | MARCH 21, 2009

Three Companies to Back Proposal on Union Bill

Article

Comments (1)

MORE IN BUSINESS »

By KRIS MAHER

Three big retailers are expected to back an alternative proposal next week on a hotly contested bill that would make it easier to unionize workplaces, a move some experts said would bolster the legislation's chance of passage.

Costco Wholesale Corp., Starbucks Corp. and Whole Foods Market Inc. are supporting the alternative proposal, according to someone familiar with the effort. Ray Krupin, a management labor lawyer in Washington said the most likely compromise would allow employees to unionize if 70% of them sign union-authorization cards, as opposed to 50% as currently proposed in the Employee Free Choice Act.

It's unclear, however, whether the proposal addresses a thorny section of the bill that would have a government arbitrator draw up a contract if unions and companies can't agree to terms within 120 days.

"We have had conversations with like-minded companies and are open to exploring alternative solutions to the legislation as it is currently written," said Deb Trevino, a spokeswoman for Starbucks.

Libba Letton, a spokeswoman for Whole Foods, said, "We've been having conversations with other companies that have the same outlook that we do. We've been talking to them about finding fair alternatives."

A Costco representative couldn't immediately be reached for comment.

A person close to the companies said the proposal will be fair to all sides.

The bill is organized labor's top legislative priority and has the support of the White House and Democrats in Congress. But it is strongly opposed by most major corporations and industry trade groups.

Julia Wanzco, a spokeswoman for Republican Sen. Olympia Snowe of Maine, said, "We are aware there is a proposal being shopped around and details will be unveiled early next week." She said no one on the senator's staff had formally met with representatives of the three companies and didn't know details of the proposal.

The anticipated proposal was condemned by some business groups. "These huge companies are selling out hundreds of thousands of small ones under the guise of making some phony and misguided compromise with Big Labor," said Mark Mix, president of the National Right to Work Committee, which has been campaigning against the bill. "We believe we have this draconian bill defeated outright, so these actions may well lead to the bill's passage."

Stewart Acuff, special assistant to the president of the AFL-CIO, said the labor federation hasn't been involved with any companies in crafting a compromise on the bill. "What we have heard consistently from the business community is that there is no compromise," he said. "We expect to pass it the way it's written now."

President Barack Obama signaled in January that he is open to hearing compromise proposals on the Employee Free Choice Act. White House spokesman Tommy Vietor declined to comment on whether the administration was involved in crafting a middle ground.

Write to Kris Maher at kris.maher@wsj.com

KONICA MINOLTA
The Future Is Here
A new future shaped by technology
Read on! →

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
STAY CONNECTED 24/7 VIA EMAIL NEWSLETTERS & ALERTS FROM WSJ.COM
FREE Registration
Sign up Today



Sponsored Links
U.S. Courts Former Afghan
Waive Your Debt
 Cut debt in as little as a year at Freedom Debt relief. Guaranteed.
www.freedomdebtrelief.com

America's Tire
 More Choices & Low Prices at your local store - Official Site
www.AmericasTire.com

Get Out Of Debt Today
 Too Many Bills? Get Help Now! Debt Relief Programs Reviewed & Ranked.
www.TopConsumerReviews.com



Can 3-D Save Hollywood?



The Dunk That Made History



HBO Tries No Sex, New
Constitutionary
Depression
 3:11



Underwater Volcano
Blows Near Tonga
Other Wall Street
 1:44

More in Business

- U.S. Sets Plan for Toxic Assets
- Community Bankers Gather, and Vent
- Chrysler Asks Dealers to Lobby D.C.
- IBM Scrubs Sun Micro's Contracts
- Patent Ruling Sets Back Drug Firms

Most Popular

Read Emailed Video Commented

1. **On Leno, Obama Reacts Coolly To Bill**
2. **Opinion: Neither A Hedgehog Nor A Fox**
3. **Breaking Apple's Grip On The iPhone**
4. **House Passes Bonus Tax Bill**
5. **Obama Makes History With 'Leno' Appearance**

Most Read Articles Feed

Subscribe Now for Full Access to WSJ.com and Get

2 WEEKS FREE

SUBSCRIBE NOW

WSJ Subscriber's content provides:

- **Personalized** tracking of industries
- **Heard on the Street:** up-to-the-minute news and analysis that affects the markets and industries
- **Core business news:** "What's News" and new "Management" section

Tired of Being Tired?
 Fight Fatigue and Support Immune System

Lance Armstrong

Try It Now FRS healthy energy

[BACK TO TOP](#)

WSJ.com Account:
[My Account](#)
[Setup Center](#)
[Subscriber Billing Info](#)

Create an Account:
[Register for Free](#)
[Subscribe Now](#)

Help & Information Center:
[Help](#)
[Customer Service](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[New on WSJ.com](#)
[Tour the new Journal](#)

About:
[News Licensing](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Conferences](#)
[About Dow Jones](#)
[Privacy Policy - Updated](#)
[Subscriber Agreement & Terms of Use - Updated](#)
[Copyright Policy](#)
[Jobs at WSJ.com](#)

WSJ.com:
[Site Map](#)
[Home](#)
[World](#)
[U.S.](#)
[Business](#)
[Markets](#)
[Market Data](#)
[Tech](#)
[Personal Finance](#)
[Life & Style](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Autos](#)
[Careers](#)
[Real Estate](#)
[Small Business](#)
[Corrections](#)

Tools & Formats:
[Today's Paper](#)
[Video Center](#)
[Graphics](#)
[Columns](#)
[Blogs](#)
[Alerts](#)
[Newsletters](#)
[Mobile](#)
[Podcasts](#)
[RSS Feeds](#)
[Journal Community](#)
[Forums](#)
[My Online Journal](#)

Digital Network
[WSJ.com](#)
[Marketwatch.com](#)
[Barrons.com](#)
[SmartMoney.com](#)
[AllThingsD.com](#)
[FiLife.com](#)
[BigCharts.com](#)
[Virtual Stock Exchange](#)
[WSJ U.S. Edition](#)
[WSJ Asia Edition](#)
[WSJ Europe Edition](#)
 Foreign Language Editions:
[WSJ Chinese](#)
[WSJ Portuguese](#)
[WSJ Spanish](#)

Copyright ©2009 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved