

CWA

NEWSLETTER

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Employee Free Choice Introduced in House and Senate



Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) and Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) announce the introduction of the Employee Free Choice Act in Congress, above. Below, CWA Local 2204 member Sharon Harrison told the Senate HELP committee that majority sign up at AT&T Mobility made all the difference for her and her co-workers.

Millions of working families are a step closer to having real bargaining rights with the March 10 introduction of the Employee Free Choice Act into the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

At a Capitol Hill news conference, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Representative George Miller (D-Calif.) announced the introduction of the bill, S. 560 and H.R. 1409. Currently there are 223 cosponsors (including Miller) in the House and 40 (including sponsor Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.) in the Senate.



CWA President Larry Cohen thanked Senator Harkin and Representative Miller for continuing to champion the cause of working people and for their leadership on this important legislation. He called on the House and Senate to pass the bill, stressing that only through Employee Free Choice "will we rebuild our economy, increase workers' purchasing power and put the brakes on the extreme income inequality our nation has seen over the past decade."

At a hearing of the Senate Health, Employment, Labor and Pension committee, chaired by Senator Harkin, panels of workers and economists testified that the Employee Free Choice Act is necessary to rebuild the nation's middle class.

Sharon Harrison, a member of CWA Local 2204 in Lebanon, Va., told the committee about her experiences at AT&T Mobility, where workers were able to get union representation through majority signup, after suffering under a previous management that harassed and intimidated workers who wanted union representation.

"Before we had our union, favoritism was a problem. Raises didn't depend on your job performance but whether your manager liked you. That all changed in 2005 when Cingular Wireless, now AT&T Mobility, took over. Cingular had agreed with CWA to remain neutral, to let workers make up our own minds and to recognize the union if a majority signed up. Because of that agreement, we weren't afraid anymore that managers would retaliate against us," she said.

Hundreds Lobby Congress on Employee Free Choice Act

This week, hundreds of union members, including CWAers, came to Washington, D.C. to demonstrate, mobilize, and lobby their members of Congress to pass the Employee Free Choice Act.

In events over three days, union members told their stories of real-life employer intimidation and harassment, making the case that the nation's broken labor laws must be fixed.

Union members rallied outside the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to protest the group's multi-million-dollar campaign attacking Employee Free Choice and the excessive CEO pay and bad business decisions that helped create the nation's worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

On the Senate steps, union members rallied, displaying quotes and photos of workers who are fighting for a union voice and real bargaining rights.

And on Capitol Hill, workers met with key members of the Senate and House whose support is critical to winning Employee Free Choice. During a visit with Sen. Robert Casey (D-Pa.), a key sponsor of the bill, CWA Local 13500 member Robert Hackenberg described how poor treatment by management at the former AT&T Wireless call center in Harrisburg, Pa., and management's dirty tricks convinced him "that it was time we had union representation."

John Pezzana, a Comcast worker and member of CWA Local 13000, and others met with Senator Arlen Specter (R-Pa.); meetings also were held with the staffs and members of Congress from Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, Louisiana, California, Maine, New York and other states.

"Workers' stories expose the lies that the Chamber and other business front groups have been spreading about Employee Free Choice," said CWA President Larry Cohen.

Activists also participated in workshops and training sessions on building community support for Employee Free Choice. CWA Locals can download, print, and hand out real-life stories by



Above, on the U.S. Senate steps, CWA Local 3403 member Chinoza Okolo joined dozens of union members demonstrating for Employee Free Choice. Below, CWA Local 13500 member Robert Hackenberg, top right in photo, was one of hundreds of union members who met with members of the House and Senate about Employee Free Choice.



workers on CWA's campaign website <http://www.freechoicecwa.org>.

Cohen, Catucci Attend White House Signing on Stem Cell Research



Retired District 2 Vice President Pete Catucci joins House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and CWA President Cohen at the White House as President Obama lifts the ban on federal funds for critical stem cell research.

CWA President Larry Cohen and retired District 2 Vice President Pete Catucci joined members of Congress, scientists, and others at the White House as President Barack Obama signed an executive order that removed restrictions on responsible scientific research involving embryonic stem cells.

The action reverses the Bush administration's limits on federal funding for this critical research. "It's time we once again put science at the top of our agenda and work to restore America's place as the world leader in science and technology," Obama said.

After the signing, President Obama greeted Catucci and wished him well. Catucci was

diagnosed with ALS, known as Lou Gehrig's disease, in early 2007. Since stepping down as a CWA leader in 2008, he has been a tireless fighter to restore federal funds for this effort.

Catucci said, "stem cell therapy is real. It's time the United States caught up with the rest of the world and moved forward. I am grateful to President Obama for reversing the ban on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research that's blocked so much important research over the past eight years."

Cohen said that the action "marks the triumph of sound science over attempts to politicize this and other life-saving research. Now we have a real opportunity to develop effective therapies that will improve the lives of millions of people."

President Obama also signed a Presidential Memorandum to restore "scientific integrity in government decision making."

Flight Attendants Seek Support, Fairness from Congress

More than 120 flight attendants – members of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA at United and Northwest Airlines and union activists from Delta Air Lines – went to Capitol Hill this week, seeking support for upcoming negotiations and Senate confirmation of a fair-minded nominee to oversee labor laws covering airline workers at the National Mediation Board.



Northwest Airlines flight attendant Renee Foss, AFA-CWA Local 21091, talks with Delta and Northwest flight attendants on Capitol Hill for meetings with members of Congress.

With bargaining for a new contract at United beginning this April for 17,000 AFA-CWA members, United flight attendants urged members of Congress to support AFA-CWA efforts to restore industry-leading levels of pay, benefits and working conditions at the airline. During United's bankruptcy, the workers sustained significant wage reductions, reduced health benefits, a loss of pensions, and longer working hours.

Restoring fairness, integrity and pro-worker leadership to the NMB is a critical concern for flight attendants at United as well as at Northwest and Delta. If bargaining at United goes beyond Aug. 7, flight attendants will need the assistance of the NMB to reach a fair settlement and not be subject to lengthy delays.

A fair-minded NMB also is vital for flight attendants at Delta and Northwest, who will be facing a tough anti-union campaign from management. Delta's 13,000 flight attendants don't have union representation and are fighting for a union voice. AFA's 7,000 members at Northwest seek to protect more than 60 years of collective bargaining. Both groups want to negotiate an industry leading contract. That's why it's critical to have an NMB in place that will protect workers' organizing and bargaining rights.

Vote on AT&T Mobility "Orange" Contract Gets Underway

Voting materials will be going out Friday, March 13, to CWA members at AT&T Mobility covered by the "Orange" contract. Members will vote on the tentative settlement that covers more than 20,000 Mobility workers in Districts 1, 2, 4, 7, 9 and 13.

Ballots will be counted on April 2, at CWA headquarters. Districts will have observers attending the ballot count.

AT&T Locals to Mobilize for Employment Security

As AT&T Core bargaining continues across the country, CWA locals are planning mobilization actions for Thursday, May 19, as part of a coordinated "National Day on Employment Security."

AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson has publicly praised CWA members and its positive relationship with CWA as important elements of the company's success.

CWAers will call on the company to bargain fair contracts with real employment security, including access for members to the jobs of the future.

Locals are asked to send photos and a brief account of their actions to unityatATT@cwa-union.org.

Locals Urged to Plan Now for April 28 Workers' Memorial Day

Materials to help CWA locals mark the annual Workers Memorial Day on April 28 are now available for order from the AFL-CIO.

"Participation in Workers' Memorial Day 2009 is of particular significance to CWA," CWA President Larry Cohen said. "During the last year, we lost several of our members to workplace fatalities. In addition, many of our members have suffered work-related injuries, illnesses, and 'near misses,' in some cases, suffering severe medical disorders."

"However, with the historic election of Barack Obama, we have the opportunity to strengthen workplace safety and health protections and to mobilize and organize around safety and health issues."

The theme for Workers' Memorial Day this year is "Good Jobs, Safe Jobs. Give Workers a Voice for Change."

The AFL-CIO materials can be ordered by going online to www.aflcio.org/shop or by calling the federation's health and safety department at (202) 637-5367. CWA Occupational Safety and Health Director Dave LeGrande is available to help locals plan events. He can be reached at (202) 434-1160 or by e-mail at legrande@cwa-union.org. CWA locals also are asked to let LeGrande know about events and actions they are planning.

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