

Newsletter piece

Why We Need the Employee Free Choice Act

Thanks in large part to the efforts of union volunteers around the country, working families won a strong victory on Nov. 4, sending Barack Obama to the White House and electing a stronger pro-worker majority of senators and representatives.

However, winning an election isn't the end of the fight. Now, our elected leaders need to tackle the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. They have to keep their promises to the people who voted for them—and we have to give them the support they need to make the tough choices. We need an economic recovery package that will turn around this broken economy for working families with good jobs, green jobs, re-regulation of our financial system and health care that works for all of us. But no matter what else we do, it won't result in real shared prosperity unless we restore workers' freedom to form unions so they can bargain for a better life with better wages and benefits. That's what this proposed legislation, the Employee Free Choice Act, will do. The Employee Free Choice Act will:

- Put real teeth in the laws that are supposed to bar companies from intimidating, harassing—even firing—workers who want to form unions.
- Allow workers to form their union when a majority signs cards indicating that's what they desire.
- Require arbitration to end corporate foot-dragging when workers try to get a first contract.

The Employee Free Choice Act will level the playing field that today leaves all the power in the hands of corporations, not workers.

And Big Business and the front groups set up by corporations are preparing an all-out, \$200 million propaganda and lobbying war to block it.

Unions have made passage of the Employee Free Choice Act a top priority for this year because it is the key to good wages, benefits, a voice in the workplace and the amplified political voice unions bring workers. In 2007, the U.S. House passed the measure and it had majority support in the Senate, but a minority killed it with a filibuster, emboldened by President George W. Bush's promise to veto the legislation. Now we have elected a new Congress that has promised to be beside us in this fight and a president who has promised to sign the Employee Free Choice Act.

Here are the facts on why we need the Employee Free Choice Act:

Working families are struggling. For too long, workers haven't had the power to get their fair share of the value they create. Workers are finding it harder and harder to stay in our homes, pay for our health care and save for our retirement. And our economy is suffering as a result.

Unions make people's lives better. The freedom to form unions and bargain for a better life is a basic human right, and it makes a difference: Union members make 30 percent more than workers who don't have unions. They're 59 percent more likely to have health benefits and four times more likely to have pensions. That's real economic security. Communities with strong unions have higher standards of living for everyone.

But the system is broken. More than 60 million workers who don't have a union would join one if they could. But under existing law, corporations essentially have a veto over the process. In our company-dominated system, workers can be intimidated, coerced and even fired by their bosses for trying to form a union. A decision that should be in the hands of workers is instead in the hands of corporate executives.

Why union members should support the Employee Free Choice Act. The Employee Free Choice Act doesn't just matter for workers who are trying to form a union. When more workers are in unions, workers have the strength in numbers they need to demand good wages and good benefits across communities and industries. That helps all workers bargain for better contracts and counterbalance corporate power.

The Employee Free Choice Act means long-term shared prosperity. The Employee Free Choice Act is essential to rebuilding the middle class and ensuring the survival of the American Dream. We can build an economy that works for everyone if workers can exercise the freedom to form unions.
