

Farmers & Ranchers for EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE



Why it's good for rural America

Remember the middle class?

Higher wages are good for farming, good for rural communities, and good for the nation's economy. That's because we need good wages to rescue the struggling middle class. Cheap wages just won't get us there.

- *Think about the way large-scale corporate farms are pushing family-sized farms into the economic ditch and bringing rural economies down with them. Would corporate farms have the same cost advantage if they paid union-scale wages to everyone who worked for them?*
- *Think about all the people who work in rural processing plants and other businesses connected with farming. Are the communities they work in better off with residents who are paid middle-class wages, or with people struggling to make it on rock bottom wages?*
- *Think about farmers and ranchers who want fair prices for what they sell. Who is more likely to be able to pay those prices – middle-class consumers or those living on the edge?*

Most of us get paid for what we do, not what we own, so wages are our key to the middle class. But rural economies are falling behind. Only better wages can turn this around.

The **Employee Free Choice Act** will make it easier for workers, both rural and urban, to join labor unions – and bargain for higher wages and benefits – and rebuild the middle class. The fact is, the Employee Free Choice Act is a critical piece of our economic recovery – one that doesn't require printing or borrowing more money.

Don't kid yourself . . .

Corporations have spent more than **\$300 million** in advertising to defeat the Employee Free Choice Act, but don't think for a minute it's out of concern for worker's rights to a secret ballot. Workers could still choose the secret ballot under the Act, and the people paying for the ads know that.

These are the same corporations that have outsourced most of our manufacturing sector and come knocking on rural America's door only when they need low-paid workers. They oppose the Act because weak unions are good for corporate profits.



Speak up!

Our U.S. Senators and Representatives need to hear from the rural voters they represent.

Go to **RememberTheMiddleClass.com** today and send a message direct to Congress urging them to support the Employee Free Choice Act. It's time to get serious about middle-class wages. Passing this important legislation is a good start.

Get the FACTS

FACT: The current labor law system is broken.

- 30 percent of employers illegally fire pro-union workers during organizing drives.
- 78 percent of companies require supervisors to deliver anti-union messages to workers.
- 32 percent of workers still don't have a contract one year after voting for union representation.

FACT: The Employee Free Choice Act levels the playing field for employees and employers.

- It strengthens penalties against companies that illegally coerce or intimidate employees to prevent them from forming a union.
- It allows employers or employees to request mediation if they're unable to negotiate a first contract.
- It lets employees use either secret balloting or majority sign-up to express their choice to organize.

FACT: The Employee Free Choice Act does NOT take away secret ballot elections.

Majority sign-up isn't a new approach and it's not a requirement. If one-third of workers want to have a National Labor Relations Board election, they can still ask the federal government to hold an election.

Employers are still free to express their opinion about the union as long as they don't threaten or intimidate workers. Severe penalties also apply to anyone who tries to coerce an employee to sign a union-authorization card.

FACT: A majority of voters support the Employee Free Choice Act.

In fact, 73 percent of the American public, including President Obama, most major faith denominations, and civil and human rights groups support the Act and a stronger American economy.

"I'll take economics for \$200, Alex."

Some very smart economists are helping us understand the connection between higher wages and healthy rural economies. **Paul Krugman**, our most recent Nobel prize winner in economics, wrote that "falling wages are a symptom of a sick economy." He went even farther and said that falling wages "can make the economy even sicker." (*New York Times*, May 4, 2009) This is certainly true for rural America. In the mid-1990s, a University of Minnesota study found the state's rural counties had income distributions more like Sri Lanka than Sweden. If that's not evidence of a disappearing middle class, we're not sure what is.

Our good friend, **Dr. Richard A. Levins** is Professor Emeritus of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota and pulls no punches when he explains: "Labor unions are the only economic force I know of that consistently and effectively works to keep wages at levels that will support strong economies. We must make it easier, not more difficult, for all Americans, both urban and rural, to negotiate wages that will rebuild the failing middle class."



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