

A Message from General President James P. Hoffa



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

There are many ways for Teamsters to get involved and show support for the Employee Free Choice Act, the most important legislation affecting America's middle class in decades. Our communities, friends, neighbors and members of Congress need to hear from real people why unions are important, and the sooner the better. This bill has broad support, but billions of dollars are being thrown at a misinformation campaign run by anti-worker groups and people are starting to believe the lies about this legislation.

It's important to let your elected officials in D.C. know that you support the this bill. When calling or writing, it's helpful to include your story about how you have benefited from a union or about management intimidation during your union election. The web site for the Teamsters Union, at www.teamster.org, has a wealth of material on writing, e-mailing or talking to your elected representatives. If you want to get directly in touch with your congressional representative's office, you can call the Capitol switchboard at 800-828-0498 or e-mail them through www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml.

Teamsters can also help correct myths while at the same time helping our communities understand why the Employee Free Choice Act is necessary to fix a broken system. Newspapers welcome letters from readers and you can usually find out how to send a letter to the editor by looking on the newspaper's opinion page. Sample letters that you can adapt and responses to the most common arguments are on the Teamsters Union web page devoted to the Employee Free Choice Act.

I urge every Teamster who cares about America's middle class to get involved and make your voice heard on this issue.

DRIVE is a political committee that furthers labor-related goals, including making contributions to support candidates for local, state and federal offices. Individuals may refuse to join or contribute without fear of reprisal.



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Warehouse News

The Teamster Warehouse News

James P. Hoffa, General President • C. Thomas Keegel, General Secretary-Treasurer • John A. Williams, Warehouse Division Director

Employee Free Choice Now!

Teamsters Can Help Pass Legislation Expanding America's Middle Class

The fight for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act is really about the survival of the middle class and the American Dream," said Jim Hoffa, Teamsters General President.

The Employee Free Choice Act would make it easier for workers to form a union, thereby restoring fairness and the promise of the American Dream to millions of people who have been shut out for far too long. This legislation would swell the ranks of the American middle class while being the engine for economic growth and shared prosperity. This act will also help employees secure a contract in a reasonable period of time and toughen penalties against employers who violate the law. The legislation is supported by

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Kroger to Get Blown Out in Northern California



For 45 members of Local 439 in Stockton, California, November 2008 seems a world away.

In November, things were good. Jobs were steady and the local had recently ratified a five-year contract with Northern Distribution, a third-party employer of Kroger, one of the nation's largest grocery retailers. The contract not only provided drivers with steady work, but it gave them health care and retirement benefits.

All of that came to an abrupt end just weeks ago when Kroger—without warning—broke its contract with Northern Distribution and fired all 45 Teamster drivers. Today, the company is using nonunion labor to do its work and has refused to rehire those that it fired.

Disregard for Labor Law

"We're outraged," said Sam Rosas, Local 439 Secretary-Treasurer. "Kroger knew that we entered into negotiations with Northern Distribution and

Kroger knew we've had a third-party agreement with Northern Distribution for almost 10 years. When Kroger fired these drivers, they gave them very little notice and refused to extend to them and their families any kind of medical insurance."

Such behavior, though shocking, is nothing new for Kroger.

"Kroger has disregard for working families," said John Williams, Teamster Warehouse Division Director. "We have several agreements with them through third-party companies and a master agreement with them directly. Since before I was director of the division, Kroger has abused this country's weak labor laws to fire loyal employees."

Taking a Stand

Local 439 is taking a stand and they are counting on community support to do so.

The local, along with the support of Teamsters Joint Councils 7 and 38,

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Pat Stryker Awarded for Investment Leadership

Pat Stryker, a trustee for the New York City's Employee Retirement System (NYCERS) and executive board member of Local 237 in New York, was recently recognized for her investment leadership. Stryker was given the General Secretary-Treasurer's Trustee Leadership Circle Award after raising continued concern over an investment opportunity with Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts & Co. (KKR).

KKR is a private equity firm which, in partnership with Clayton, Dublier & Rice (CD&R), owns U.S. Foodservice. Staunchly anti-union, U.S. Foodservice is notorious for violating the rights of its workers to form or join unions and often engages in harassing and intimidating behavior.

Stryker was concerned when she learned that U.S. Foodservice is not just aggressive, but unlawfully infringes on the rights of their employees. During meetings and conference calls, she raised concerns with both owners about management oversight of U.S. Foodservice and was reassured by company officials that KKR and CD&R would clean up the act of their portfolio company.

Time after time, however, Stryker learned that the behavior of U.S. Foodservice management was not getting better—it was getting worse.

"As a trustee and fiduciary, it is my duty to promote responsible investment choices for the pension security of NYCERS. I was concerned about investing with a private equity firm that has no control over the management of one of their portfolio companies," Stryker said.

At this point in time, Stryker has communicated that she will not support the NYCERS investing with KKR.

"I will continue to raise my concerns and press this issue unless I see meaningful change," Stryker said. "This ongoing problem of rights violations and disregard for the law raises serious questions from the perspective of an investor about just how well KKR can manage not only U.S. Foodservice, but any other company within its control."

Employee Free Choice Now!

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President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, a majority of U.S. Senators and Representatives, and a majority of the American people.

"Even with the support of so many, a flood of corporate cash is being spent on a misinformation campaign on this issue. Suppressing unions is part of a larger effort by CEOs and business interests to prevent working people from getting their fair share," Hoffa said.

Union Workers Make 28 Percent More

Working people are struggling to make ends meet today, and we are in danger of seeing the American Dream disappear. Too often, corporations and their CEOs aren't treating workers fairly. They cut back on health care benefits and give raises that don't even keep up with the cost of living, while CEO salaries and profits go higher and higher.

"These millionaire CEOs and others fighting the Employee Free Choice Act bully their employees who want a union, but these CEOs wouldn't work one day without a written contract that protected their benefits," said Tom Keegel, Teamsters General Secretary-Treasurer. "Due to this mindset, the American middle class has lost a lot of ground and is in danger of losing more if we don't all get involved in this fight."

An important way to help average people get their fair share is to remove unfair barriers to union representation and collective bargaining. The wages of workers in unions are 28 percent higher than those not in unions, and union workers are 62 percent more likely to have employer health coverage, and four times as likely to have a pension.

"The nation's economic mess didn't originate on the shop floor or from a union contract. It started at the highest levels of management. Their harmful ideas hurt the bottom line of their corporations. Wanting to deny workers the option of forming a union without management interference is another of their bright ideas," Keegel said.

Setting the Record Straight

The corporate interests against the Employee Free Choice Act have incorrectly portrayed the bill as eliminating workers' rights to a secret ballot election. This is absolutely not true. The legislation simply gives workers, not bosses, the choice in how they decide whether to form a union, either through a majority of workers signing cards in support of the union, or through an election.

In reality, the corporate interests who are opposed to this bill are the same ones against their employees having a real opportunity of securing fair pay, health insurance, job security and a chance of living the American Dream. Greedy CEOs are realizing they are losing the ability to hold back change to a system that favors them, and they are engaged in an unprecedented campaign to mislead the public on the Employee Free Choice Act and anyone who supports it.

Please help the Teamsters Union make sure the middle class survives the current economic crisis by getting involved to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. For more information, visit www.teamster.org.

Northern California

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has begun a grassroots leafleting campaign to educate area citizens about the egregious behavior of Kroger. Teamsters from five different locals have been spreading the message at high-volume Kroger stores throughout Northern California, including at Sacramento and San Francisco locations.

The goal of the campaign, according to Rosas, is to put all Kroger stores in Northern California out of business.



Fighting for Rights at U.S. Foodservice

For U.S. Foodservice workers Frank Solis and Ryan Proctor, quitting is not an option.

The two warehousemen, along with their coworkers, have been trying to join Teamsters Local 104 in Phoenix, Arizona for the past year, but their struggle for respect and representation has been a long, hard battle.

At the beginning of their campaign, U.S. Foodservice workers overwhelmingly supported joining the Teamsters Union. With 70 percent of Teamster authorization cards signed, Solis, Proctor and their coworkers at U.S. Foodservice were ready for an election.

The mood changed when the company launched a brutal antiunion campaign against its workers, which included every harassment technique from intimidation to the out-right termination of union supporters.

"I can't believe the lengths to which the company went to keep the union out," Solis said. "The harassment was especially bad. I saw grown men being yelled at and poked in the chest or fired because they supported the union."

Despite having an overwhelming majority of cards signed, the Teamsters lost the election by four votes. Since the election, U.S. Foodservice has fired or suspended 13 of its employees.

So egregious were the actions of U.S. Foodservice that the National Labor Relations Board—under Bush appointees—has filed 177 complaints against the company, including a Gissel Bargaining Order.

So far, the campaign is working.

"The consumer has been very supportive of this activity. We are definitely getting the support we need and want. We've probably cut into Kroger's business by 50 percent," Rosas said. "Kroger needs to understand that it doesn't make good business sense to have a bunch of angry Teamsters out in front of their stores cutting into their business."

Though Solis, Proctor and their coworkers must wait for court action, they are not giving up hope. Having made a pact with each other, Solis and Proctor have vowed to see their campaign through to the end.

"We're not going to stop fighting for what we believe in until we get a contract," Proctor said. "And we're not going to stop there, either. We're not going to stop until all U.S. Foodservice employees around the country are treated fairly under a national contract."

Taking a Stand

To prove just how serious they are, Solis and Proctor recently visited Washington, D.C. where they told the nation's lawmakers of their struggles. They also led a rally in conjunction with the Teamsters Union, Jobs for Justice, the Student Labor Action Project and Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice against the National Restaurant Association—a trade association to which U.S. Foodservice belongs.

Like their members, the National Restaurant Association is staunchly anti-union. In the past two years, the organization has spent over \$3.3 million to directly lobby Congress to stop the passage of legislation crucial to America's workers. Solis, Proctor, nearly 250 Teamsters and labor supporters stood in the streets of Washington outside of the association's headquarters where they said "we're not going to take it anymore."

"This fight was never about money or benefits," Solis told hundreds of cheering Teamsters. "Our fight is about what is right. We are being treated unfairly and we want to make sure this kind of thing doesn't happen to us or any other American worker again."

During the demonstration, Solis and Proctor and Teamster representatives delivered a letter to officials at the National Restaurant Association demanding an end to the organization's lobbying against pro-worker and pro-union legislation and an end the blind eye the organization has turned toward the actions of U.S. Foodservice.

Although they have been climbing an uphill battle, Solis and Proctor are determined to bring justice and representation to U.S. Foodservice. With the support of 1.4 million Teamster brothers and sisters, they are confident they will get the job done—no matter how long it takes.

"U.S. Foodservice has to be held accountable for their actions. We're going to make sure of that," Solis told the rally audience. "We're not going to give up. That's not part of our plan."