



TIPS FOR TALKING TO UNION MEMBERS

- **Really engage union members about the Employee Free Choice Act.** The good news is that most union members will support the Employee Free Choice Act. But few have heard of it, know what this legislation is about or are familiar with the problems it solves. For example, only 54 percent of members know companies resist workers' attempts to form unions. So unions must expand efforts to educate members about the urgent need for the Employee Free Choice Act.
- **Lead with an economic framework.** Place the Employee Free Choice Act in the larger context of today's economic crisis for working people and how unions improve workers' lives. This is about the survival of the middle class and the American Dream, not labor law. A framework on union-busting or broken labor law is not as effective for members – especially in this economic climate.
- **Tap into members' anger at corporate CEOs.** Corporate executives, more than businesses in general, are seen as the source of many of the economic problems facing workers. Take advantage of this anger and insert CEOs and their record compensation packages, even when their companies are failing and getting taxpayer bailouts, into your messages when you can. Point out the double standard of corporations – providing written contracts to CEOs while fighting to prevent workers from enjoying the same protection. You can also paint the anticipated \$200 million campaign by business front groups as examples of CEOs and corporations desperate to block workers from getting ahead. For example, suppressing unions is part of larger efforts by CEOs to prevent working people from getting their fair share. These are the same people who oppose the minimum wage, improving your health care, etc.
- **Give members a clearer sense of their own personal stake in this battle.** Union members will support the Employee Free Choice Act, but often voice an important caveat: “Don't forget about us.” Share how this will help raise the living standards of today's union members, as well as workers who become members in the future. Conveying a “strength in numbers” message is key: More workers having unions means, collectively, we all have an increased ability to raise wages, improve health care and help stop corporate America's race to the bottom.
- **Communicate the reality of anti-union campaigns so members see the need for the law.** Even though we do not recommend leading with this message, it is critical to explain the barriers that workers face when trying to form unions. Most union members never have gone through an organizing campaign, so they don't know how bad it can be for workers. Union members object strongly to several common illegal and anti-union tactics, especially the firing of pro-union workers (97 percent say this is “unacceptable”).
- **Whenever you can, keep the policy discussion simple.** Fully 84 percent of members are more likely to support the bill when it is described simply as “making it much easier for workers to gain union representation in their workplace.” Very few union members will want or need more detail. This short summary of the law's purpose, together with highlighting the broader economic benefits it will bring, often will do the job for members.
- **Majority sign-up is effective, legitimate, direct and fair.** Most of your members never experienced organizing through majority sign-up. In longer settings, take the opportunity to frame the process in positive terms. It is an alternative to a company-dominated system that is long, bureaucratic, intimidating and undemocratic. One of the most convincing methods is to share the names of large national companies with good profit margins and good labor relations, such as AT&T and Kaiser Permanente, who have used majority sign-up successfully for years.



EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT

CORE MESSAGE

- 1. Working families are struggling to make ends meet. Wages are dropping, health costs are rising, pensions are disappearing, and we are in danger of losing our middle class.**
- 2. Under today's broken laws, working people are powerless to bargain for better wages, while CEOs demand contracts for themselves and get golden parachutes for driving their companies into the ground.**
- 3. Workers need new laws that level the playing field and ensure the freedom to form unions and bargain for better wages and benefits. Union members make 30 percent more and are far more likely to have health care and pensions than nonunion workers. With the free choice to form unions, working people can counterbalance corporate power and rebuild our middle class.**

KEY POINTS

- Our economy is in shambles, and the wage gap between corporate executives and working people has never been wider. Corporations and CEOs hold all the cards in today's economy, and working families are left to struggle with the economy that is left behind.
- Unions are the single best tool to create an economy that works for all. Workers who belong to unions earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers. They are 59 percent more likely to have employer-provided health coverage and four times more likely to have pensions.
- More than half of U.S. workers—nearly 60 million—say they would join a union right now if they could. But not enough get the chance because of today's company-dominated system that robs workers of their freedom to make their own decision. Companies routinely intimidate, harass, coerce and even fire people who try to form unions. This is an urgent problem for workers, blocking their free will and their ability to improve their economic well-being.
- The benefits of economic growth can never be broadly shared unless working people regain the free choice to bargain with their companies for a better life.