
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Strengthening America's Middle Class

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**CHAIRMAN ANDREWS STATEMENT AT SUBCOMMITTEE
HEARING ON “STRENGTHENING AMERICA’S MIDDLE
CLASS THROUGH THE EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, for a subcommittee hearing on “Strengthening America’s Middle Class Through the Employee Free Choice Act.”*

Today's hearing will examine how the current representation process under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) unfairly infringes upon Americans' right to decide whether they want to organize. We will also examine a proposal known as the Employee Free Choice Act, which levels the playing field and provides a fair democratic process by strengthening workers' right to choose whether or not they want to join a union. As a sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act, I am extremely interested in exploring this issue today.

For the past six years, middle-class workers have seen their wages and benefits shrink even as corporate profits and executive compensation have soared. The reality is that workers in unions earn 30 percent more in wages than non-union workers and 80 percent of union workers have health insurance while only 49 percent of non-union workers do. Coercive employers determined to obstruct any effort to allow workers to organize have eroded the basic underpinnings of middle class life: decent wages and benefits.

Many workers, who support an unsuccessful union campaign are suspended, demoted, or even fired by their employer. Research has shown that during organizing campaigns, a quarter of employers illegally fire at least one worker for union activity. Even if workers successfully organize a union under current law, the deck is so heavily stacked against them that the employer can choose to ignore recognition of the union. While the employer has a choice to ignore the union without recourse, the worker has no choice without the risk of being fired.

Today, we will hear from workers who were intimidated, coerced and fired by their employer for exercising their right to choose whether to be represented by a union. Most employers are not bad actors; however, I do believe the current structure of the representation process perpetuates the ability of a few employers to coerce employees without consequence.

I believe that restoring workers' free choice, through the Employee Free Choice Act, is the only way to ensure that they have the right to bargain for fair wages and benefits. It is imperative that Congress take this action for all middle class Americans and particularly for the over 60 million nonunion workers who seek nothing more than decent wages and healthcare. Restoring the right for workers to negotiate for fair compensation is critical if we are to have America's middle class grow over the next 50 years as it did over the past fifty.

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