

It is clear to me that in order to rebuild economic security for the middle class in America, we must first rebuild strong and vibrant unions; and to rebuild strong unions, we must first reduce the unfair barriers to union organizing. A recent study by the Institute for America's Future confirms this by comparing organizing campaigns in the United States and Canada. The study found that more worker-friendly certification rules resulted in increased union participation.

But, of course, this is all just common sense. If you reduce the barriers to workers joining unions, more workers will join. What does that mean? Well, as the study made clear, by passing this Employee Free Choice Act, by making it easier for workers to band together, more than 3½ million Americans would be able to secure health coverage, more than 3 million Americans would have access to employer-based pensions.

Middle-class families in this country have an increasingly difficult time making ends meet. More than 47 million lack health insurance, that is including 251,000 Iowans, and even those who get it find it covers less and less. This should not be happening in America. When productivity rises, everyone should see a fair share of the gain. But in the past several years, increasing productivity has gone hand in hand with a growing wage gap.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service: Adjusted for inflation, average worker pay rose 8 percent from 1995 to 2005; but median CEO pay at the 350 largest firms rose 150 percent over the same period.

In my home State of Iowa, real median household income fell by 3.4 percent between 1995 and 2005, at the same time productivity increased. So workers are working and becoming more productive, but they are not getting any of their fair share.

By passing the Employee Free Choice Act, by giving workers a seat at the table, we can start to reverse this negative trend. Union participation in the workplace means everybody wins. When employees have a voice, not just to ask for better wages and benefits but to make suggestions on how to do things better, employers benefit also.

Union employees take pride in their work and they work to get more training. They are happy to help find other efficiencies in the operation because they know if they do they get a share of the savings.

Unfortunately, the scaremongers out there are trying to tell us that the Employee Free Choice Act takes away employee rights to a secret ballot. Nothing can be further from the truth. This bill does not establish a new election process. It merely requires employers to honor the employee choice.

Right now a company gets to decide whether it will recognize a majority sign-up vote. Well, why should just the company get to decide that? Why should employees not get to decide

that? That is what this bill does. It levels the playing field. It says the employees get to decide as well as the company.

If the employees want to use the National Labor Relations Board process, they can do that also. But we know from hard experience—the best teacher, hard experience—that process can be threatening and intimidating to many employees.

So in addition to making it easier to form a union in the first place, the Employee Free Choice Act provides for arbitration for the first contract. I know from personal experience how a company can bust a union and cause major hardships for their employees.

My brother, Frank, was a member of the UAW for 23 years. He worked at a plant called Delavan in West Des Moines, IA, for 23 years, a proud union member. He had a good job as a machinist, operating machines, made parts for the military, had good pay, good benefits, a good pension.

In 23 years he had only missed 5 days of work. In 23 years the union never went on strike, never had a work stoppage. But then Mr. Delavan, the owner, decided to sell the plant. And he sold it to a group of investors. One of those investors bragged openly—it was in the Des Moines Register—if you want to see how to bust a union, come to Delavan, we will show you how. He openly bragged about it.

What happened? Well, the investors took over. When the union contract came up, the company put forward conditions with which no union could ever agree. So what was the union forced to do? To go out on strike. For the first time ever in 23 years they went out on strike.

Well, then what did the company do? They brought in replacement workers. Then what happened? There was a long bitter strike. I remember it well. After 1 year, as allowed by labor law, they had a decertification vote. Who votes to decertify? Well, the replacement workers. So they voted them out. They did not want to lose their jobs. So they voted to decertify.

So after 23 years, my brother Frank was out of a job. He lost his union job with excellent pay, vacation, pension. Now, I ask you, what does a 54-year-old deaf man—and my brother was deaf. He is disabled. What does a 54-year-old deaf man do when he loses that kind of a job? I will tell you what he did. The only job he could get was as a janitor working in a store at night in a shopping mall—minimum wage, no union, no pension, no benefits, nothing.

This is a real-life story, folks. That happened to my family. Not only did it just destroy my brother's livelihood, it broke his spirit. That is what happens when unions are weakened and destroyed, jeopardizing our middle-class way of life. That is what is happening today, my friends, to tens of millions of workers all over this country.

I will close with this, from a December 2005 letter by 11 Nobel Peace Prize winners:

Even the wealthiest nation in the world, the United States of America, fails to adequately protect workers' rights to form unions and bargain collectively. Millions of U.S. workers lack any legal protection to form unions, and thousands are discriminated against every year for trying to exercise these rights.

It is time to level the playing field and to give them a truly fair process.

CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT AND CREDENTIALS

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Chair lays before the Senate the certificate of appointment of Senator JOHN BARRASSO of the State of Wyoming. Without objection, it will be placed on file and the certificate of appointment will be deemed to have been read.

The certificate of appointment is as follows:

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR,
The State of Wyoming.

CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES: This is to certify that, pursuant to the power vested in me by the Constitution of the United States and the laws of the State of Wyoming, I, Dave Freudenthal, the Governor of said State, do hereby appoint John Barrasso a Senator from said State to represent said State in the Senate of the United States until the vacancy therein caused by the death of Senator Craig Thomas, is filled by election as provided by law.

Witness: His Excellency our Governor Dave Freudenthal, and our Seal hereto affixed at Cheyenne, Wyoming, this 22nd day of June, in the year of our Lord 2007.

By the Governor:

DAVE FREUDENTHAL,
Governor.
MAX MAXFIELD,
Secretary of State.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Senator will present himself at the desk. The Chair will administer the oath of office as required by the Constitution and prescribed by law.

The Senator, escorted by Mr. ENZI and Mr. Wallop, respectively, advanced to the desk of the Vice President; the oath prescribed by law was administered to him by the Vice President; and he subscribed to the oath in the official oath book.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Congratulations.

[Applause, Senators rising.]

The VICE PRESIDENT. The minority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me say briefly a warm welcome to the new Senator from Wyoming, Senator BARRASSO. He has big shoes to fill with our departed colleague Craig Thomas. I am sure he is up to it. Given the average age of this institution, it is certainly good to have another physician in the Senate. An orthopedic surgeon may be particularly useful. I had a chance to meet with the new Senator this morning. He is a bright, capable