



Fact Sheet: Organizing and Collective Bargaining Rights in the U.S.

Organizing and collective bargaining rights are the rights workers have to unionize and through their unions bargain with employers for fair wages, hours, and benefits. These rights are protected under law by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). Organizing and collective bargaining rights are fundamental for the achievement of economic justice in the workplace.

According to Article 23 (4) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his or her interests.” Unfortunately U.S. labor laws fail to protect this fundamental human right.

The Current State of Organizing and Collective Bargaining Rights in the U.S.

Collective bargaining density is now under 9% in the private sector and about 30% in the public sector. Every other industrial democracy has rates at least three times higher in both the private and public sectors.

More than 41 million workers say they want a union, but here are the facts according to a Cornell University study:

- 25% of employers illegally fire at least one activist during a union campaign.
- 75% hire professional anti-union consultants.
- 92% force workers to attend mandatory closed door meetings against forming a union.
- 51% threaten to close their facilities or slash jobs if workers vote for a union.

This lack of initial recognition has an immense affect on access to healthcare, retirement security, pay increases, professional development, and other workplace issues.

The Union Advantage

According to *American Rights at Work*:

- 75 % of union workers have health benefits, compared with 49% of non-union workers.
- 69% of union workers have short-term disability coverage, compared with 30% of non-union workers.
- 82% of union workers get life insurance, compared with 51% of non-union workers.
- Union workers earn 27% more in median weekly wages than non-union workers.
- Unionized women earn 33% more than non-union women.
- African-American union workers earn 35% more than non-union African Americans.
- Latino union members earn 51% more than their non-union counterparts.
- Asian-American union members earn 11% more than their non-union counterparts.

The Employee Free Choice Act

New bipartisan legislation (H.R. 3619 and S. 1925) introduced in Congress will help fix the broken process through which workers form unions.

The Employee Free Choice Act aims to:

1. *Speed the process that certifies whether a majority of workers at a company want to form a union.*
2. *Speed the process of negotiating a first Contract.*
3. *Increase penalties for employers who violate workers rights.*

For these reasons and many more students, labor unions, community organizations and religious groups are uniting in the fight to strengthen the organizing and collective bargaining rights of workers and ignite a movement toward economic justice in the U.S.

For more information on the current state of organizing and collective bargaining rights in the U.S. you can visit www.americanrightsatwork.org. For information on getting involved in the fight for economic justice in your community e-mail www.slapp@usstudents.org or call (202) 393-1044 ext. 221.