

Action Lines

Kentucky Jobs With Justice: A campaign for economic justice and workers' rights



Kentucky Jobs With Justice

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Employee Free Choice Act

Our nation has a proud history of making sure citizens' basic civil and human rights are honored. That's what the civil rights movement was about. That's what the women's suffragist movement was about. That's what the Declaration of Independence was about.

But there's a basic freedom Americans are being denied day after day. More than half of America's workers say they would like to join a union but too few will get that chance, because employers routinely and shamefully violate workers' freedom to form unions.

Human Rights Watch—an internationally recognized organization that monitors basic human rights—has issued a report calling the routine violation of workers' rights in the United States a fundamental human rights issue. How bad is it? Research shows that even though our laws supposedly guarantee America's workers the right to choose for themselves whether to have a union, employers routinely violate that right.

Workers are harassed, intimidated, coerced and even fired, just for exercising, or attempting to exercise, this basic freedom.

Some 42 million workers in America say they would form a union tomorrow to improve their jobs, gain health care, ensure job security and have a say in their working conditions.

However, employers do just about anything to stop them, including breaking the law. Twenty-five percent of private-sector employers illegally fire workers for supporting a union. More than three-quarters use workers' own supervisors to pressure workers in one-on-one meetings.

Ninety-two percent of employers force workers to attend meetings against the union, according to Cornell University researcher Kate Bronfenbrenner.

The Employee Free Choice Act (S. 1925, H.R. 3619), sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), ensures that

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Have you signed the petition to support the
Employee Free Choice Act?

Go to: www.freechoiceact.org/page/s/jwj?source=f&subsource=i

Employee Free Choice Act (continued)

when a majority of employees in a workplace decides to form a union, employees can do so without the debilitating obstacles employers now use to block workers' free choice. This presents an exciting opportunity to strengthen the rights of workers to choose a union freely, and we must obtain firm commitments from our elected officials at all levels to take a clear stand in support of this bill.

Congressmen Ben Chandler and John Yarmuth have demonstrated their support for workers' rights by voting for the Employee Free Choice Act. They have yet to be joined by Ed Whitfield, Geoff Davis, Hal Rogers or Ron Lewis.

These employer abuses come at a huge cost to society, not only because they contravene our basic constitutional freedoms but also because when the right to choose a union is suppressed, society's safety net is strained, race and gender pay gaps widen, discrimination on the job increases, wages and local tax bases dwindle and job safety standards plummet. The democracy America's workers have fought so long and hard to establish should not be pillaged by unscrupulous employers.

Please urge our local elected officials to support the Employee Free Choice Act so that we may restore to workers in Kentucky and across the whole of our democracy the fundamental freedom to form unions.

Kentucky Social Forum

Planning for the Kentucky Social Forum has started with a bang! With new school organizing via facebook, myspace and text messaging and old school organizing via one-on-ones and telephone, 45 folks participated in the first strategy session in Louisville in July. At that session, we talked about part of the purpose of a state



Social Form is to continue building a progressive movement in Kentucky by educating folks about numerous social justice issues using a human rights framework. Stephanie Guilloud of Project South facilitated this initial session.

Some of those social justice issues include housing, hunger, homelessness, poverty, environmental justice, workers' rights, youth advocacy and organizing, mountaintop removal, reproductive justice, immigrant rights, queer advocacy and organizing, media justice, non-partisan political mobilizing, economic justice, etc.

For the second session in Lexington in August, folks signed up to work teams including planning, logistics, fundraising, programming, arts & culture, outreach & organizing, communications/technology/media, and youth. If you would like to sign up for a Work Team, please call 502-582-5454 or email attica@kyjwj.org. You can also join the "Kentucky

Women Building Power in Kentucky

By Jenna Dirr

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”
-- Arundhati Roy

“Women Building Power in Kentucky” retreats have been an amazing experience for me. They were co-organized by a group of women representing different perspectives with a common goal of connecting with others in the state who are making a difference in the lives of many. The overall goal of “Women Building Power” is to intentionally develop relationships and agendas for social change that are multiracial, intergenerational, multi-lingual and build bridges across boundaries of sexuality, income level, disability and educational background.



Often times we are consumed with the hustle and bustle of our daily lives and we forget to take a minute to renew our spirits and show gratitude. The “Women Building Power in Kentucky” retreats allow women to vision together, share experiences and knowledge, reflect and most importantly hope together. As a newcomer to the state of KY it was the first time since my move that I felt a strong connection with others in the social justice movement. I cherished the time to relax and enjoy one another’s company and feel such solidarity.

Too often we focus on only one issue and do not collaborate or make it out to support one another’s efforts for change, and this was a unique way to remind us of the critical impact we can have as a united front. No matter our background this time enabled many to feel connected to a larger vision and channel our energy toward working on social justice for the entire state of Kentucky.

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Investing In Our Work

Thank you to the following foundations, houses of worship and labor unions that have invested in Kentucky Jobs With Justice in 2008:

American Federation of Government Employees Local 1133

American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees Council 62

Appalachian Community Fund

Church of the Epiphany

Coalition for the Homeless

Communications Workers of America District 3

Greater Louisville Building and Construction Trades Council

Highlander Research and Education Center "We Shall Overcome Fund"

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