We are nearing the end of the parliamentary process of the controversial Trade Union Bill and thanks to the collective work of trade unions and other partners who took part in the mass lobby of parliament, organised public and workplace meetings, rallies, street stalls and campaigned with us during heart unions week, we have achieved a huge amount so far.

On the 16th March, members of the House of Lords voted to defeat the government three times inside three hours during the report stage debate for the trade union bill. We defeated the government on; a review into electronic balloting and the recommendations of the select committee into political funding, including making opt-in mandatory only for new joiners and powers to cap facility time.

**And more concessions...**

Last week we saw some even more dramatic developments, with the government heading off potential defeats on new amendments with further concessions. We saw the government concede on check-off – allowing unions to carry on with check-off where we pay the costs to the employer. This is a very significant concession. It would have cost unions dearly in both adjustment costs and lost memberships due to people falling through the gaps in the move to the new system.

We also saw government promises on the changes in the role of the union regulatory body. The government conceded further safeguards on the appointment and activities of the Certification Officer – that they will be free from ministerial direction and appointed by the OCPA, and that the levy on unions will only pay for part of the costs of the CO, excluding the more expensive costs of any external investigators.

Today, will see Peers debate the third reading of the bill which takes into account the changes made at report stage and gives the government a chance to come back with further changes to deal with concerns raised throughout the Lords’ stages.

And on Wednesday MPs will convene for what is known as the “ping-pong” stages, where the government defeats from the Lords are looked at again and the government decides whether to accept the Lords’ changes or push on and force the original proposals through.

At the TUC, we remain opposed to the bill, even as amended by the government and Lords. It’s unnecessary, anti-democratic and unfair - with a focus on eroding union membership and reducing all workers’ abilities to do anything about unfair treatment at work and protect their terms and conditions.

Now is the time to ask workers to get back in touch with their MP. We need to make sure we can still count on all opposition MPs as strongly as we were able to during the Commons stages.

We need to ask them to uphold the Lords amendments, and then vote against the Bill in its entirety. In particular, it’s critical that we reach every Conservative MP.

Add your voice at: [www.goingtowork.org.uk](http://www.goingtowork.org.uk)

Beth Farhat

Regional Secretary, TUC