

Employee Free Choice Act Introduced by Congress

by Marina Martinez, Local 881 Legislative and Political Director

The *Employee Free Choice Act* was introduced by the U.S. Senate (S. 560) and the U.S. House of Representatives (HR 1409) on March 10, 2009. The *Employee Free Choice Act* is critical legislation that will restore our middle class and give workers back the freedom to bargain for a better life. The introduction of this bill in both the Senate and House so early in this Congressional Session and the Obama Administration is positive.

The *Employee Free Choice Act* does three things to level the playing field for employees and employers. First, companies that illegally coerce or intimidate employees in an effort to prevent them from forming a Union will face tougher penalties. Next, a neutral third party will be brought in to arbitrate a contract if a company and a newly certified Union cannot agree to a first contract after three months. Finally, the *Employee Free Choice Act* establishes majority sign-up, meaning that if over 50 percent of employees sign Union authorization cards, and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) validates the cards, then a company must recognize the Union.

The *Employee Free Choice Act* will:

- Establish stronger penalties if companies violate the rights of workers who are forming unions and negotiating first contracts.
- Provide mediation and arbitration if workers and the employer can't agree on a first contract.
- Allow workers to form unions and bargain once a majority of workers sign authorization cards.

The business community is mounting a multi-million dollar campaign to oppose this critical legislation. While it is going to be a continued campaign to ensure that the *Employee Free Choice Act* becomes law, there is strong Congressional support and President Obama is committed to signing it into law. According to recent polling, 73 percent of the American public supports the Employee Free Choice Act.

Too often workers trying to form unions and bargain for a better life are thwarted by corporations who use coercion, harassment, and delay tactics. The *Employee Free Choice Act*



will restore workers' freedom to unionize and bargain for better wages, benefits, and provide a voice on the job. When more workers unionize, the voice for all workers is stronger.

For more information about the Employee Free Choice Act, contact Marina Martinez at 847-294-5064.