

FOR Immediate Release  
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**KENNEDY INTRODUCES EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT IN THE SENATE  
*FIGHTS TO STRENGTHEN MIDDLE CLASS — HELP WORKING FAMILIES***

Washington, D.C. -- Today, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee introduced the Employee Free Choice Act. The bill will strengthen the middle class by giving workers the freedom to choose union representation. In today's economy, when productivity is rising and corporate profits are soaring but wages have been stagnant and workers are losing essential benefits like health care and pensions, the Employee Free Choice Act is essential to help working families get their fair share of our economic prosperity.

The identical bill, sponsored by Rep. George Miller, passed the House earlier this month.

Below is Senator Kennedy's full statement upon introduction.

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY  
ON THE INTRODUCTION OF  
THE EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT**

March 29, 2006

For far too long, we've acquiesced in a lop-sided economy that benefits wealthy individuals and corporations, but not America's working families. Tens of millions of our men and women are working harder than ever, but they aren't receiving their fair share of the economy they helped do so much to create and sustain.

Since President Bush took office, corporate profits have increased 65 percent. Productivity is up 18 percent. But household income has declined; the wages of working Americans are stagnant. Six million have lost their health insurance. Their retirement is uncertain as well—only 1 in 5 workers today has a guaranteed pension. In short, working families are finding that the American dream is beyond their reach. This injustice is worsening each year, and it is time for Congress to deal with it.

The best way to see that employees receive their fair share of America's prosperity is to give them a stronger voice in the workplace. Unions were fundamental in building America's middle class, and they have a vital role today in preserving the American

dream for working families.

Unions can make all the difference between an economy that's fair, and an economy where working people are left behind. Union wages are 30 percent higher than non-union wages. 80 percent of union workers have health insurance, compared to only 49 percent of non-union workers. Union members are 4 times more likely to have a secure, guaranteed pension.

No wonder most American workers want union representation. The question is, why don't more of them have it?

The reason is clear. In 2005 alone, more than 30,000 workers were illegally fired or retaliated against for attempting to exercise their right to have a union in their workplace. Every 17 minutes, a worker is fired or punished in some illegal way for supporting a union. Unscrupulous employers routinely break the law to keep unions out—they intimidate employees, harass them, and discriminate against them. They shut down whole departments—or even entire plants—to avoid negotiating a union contract. It's illegal and unacceptable, but it happens every day.

Clearly, the current system is broken. It can't stop these illegal, anti-worker, anti-labor, anti-union tactics that take place every day. The penalties are so minor that employers treat them as just another cost of doing business. Even when workers succeed in forming a union, they often can't obtain a first contract because management stonewalls them and refuses to negotiate. Half of all cases alleging that employers refused to bargain are filed during first-contract negotiations—and in most of those cases, the National Labor Relations Board finds an unfair labor practice.

Year after year, Congress has refused to act against these union-busting tactics that are now all too familiar in the workplace. It's time to listen to the voice of America's working men and women, and give them what they want and deserve – a fair voice in the workplace and a fair chance at the American dream.

That's why I'm reintroducing the Employee Free Choice Act today. This essential legislation will strengthen protections for workers' freedom to choose union representation. It will restore their democratic right to join together for better wages, better benefits, and better working conditions. It will help millions of working men and women to build a better life for themselves and a better future for their children.

I'm proud to have 46 of my fellow Senators joining me in sponsoring this important bill, and I hope that all of my colleagues will support it.