



measure that would allow parents to use vouchers to pay for private school for their children. In their usual attire of tea party T-shirts, "Don't Tread on Me" pins, and American-flag scarves and hats, the activists promised Arney that they would back the bill.

Six months after helping tea-party-backed candidates sweep to power in the House on a single-minded platform of cutting government spending, FreedomWorks has shifted its focus to the states, where the group is using its considerable clout to push a fresh crop of Republican lawmakers to back a number of longtime conservative causes. The group's goal isn't just to push those causes but also to keep activists engaged enough to enter 2012 with a grass-roots

one that played such a dramatic role last year.

In addition to the school-choice bill in Pennsylvania, FreedomWorks has helped push for major curtailments of union collective-bargaining rights in a number of states, including Ohio and Wisconsin.

A Washington-based free-market advocacy group that has been around for more than a quarter-century, FreedomWorks was one of the first national organizations to recognize the potential power of the tea party, in early 2009. Today, a small crop of freshmen in Congress owe much of their political success to FreedomWorks, and so do a vast army of activists nationwide whom the organization courted, trained and supplied with campaign materials throughout 2010. Keeping both groups intact is the priority now.

"If we don't win in the next two years, if we don't win in the states, we will grievously undermine our ability to win at the national level," Arney told the crowd of activists in Pittsburgh.

The day after his speech there, Arney drove to Harrisburg, where he breezed through the halls of Pennsylvania's Capitol, cowboy hat in hand, visiting with senior Republican lawmakers and even not-so-senior ones to let them know why the school-choice bill is important to him and thousands of Pennsylvania voters.

Arney buttonholed Rep. Brian Ellis, from a suburban district in Butler County, as he strode up the steps of the state Capitol. Arney had met dozens of Ellis's constituents at the conference the day before, he said — and they wanted Ellis to vote for school choice.

Ellis listened nervously as Arney spoke, all too aware of the power of the tea party movement — and FreedomWorks — to target lawmakers who vote the wrong way. Ellis would "absolutely" take a closer look at the bill, he promised Arney as the two shook hands.

It wasn't long ago that the idea of pushing a school-choice bill through the legislature in Penn-

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