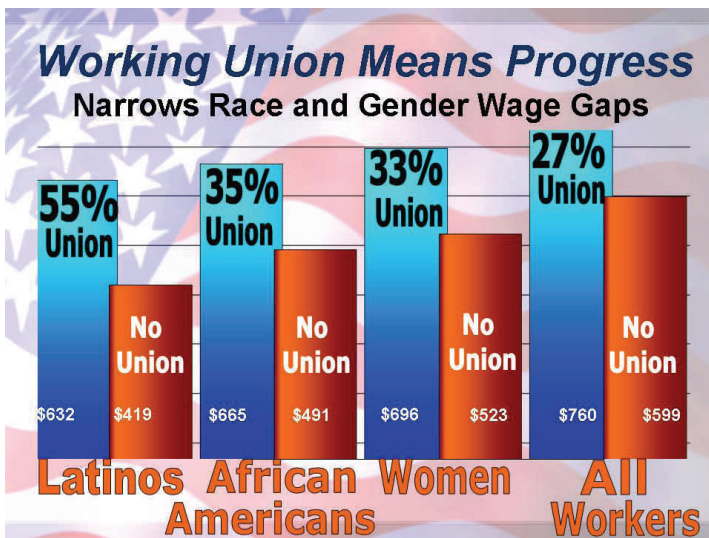


We All Win -

The top legislative priority of the AFL-CIO is passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, EFCA also called the Card Check bill. The legislation would streamline the process for workers to first form or join unions.

The current federal law, passed during the New Deal, has not withstood the corporate assault on a workers' freedom to associate together. In practice today, compliance with the National Labor Relations Act is voluntary and unionization of the private sector has dropped below 9% of the workforce. Things are so bad that Human Rights Watch, for the last six years in a row, has found that the United States supports human rights abuse through the inadequate protections and non enforcement of the laws meant to protect the freedom to organize.



At a September Capitol Hill press conference held with the Democratic Leadership Committee AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said

Our current laws are a nightmare that not only allow—but encourage—lengthy and confrontational campaigns aimed at snuffing out workers' choice. Fewer than 70,000 workers were able to form unions last year under current law—even though more than half of all workers say they would join a union today if they could.

The stakes are clear when you remember that all of the things we think of as hallmarks of the American middle class—home ownership, health insurance, paid vacations, guaranteed pensions, the eight-hour day and the 40-hour week—all of these first became possible for union workers as a result of collective bargaining, then spread more widely to other workers as nonunion employers sought to compete. “

Sweeney's remarks were echoed by the Democratic

Leadership Committee Chair and Iowa Governor Tom Visklak . The occasion marks the first time that the Democratic Leadership Committee and the AFL-CIO have worked together to pass major legislation.

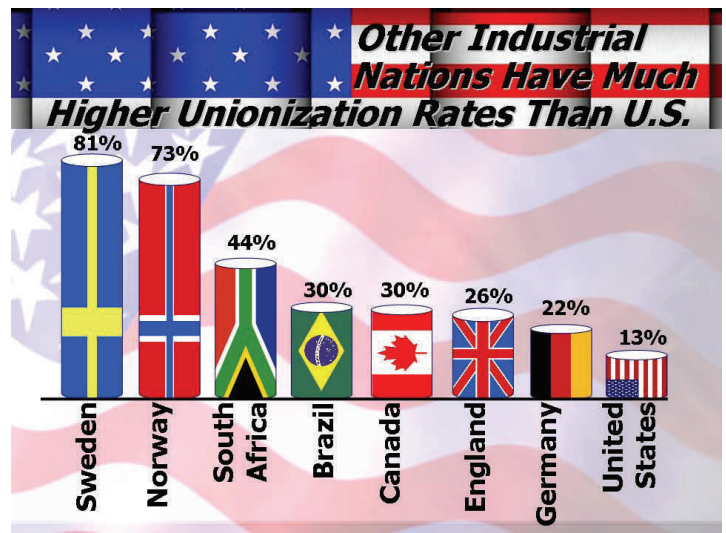
In the current Republican dominated Congress the legislation, also known as the Card Check bill, was reintroduced with 216 cosponsors in the House (219 is a majority) and 41 in the Senate where 51 is the majority. In the next Congress the chances for passage are greatly improved.

The legislation fundamentally is about building power for workers by forming unions in order to get what we all want and need and deserve from our work and from society for ourselves and our families. The reason for this legislation is that organizing strengthens bargaining. The higher the market share a union has the higher the wages and benefits will be. The higher the market share that unions have in a region the higher the standard of living will be. The stronger the middle class becomes the better a nation we become – that's why the DLC supports this fundamental change in the rules for organizing unions. The card check system proposed in the EFCA is already the law in New York State for small businesses.

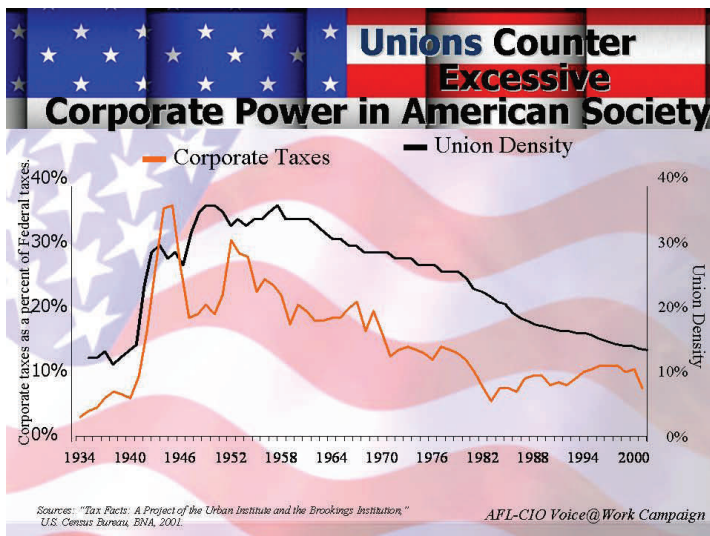
The labor movement is the most successful antipoverty program ever invented. And the facts support a conclusion that for over seventy years the most improvements to the greatest number of families in this nation have come from the ability of immigrants and citizens alike to join Unions and harvest the fruits of collective bargaining, then secure those gains through political action and passing legislation.

According to the US Department of Labor working union means earning 33% more for women, 35% more for African Americans and 55% more for Latinos and overall 27% more for all workers when compared to working without a union. See fig. _ Working union means having a 77% advantage in health care and 50 % advantage in pensions.

Where greater percentages of workers are organized, wages are higher and benefits are better and improvements are easier to achieve. The U.S. has the lowest unionization rate of



all the industrialized nations and is the only industrialized nation without a national health care system. The U.S. is number one in wealth creation and 34th in 22nd in educational achievement, 34th in health care, 27th in press freedom, 38th in personal free-



dom and 27th in sustainable development.

When there is a high unionization rate corporations pay more taxes. In 1955 35% of American workers were in unions and corporations paid 40% of the Federal budget. Today corporations pay less than 5% of the taxes and unions represent less than 13% of the workforce. See fig. _

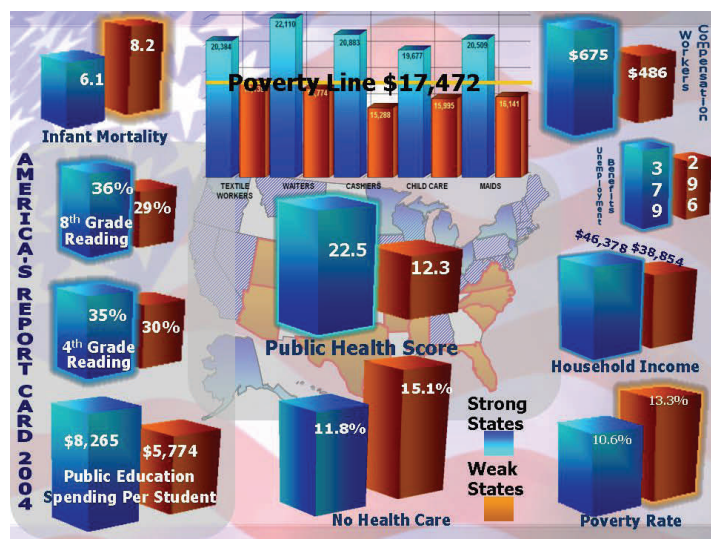
A comparison of statistics in the 10 states with the highest rates of unionization compared to the ten states with the lowest rates of unionization on measures of well being demonstrates that when we work union, we all win. In the strong union states poverty rates are 28.3% lower than in the 10 states where unionized market share is the lowest. The rates of single family home ownership are 26.8% higher in the strong union states. Average household income is 19.4% higher in the strong union states than in the weak Union states. Low wage occupations like cashiers, maids, waiters, and child care workers pay wages on average above the poverty line in strong union states instead of below the poverty line. Health indices follow the pattern too. Infant mortality rates are 25.6% higher in weak union states, the death rate is nearly 10% higher in weak union states, the rate of occupational fatalities, death while at work, is 22% higher in states with the lowest rates of unionization. Rates of having no insurance are 27.9% higher in those same weak union states. See fig. _

America has relied on education is the key to a better life for generations. Key educational statistics in the states prove out that when more working families have a voice their aspirations are supported. Per pupil k-12 public education spending in strong union states is 43.1% higher. The number of fourth graders reading at or above grade level is 16% higher and in eighth grade 24% higher in the strong union states. IQ scores on average are 11.9% higher. The social safety net is stronger too with unemployment benefits a average of 28% higher in strong union states and the worker comp benefit being almost 39% better.

See fig. _

The US Center for Disease Control uses a set of measurers including those above to come up with a public health score for each of the fifty states and the nation as a whole. The strong union states score an average of 22.5 and the ten weakest 12.3 – an incredible 83% difference. Working union really does mean living a better life. See fig. _

Even civic participation is greater in the strong union states with a majority of eligible voters going to the polls in the strong Union states in the last five presidential elections with only the 2000 Union. The stronger the participation the greater the democracy. Nearly 1500 volunteers worked to elect 802 member John Hall to the 103rd Congress and that lower Hudson Valley district will now have a co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice act. A remarkable turn around from outgoing congresswoman Sue Kelly who, with representative Shays from Connecticut, worked on a bill to make card check illegal, end voluntary political contributions by union members and make the personal information about union organizers public. See fig. _



The truth is, for practical economic matters, Liberty means being able to open a small business and liberty means being free to organize into a Union to make a better life for your family. Until this year you would not hear this as part of most politicians' agenda – its too far "off center" for the policy advisors and the political communications people to recommend advocating in public discourse. That is now changing. When we get a president that will sign the legislation the groundwork for protecting the middle class and organizing will be laid.

Bush Inc has pushed the power of wealth and privilege as the purpose of government. Now the push back, to make government serve and protect all Americans, begins in earnest. The Labor movement marks fight for the restoration of the freedom to organize each December 10 on International Human Rights day. Information about this year's activities and the EFCA is available at <http://www.aflcio.org/joinaunion/voiceatwork/efca/>