

Workplace Democracy Act

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In order to strengthen America's middle class, we have to restore workers' rights to bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions. That is the goal of the Workplace Democracy Act.

There is no doubt that union membership is good for workers. According to data released in early 2015 from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, union workers' wages are 27 percent higher than for nonunion workers. 79 percent of unionized workers receive health insurance from their employers, compared to only 49 percent of nonunion workers. 76 percent of union workers have guaranteed defined-benefit pension plans, compared to only 16 percent of nonunion workers, and 83 percent of union workers receive paid with sick leave compared to only 62 percent of nonunion workers.

Today, corporate profits are at an all-time high, while wages as a percentage of the economy are near an all-time low. The middle class is disappearing, nearly 47 million Americans are living in poverty, and the gap between the very rich and everyone else is growing wider and wider.

There are many reasons for the growing inequality in our economy, but perhaps the most significant reason for the disappearing middle class is that the rights of workers to join together and bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions have been severely undermined. According to the most recent statistics:

- If an employee is engaged in a union organizing campaign, that employee has a one in five chance of getting fired.
- Half of all employers threaten to close or relocate their businesses if workers elect to form a union.
- When workers become interested in forming unions, 92 percent of private-sector employers force employees to attend closed-door meetings to hear anti-union propaganda; 80 percent require supervisors to attend training sessions on attacking unions; 78 percent require that supervisors deliver anti-union messages to workers they oversee; and 75 percent hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns.
- Even when workers overcome these enormous obstacles and win union elections, 52 percent of these new unions still do not have a first contract for workers a year after the election, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

The Workplace Democracy Act would:

1. Make it easier for workers to form unions through a majority sign up process. This section would allow the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to certify a union as the collective bargaining representative if a majority of eligible workers join sign valid authorization cards and the NLRB verifies that majority. Workers will get to elect which process to use to form unions, rather than allowing employers to dictate the course of action.

2. Ensure companies can't prevent a union from forming by denying a first contract. This section would require an employer to begin negotiating within 10 days after certification. If no agreement is reached after 90 days of negotiation, either party can request compulsory mediation. If no first contract is reached after 30 more days of mediation, the parties would submit the remaining issues to binding arbitration.