



Abandon this day-care 'union' scheme

If you received an unemployment check, do you think that qualifies you as a member of some kind of "unemployed union"? Would you expect the state, on your behalf, to deduct money from your payment to unionize you against some obscure agency that the state itself created?

Ridiculous, right? Well, it appears the Granholm administration has created a similar scheme with day-care providers who receive payments from the state to watch the children of the needy.

And when the Legislature tried to short-circuit this scheme by eliminating state funding for the obscure agency, the Department of Human Services kept right on going, using money from another account.

In an explanation to Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, DHS Director Ismael Ahmed said the state had entered into an "interlocal agreement" to provide services, thereby obligating DHS to fund the obscure agency — the Michigan Home Based Child Care Council — regardless of what the Legisla-

OUR POINT IS...

How can a home-based day-care provider unionize against anyone?

ture wanted.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm and her team are on the shakiest of ground. The work of DHS is too important to have it embroiled in such a political scheme.

These day-care providers are not state employees. They are independent contractors using their homes to provide a service. How can they form a union? Who are they unionizing against?

Who is the "employer?"

It just so happens that the state provides users of the service — needy families — with subsidies. That's a public policy, not a mediation of the employment market.

The state also provides a homestead exemption on property taxes — a lucrative one. Does that mean the state should create

an agency to help homeowners organize a union against the local governments and assessors involved in determining the value of and taxes on a dwelling?

Some of the day-care providers, backed by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, are suing against the dues. In a filing to the Michigan Supreme Court, they say dues collection started in January 2009 and may have raised as much as \$3.7 million in that year alone.

If the Granholm administration wants to discuss payment rates or working conditions in day care, fine. It should be pointed out though that the state already exercises licensing and regulatory powers over the field.

But collecting union dues from subsidy payments by using an "interlocal agreement" appears to be nothing more than a ploy to advance a particular group's interests without the messy involvement of the Legislature or the people of this state.

Shaky ground, governor, shaky ground.

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