

June 21, 2007

Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S-221 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
S-230 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

As governors, we ask for your support of the "Employee Free Choice Act," introduced by U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy and U.S. Representative George Miller. This legislation provides for recognition of a union when the majority of employees voluntarily sign authorizations, offers mediation and binding arbitration to resolve first contracts, and strengthens penalties for violations during organizing and first contract efforts.


The freedom to form and join unions is a fundamental human right protected by our constitutional freedom of association, our nation's labor laws, and international human rights laws, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a right for which millions of Americans have struggled. The freedom to form unions is of special importance to the civil and women's rights movements because unions help ensure adequate wages, health care coverage and retirement security. It was the right to form a union that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was supporting during the Memphis sanitation strike when he was assassinated in 1968. Unions also help to reduce the wage gap for women and people of color, and can prevent arbitrary and discriminatory employer behavior.

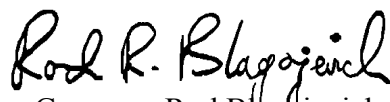
The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 has long allowed employers to recognize a union when the majority of workers sign authorization cards, designating the union as their bargaining agent. The right to form a union, however, has been eroded over the last several years, resulting in increasing employer harassment, discrimination, and sometimes termination for workers taking initial steps toward forming a union. Twenty-five percent of private-sector employers illegally fire at least one worker for union activity during organizing campaigns. Even where workers successfully form unions, employers often refuse to bargain fairly with the workers. Moreover, 92% of employers illegally force employees to attend mandatory, closed-door meetings against the union. The Employee Free Choice Act will protect workers from these abuses, provide for first contract mediation and arbitration, and establish meaningful penalties when employers violate workers rights.

When workers try to form unions, all too often they are harassed, intimidated, and even fired for their support of the union. These attacks on workers' rights, for which there are only weak -- if any -- remedies, occur all too frequently among the most vulnerable workers of our society, including women, the working poor of all races, and recent immigrants. As a result, those workers who need unions the most are often those who have the least chance of achieving the benefits of unionization.


We strongly urge you to support the Employee Free Choice, legislation that would begin to reinstate the right to form unions that Congress protected for Americas workers over 65 years ago.


Sincerely,


Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.
Colorado



Governor Rod Blagojevich
Illinois



Governor Chet Culver
Iowa

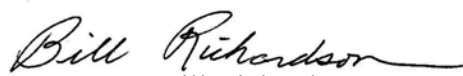

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Kansas


Governor John Baldacci
Maine


Governor Martin O'Malley
Maryland


Governor Jennifer Granholm
Michigan



Governor Jon Corzine
New Jersey



Governor Bill Richardson
New Mexico



Governor Eliot Spitzer
New York

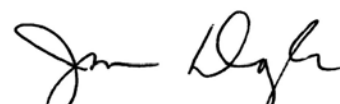

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