

## Religious Leader Statements

### Supporting Employee Free Choice Act

**Catholics United:** “The Employee Free Choice Act is the cornerstone of an economy that serves working families. The right to organize is foundational to Catholic social teaching. Catholics United stands with working families and supports the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.” - James Salt, Co-Founder

**Friends Committee on National Legislation:** "The Friends Committee on National Legislation support strengthening laws that guarantee all workers the right to organize unions and to bargain collectively. By giving employees a choice about how they would like to organize for collective bargaining, the Employee Free Choice Act will strengthen labor laws and will open the opportunity for unionization to a broader spectrum of workers." - Ruth Flower, Legislative Director

**Interfaith Worker Justice:** “All faith traditions teach that workers should be treated with respect and dignity and paid fairly. Unions serve vital roles in ensuring workers' just treatment and pay, which is why Interfaith Worker Justice supports the Employee Free Choice Act. In this time of economic crisis, workers need a voice in the future of their companies that comes through collective bargaining.” - Kim Bobo, Executive Director

**Progressive Christians Uniting:** Progressive Christians Uniting, a California network of congregations and individuals—strongly supports the **Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)** as a much-needed remedy to restore proper balance in labor relations and thus begin to allow the fruits of productivity increases in the workplace to be enjoyed by the workers and not just by the owners” - Peter Laarman, Executive Director

**Sojourners:** “The “right to organize” is what is at stake with the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), and it is why the Employee Free Choice Act is fundamentally a moral issue. It is a way to level the playing field, to give workers a collective voice in the wages, benefits, and conditions of their employment. It is a way to ensure their basic human dignity.” - Reverend Jim Wallis, President

**Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ:** For many years working people in the U.S. have not done well. Wages have stagnated, good jobs have disappeared, and protective regulations have been eroded. The rich got richer while the poor and middle class got what was left over. This is not the foundation for a just society or a sound economy. The Church is called to seek out and accompany people wherever they are, including on their jobs. God’s reign does not stop at the door to the workplace. Unions are one of the best ways for workers to gain greater justice. But employees’ right to organize has been seriously eroded.

Passing the Employee Free Choice Act will strengthen workers' internationally-recognized human right to freely choose whether to form a union. - Edith Rasell, Ph.D., Minister for Workplace Justice

**Catholic Labor Network Organizing Committee** Employee Free Choice Act  
Endorsement Statement:

Well over a century ago, with the rise of industrial capitalism, Pope Leo XIII issued his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. Reflecting on how the modern economy too often offered the rich and powerful an opportunity to exploit working people, he took consolation in the multiplication of "workingmen's unions" that helped ameliorate the condition of labor. "There are not a few associations of this nature," the Holy Father observed, "but it were greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient."

But we live today in a nation where associations of this nature are becoming steadily fewer, in large measure because of widespread unlawful action by employers to obstruct the right of workers to organize in unions. Conservative estimates indicate that tens of thousands of workers are fired every year for exercising their lawful right to organize. Seeking a union under today's National Labor Relations Act system is an arduous and dangerous process for employees if their employers object, yet penalties for violating the Act are so trivial as to create economic incentives for illegal union-busting activities.

Catholic social teaching on the right of workers to organize has been admirably consistent over the century since Leo XIII wrote, with John Paul II observing even more emphatically in his 1981 encyclical "*Laborem Exercens*" that labor unions are "indeed a mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice" and in fact "an indispensable element of social life."

We in the Catholic Labor Network agree that trade unions represent "an indispensable element of social life" and that "it were greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous," but that the current condition of labor law in the United States militates against this. The Employee Free Choice Act would help address this problem. For this reason, we in the Catholic Labor Network conclude that the Employee Free Choice Act represents a sound public policy method to effect the purposes of Catholic Social Teaching.

**Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice** Endorsement Statement

**We speak as scholars who are committed to Catholic Social Teaching concerning the human right of workers to organize employee unions.** The Magisterium of the Catholic Church recognizes "*the fundamental role played by labor unions, whose existence is connected with the right to form associations or unions to defend the vital interests of workers employed in the various professions.*" Indeed, the Catholic Church holds that unions "are a positive influence for social order and solidarity, and are therefore an *indispensable element of social life.*" Because Catholic teaching is based on natural law, we believe the Church's teachings have relevance not only to Catholic institutions but also to the broader civil society. Specifically, we hold the

following:

\* **The present legal and moral framework that is intended to assist workers to form unions is badly broken.** Workers who seek to form unions are routinely met with employer resistance to their right to organize. Many employers intimidate, ostracize, or fire union organizers, deny free speech to workers on the job, threaten the loss of jobs and benefits, and hire “union avoidance” firms that – despite employers’ protests to the contrary – actively seek to *prevent* union elections from taking place at all. Present labor law is so weak that when elections actually take place many employers *ignore* the results with little impunity and when employers *do* bargain it can take years to reach a first contract, if at all.

\* **There is an a priori presumption for unions in Catholic Social Teaching.** Catholic teaching states that the right to organize unions is based on the human right of freedom of association that is found in the natural law. The right to organize belongs to the workers alone and cannot be abridged or annulled by civil or ecclesiastical authorities. The method or venue that workers choose to form a union is *also* their choice: workers may say yea or nay, stand or sit, sign statements or cards, or hold a secret ballot election. The right of workers to freely choose unions necessarily involves their right to decide how they shall decide for or against a union.

\* **The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) is rooted in and supported by Catholic Social Teaching.** The EFCA would: (1) Recognize the right of workers to join a union through filing signed cards – know as “card check” -- that state their decision to form a union; (2) mandate mediation and arbitration if a first contract cannot be negotiated within the first 90 days; (3) impose stronger penalties on employers that violate workers’ rights. Workers can also choose a secret ballot election *if that is their choice*. These provisions strongly reflect the Catholic position that the decision to form or join unions is *always* the workers’ choice. Most importantly, the workers’ decision to unionize must *not* meet with hostility or resistance from employers.