

# A bad thing to be in a union?

## GUEST OPINION

To the editor:

I wonder when it became a bad thing to belong to a union. I've belonged to a union my entire working life, as did my father before me. A union worker will never be considered wealthy or rich, but we'll always have a decent wage, health insurance and a pension that will allow us to be self-supporting in our retirement and not be reliant upon the government. Union employers can take pride in giving their workers these benefits.

The Employee Free Choice Act allows workers to have a union once a majority of workers signs authorization cards indicating they want to form a union - or they can choose an NLRB-supervised election. The workers make the choice. Isn't that what our country is all about? Under current law, cards are signed, but the employer, not the worker, chooses to have an election or not.

In a previous letter to the

editor the writer indicated \$200 million was spent by labor in elections last year. According to OpenSecrets.org, a non-partisan organization, business PACs gave nearly five times more in campaign contributions than labor PACs did in the last election cycle. Add to that the lobbying efforts of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a proponent of big business, who spent \$144.4 million on lobbying efforts in the last election cycle, that's more than \$400,000 for every day Congress was in session. The entire labor sector spent less than \$84 million on lobbying efforts during that same time.

That letter also indicated workers would be subject to "unrelenting pressure and coercion" by the union. Perhaps, a more realistic fear is the "unrelenting pressure and coercion" a worker seeking union representation receives from the employer - with or without a secret ballot. In a report for the American

Rights at Work from December 2005, it is sited that over 50 percent of companies threaten their workers they will close their doors if the union is brought in, only 1 percent actually do. It goes on to report that 92 percent of companies force workers to attend mandatory closed-door meetings against the union and 75 percent hire union-busters. Further, 25 percent of companies have illegally fired at least one worker for trying to unionize.

We need our elected official to protect workers rights before continued harm is done to our economy and the middle class. The Employee Free Choice Act is not an automatic unionization, as some would have you believe, it is simply a way for the American workers to have a voice. Democracy at its finest.

**Pete Parris, Waconia  
Political Director  
Sheet Metal Workers  
Local #10**