

CWA → EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT UPDATE

Last week, Senator Tom Harkin and Representative George Miller introduced the Employee Free Choice Act into the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The introduction of this bill, with 223 co-sponsors in the House and 40 co-sponsors in the Senate, is the result of years of hard work by thousands of CWA activists across the country. But our work is not done. The next ten weeks will be the most crucial time in this campaign.

The election of Barack Obama and a more worker-friendly Congress gives us our best chance ever to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. It has also energized our opposition - see our "Fact Check" below about the latest misinformation being spread by corporate interests.

We must now ramp up our efforts and work together to ensure that the House and Senate move quickly to pass this legislation.

CWA Member Sharon Harrison Addresses Senate Committee



On March 10, the day the Employee Free Choice Act was introduced in Congress, CWA members from around the country joined 350 other workers on Capitol Hill to show their support for the Employee Free Choice Act.

The day began with a standing-room-only hearing on the bill. The Senate Health, Employment, Labor and Pension Committee was bolstered by the strong presence of union members dressed in work uniforms who were seated in the gallery. The crowd cheered statements by Senators Harkin (IA), Sanders (VT), Brown (OH) and Casey (PA) as they spoke of the need for the Employee Free Choice Act to fight income disparities and restore the economy by preserving good paying jobs.

The hearing featured the testimony of CWA member Sharon Harrison of Virginia, who spoke of the power that the Employee Free Choice Act would give to workers:

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.



You can [watch a video](#) of the entire hearing or [download a copy of Sharon's testimony](#). Sharon's testimony begins at 152:19 in the video.

Sharon's story, along with those of other CWA members, is also available from our [Workers' Stories library](#).

Cohen Hails Introduction of the Employee Free Choice Act

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. CWA President Larry Cohen thanked Senator Tom Harkin and Representative George 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 quickly, 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 the press conference marking the introduction of the legislation, Senator Harkin noted:

Just as the National Labor Relations Act, the 40 hour week and the minimum wage helped to pull us out of the Great Depression and into a period of unprecedented prosperity, so too will the Employee Free Choice Act help reinvigorate our economy.

Representative Miller agreed that the bill is critical to overcoming the current economic crisis:

If we want a fair and sustainable recovery from this economic crisis, we must give workers the ability to stand up for themselves and once again share in the prosperity they help to create.

CWA Members Lobby Congress

Throughout the day on March 10, 16 CWA-ers from California, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Louisiana, Arkansas, North Carolina, Virginia, and Maine walked the halls of Congress to educate their Senators and Representatives on the Employee Free Choice Act. Members listened to workers telling their experiences of workplace intimidation or positive organizing in private meetings, and heard why the Act was needed to level the playing field for workers in the United States.

CWA President Larry Cohen described the importance of workers speaking to their representatives in Congress: "Workers' stories expose the lies that the Chamber [of Commerce] and other business front groups have been spreading about Employee Free Choice."

Thousands of other CWA members made their voices heard by sending messages thanking Employee Free Choice Act co-sponsors and encouraging those who have not yet co-sponsored the legislation to get on board. Additionally, CWA-ers in ten priority states have pledged to

get at least 1% of their memberships to hand-write letters to their Senators. To find out if your Senators and Representative have co-sponsored and to send your own message visit <http://www.freechoiceact.org/takeactioncwa>.

Fact Check: Will the Employee Free Choice Act Cost America 600,000 Jobs?

A curious claim has been making news this past week – thanks to a business front group called "The Alliance to Save Main Street Jobs." CBS, MSNBC, the Wall Street Journal and others have reported that when the Employee Free Choice Act is passed, the US will lose 600,000 jobs.

But Anne Layne-Farrar, the economist at corporate consulting firm LEGG who authored the study, relied on flawed research.

[Economist Dean Baker](#) points out that Layne-Farrar's comparison with Canada's unemployment and union density rates don't add up:

This study purports to find that a 3 percentage point increase in unionization rates leads to a 1 percentage point increase in unemployment. Based on this study, the opponents of the Employee Free Choice Act argue that any resulting increase in unionization will cost millions of jobs. Of course the immediate response might be to ask, if this study's findings are accurate, why isn't Canada's unemployment rate 7 percentage points higher than the U.S. rate? Canada's unionization rate is about 20 percentage points higher than in the U.S., yet its unemployment rate is somewhat lower.

[The Institute for Southern Studies](#) also took a close look at Layne-Farrar's work. Their conclusion? "Even as a piece of business research-for-hire, Layne-Farrar's study is shockingly weak -- based on a thin set of old and irrelevant data that doesn't even bear out her own conclusions."

Did you hear about this report from your local newspaper or television station? If so, use our [letter to the editor tool](#) to let them know that the research is flawed and that rather than destroy American jobs, the Employee Free Choice act will restore the middle class and help rebuild our economy.

Keep Up with the Latest Developments

In addition to subscribing to this update there are other ways you can keep up with the latest developments on the Employee Free Choice Act.

Use the tools at www.GovTrack.us to set up e-mail alerts or an RSS feed for the Employee Free Choice Act. Just search on HR 1409 to keep track of progress in the House of Representatives and S 560 to keep track of Senate developments.

If you use Twitter, consider following Representative George Miller's feed from the House

Education and Labor Committee (@edlabordems).