

‘NIGHT KNIGHT: UNIONS SHED LIGHT ON REP

In State Legislature and Congress, Knight Has Voted Against Building Trades

BY LESLIE BERKMAN

Determined to hold Republican Congressman Steve Knight accountable for his harsh anti-labor voting record, the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, which includes the Building Trades, has partnered with community organizations in an unprecedented drive to get the word out on the Republican incumbent in the Antelope Valley, historically a GOP bastion.

Knight, up for re-election in 2018 in the 25th Congressional District, holds one of 24 seats that make up the Republican majority in the House.

“The Los Angeles Federation of Labor opposes Knight because of his long history of taking anti-working-class positions,” said Tracy Zeluff, president of Groundworks Campaigns, which is organizing the Federation’s campaign to hold Knight accountable. Of special concern to the Building Trades, Knight’s anti-worker position goes back to when he served in the state legislature, before being elected to Congress in 2014. In Sacramento, he voted against two of the most important safety and job-creating measures for the Trades: Senate Bills 7 and 54.

Disregard for our Members

“We needed every vote we could get on those bills,” noted Robbie Hunter, President of the State Building and Construction Trades Council. “Many of our members live in Knight’s district. He showed disregard for them and their families when he voted against those bills.”

Labor officials said Knight’s voting record has shown a consistent lack of compassion for working families. The Federation campaign, focused on educating Knight’s constituents, will spotlight Knight’s recent support of the tax bill adopted by the House of Representatives that disproportionately harms middle-class workers and homeowners in high-cost and high-tax states like California.

“Plenty of people don’t know he is a Republican and don’t know his track record in voting 98 percent in favor of what Trump and the Republican leaders put forward,” against the interests of those he represents, Zeluff said.

She said that although three House Republicans from California—Reps. Tom McClintock of Elk Grove, Dana Rohrabacher of Costa Mesa and Darrell Issa of Vista—voted



Rep. Steve Knight in his Washington, D.C. office.

against the House version of the tax plan because it would increase taxes on their constituents, Knight voted in lock step with the Republican majority.

The House bill would give large tax cuts to big corporations and the super wealthy while increasing the taxes of many middle-income Californians.

Also, by adding \$1 trillion to the national debt over 10 years, the proposed federal tax reform would force an automatic \$25 billion per year in cuts to Medicare, Zeluff said.

Zeluff ticked off some unpalatable stands on labor issues that Knight has taken in his political career:

- Opposed increasing the minimum wage, paid sick leave, overtime pay, and Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements.
- Voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with the Republican plan that would have left more than 20 million Americans without healthcare coverage.
- Said he does not believe immigration reform needs to provide any type of pathway to legal residency or citizenship.
- Opposed federal regulation of greenhouse gas emissions and said California’s Warming Solutions Act of 2006 was “killing California’s economy.”

Voted Against Safety Bill

A graduate of Palmdale High School, Knight, 51, worked 18 years for the Los Angeles Police Department and won election to the Palmdale City Council. In 2008 he ran successfully for the State Assembly in the 36th district. In 2012 he won election to the 21st State Senate district, where he served until he was elected in 2014 to the first of two terms in Congress.

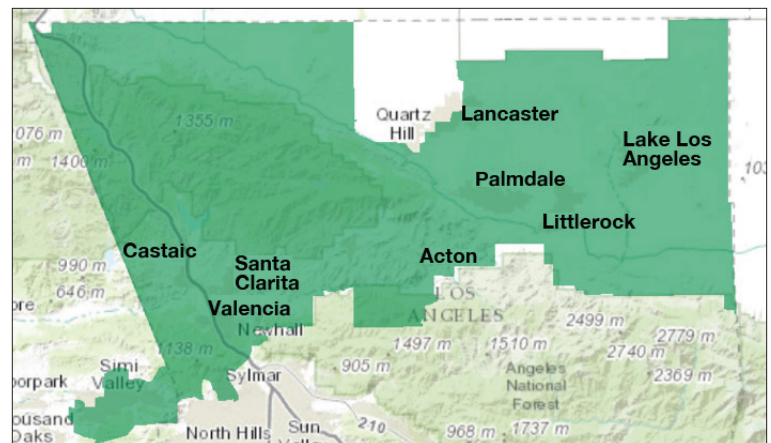
Over the years, Knight “has had plenty

of opportunities to stand with construction workers in California and in the United States and repeatedly he has voted against our interests,” said Chris Hannan, Los Angeles County representative for the LA/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council.

In 2013 the state legislature passed SB 54, a bill labor supported that sought to improve safety at California refineries by requiring those who perform a high percentage of the most complex and dangerous jobs to have graduated from state-approved apprenticeship programs. Knight voted against the bill.

Opposed Prevailing Wage

That same year, Hannan said, Knight voted against a key bill spearheaded by the California Building Trades, SB 7, which closed a loophole that had allowed lowball contractors to avoid paying prevailing wage on public works projects in California charter cities. The legislation was enacted despite Knight’s opposition.



The 25th Congressional District includes Lancaster, Palmdale and Santa Clarita.

In Congress, Knight took yet another stand against the jobs of construction workers, Hannan said, when he voted for an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for the 2018 fiscal year. The amendment would have altered the process of setting wage rates under the Davis-Bacon Act in a way that would have significantly slashed wages and benefits for American construction workers on Defense Department projects, according to North America’s Building Trades Unions. The amendment ultimately failed.

“Steve Knight is terrible for American workers regardless of party affiliation,” said Hannan, noting that Building Trades membership includes Republicans as well as

Democrats.

Devin Osiri, political director for the federation, said in the last couple of years population growth in the Antelope Valley has given Democrats for the first time a slight edge in voter registration over Republicans. While that could make Knight more vulnerable to a Democratic challenger, Osiri said, the Antelope Valley also has large number of voters who decline to state a party affiliation but lean Republican.

“It is unprecedented that labor groups in partnership with community groups are trying to dislodge an incumbent in the Antelope Valley,” Osiri observed.

Another obstacle the campaign must overcome, he said, is the strong local name recognition that benefits Knight. He follows in the political footsteps of his late father, William John “Pete” Knight, a celebrated Air Force veteran and Palmdale’s first elected mayor.

The federation has opened two offices, one in Santa Clarita and the second in Palmdale,

where it is running the information campaign, with a goal of bringing the anti-worker votes to light. Osiri said the federation is unlikely endorse any of the several candidates running in the June primary but will “circle the wagons” in support of the pro-labor candidate after the primary. That candidate will take on Knight in November.

The campaign is seeking volunteers to walk precincts and work on phone banks. “I highly encourage residents of the 25th Congressional District to volunteer on getting the information out on Congressman Steve Knight’s terrible record. It is always more powerful when local volunteers are talking to their neighbors,” Hannan said.