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*"What is the importance of the Employee Free Choice Act to the American Worker?"*

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) is very important to the American Worker in today's disastrous economic climate, which developed as a result of eight years of actions and policies imposed on the American people by the money-grabbing Republican regime of the George Bush administration. Today, corporate managers continue to make many millions of dollars each year, while the workers of their companies are asked to take cuts in pay, benefits, and working conditions. The Employee Free Choice Act is a bill that is designed to improve and protect workers rights to bargain as a collective unit, thereby saving the middle class from being further demoted in society. The EFCA is important because it will protect worker's freedom to unionize once again by removing flaws in the system that were created by the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act.

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935 is a law that guarantees the right of workers in the United States to form unions. It also ensures the right of employees to engage in collective bargaining. It bans certain practices by employers such as prohibiting them from interfering with union efforts to bring workers into unions, and the act requires employers to negotiate with representatives elected by workers. The act established the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to enforce these provisions. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, also known as the "slave-labor bill," was an amendment to the National Labor Relations Act. It is a pro-management legislation that has shackled unions for many years, undermining the strengths of the NLRA, and put

the NLRB into the control of corporate interests.

The latest version of the EFCA was introduced into both chambers of the U.S. Congress on March 10, 2009 by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), and Reps. George Miller (D-CA) and Peter King (R-N.Y.); it is pending legislation in the United States. The Employee Free Choice Act will correct some of the flaws inherent in the NLRA and NLRB, as a result of the Taft-Hartley Act, so that workers today will be better protected from corporate greed and abuse. Its text states that it would "amend the National Labor Relations Act to establish an easier system to enable employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to provide for mandatory injunctions for unfair labor practices during organizing efforts, and for other purposes." The Employee Free Choice Act contains three parts: it removes barriers that prevent workers from forming unions for collective bargaining, guarantees workers a contract when they form a new union, and strengthens penalties against companies who break the law during organizing campaigns and first contract negotiations.

Companies routinely block efforts to form unions and bargain. Employers use coercion and intimidation to stop the formation of unions, some even employ brainwashing techniques in the form of anti-union 'training' videos and seminars. One in five workers trying to form a union is fired. The Employee Free Choice Act will help put a stop to these injustices and help form a brighter future for America. By getting rid of the management dominated system currently used, the EFCA will put a stop to the coercion and intimidation. With the Employee Free Choice Act, workers will have the option of using majority sign-up or ballots. Majority sign-up involves employees voting to form a union by signing authorization cards, which are validated by the federal

government, and the company would be legally required to recognize and bargain with the workers' union. Companies such as Cingular have used this approach of allowing employees to choose by majority decision. Companies that have voluntarily used majority sign-up have a better relationship with their workers because there is less hostility in the workplace, and workers who are more satisfied with their working environment will be more productive and happier with their jobs.

Workers cannot get a first contract 44% of the time even after the workers successfully form unions. The Employee Free Choice Act will require employers and employees to agree upon a contract within 90 days of the formation of a new union. This will put an end to employers using delay tactics which allow them to continue abusing employees even after a union has been formed.

The act also instills harsher penalties on companies who break the law. Currently the penalties for corporate misconduct are so feeble companies view them as minor annoyances that in no way impede them from bullying employees. There is no excuse for companies to continually threaten and harass employees, withhold their opportunity for a better future, and deny them of health care, fair wages and safe working conditions that come about because of unionization. The EFCA will take the NLRA back from the management and give it to the workers by strengthening penalties against these companies. With EFCA, a company can be fined up to \$20,000 per violation for violating employees rights during organization. Companies will be required to pay three times the amount of back pay than they have under existing laws when an employee is fired or discriminated against during an organizing campaign. Lastly, the EFCA will require the NLRB to seek a federal court injunction when a company

interferes with a workers rights during organizing, and makes injunctive remedies against companies the same as those against unions.

Workers will benefit from EFCA because they will be better able to form unions and be members of unions. As union members, people will be able to lead better lives. Workers in a union are nearly three times more likely to have pensions and five times more likely to have health insurance benefits. Union workers earn 28% more than non-union workers. President Obama has expressed support for unions and the well-being of the American people and their families, and was one of the sponsors of the original EFCA bill that was introduced in 2007. The American dream is hope for a better future, and a better future means unions. As A. Phillip Randolph (Founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and former Vice President of the AFL-CIO) famously said "At the banquet table of nature there are no reserved seats. You get what you can take, and keep what you can hold. If you can't take anything, you won't get anything; and if you can't hold anything, you won't keep anything. And you can't take anything without organization." Let us hope and the Democratic legislature will embrace this bill and its potential for bettering the lives of workers throughout America.