

Half a Million and Counting

In these tough economic times, workers need more opportunities to get ahead – that’s why unions matter and why workers across the country are seeking to form them today. **Since 2003, more than half a million Americans formed unions through majority sign-up, an efficient, fair and democratic union organizing process** where employers recognize unions if a majority of employees demonstrate their desire to form one.¹

Who’s Using Majority Sign-Up

Majority sign-up has given hundreds of thousands of workers access to a stronger voice, better wages, and improved health care. They come from diverse professions, regions, and successful companies in the United States, including:

- 64,000 hotel and casino workers
- 46,000 home care providers
- 11,000 UPS Freight workers
- 5,800 public school teachers and aides
- 225 reporters and editors at Dow Jones
- 162 nuclear engineers at Pacific Gas & Electric
- 8,000 farmworkers jointly employed by Mount Olive Pickle and the North Carolina Growers Association

Building on a Fair and Direct Process

Too often, irresponsible corporations call the shots. They get to decide how their workers choose to form unions through a management-dominated union election process. And when workers try and form unions to improve their lives, they’re often met with harassment and resistance, dragging on the election process indefinitely and repeatedly breaking the law. That’s why majority sign-up is so critical – it helps level the playing field and offers workers a more fair and direct path to form unions.²

Both employees and employers who have used the majority sign-up process are singing praises on its attributes. One solid example can be found at AT&T. The wireless division of AT&T negotiated its first contract with the Communications Workers of America (CWA) in 2000 using majority sign-up. Both parties took an additional step of creating a voluntary code of conduct to help create a level playing field during the union organizing process by prohibiting disparaging treatment of one another and banning the use of intimidating and coercive tactics on employees.

The result has been effective – both parties serve as business partners, advancing a cooperative labor relations model in direct contrast to hostile relationships that so often pit employers against unions during organizing drives. Given a free and fair chance to make an informed decision, a significant number of wireless workers across the country elected to form unions. To date, 21,000 AT&T employees have chosen union representation through majority sign-up.



“Management didn’t pressure us or try to interfere. Our union campaign was positive and without conflict. We were focused on improving our jobs and making [AT&T] a better place to work.”

Larry Barrett, AT&T Wireless Technician, Schaumburg, IL



“We believe that employees should have a choice... Making that choice available to them results, in part, in employees who are engaged in the business and who have a passion for customers.”

Rick Bradley, Former Executive Vice President of Human Resources, AT&T

A Growing Alternative

Just as states are at the forefront of tackling problems concerning health coverage and global warming, they are also at the forefront of legislation that seeks to truly give workers a free choice. There are now 22 laws in 12 states that grant certain public and private employees the right to form unions through the majority sign-up process.³ These states are laboratories for public policy, showing that majority sign-up works and is a proven and widely-used process.

Federal Reform Needed

While many states and cutting-edge companies have adopted majority sign-up with great success as an alternative to outdated union recognition systems, the vast majority of America's workers are denied the fair and democratic process that majority sign-up provides. State laws granting majority sign-up rights typically just cover public employees, and private employees must rely on their employer to voluntarily agree to recognize their union through this process. National labor policy needs to catch up to this innovation in states and the private sector. That's why passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, which would extend this right to millions of Americans, is so vital. Majority sign-up has already allowed half a million Americans to join unions in the past five years – many more workers have used this method than those who have organized through the National Labor Relations Board election process during the same period.⁴ Millions more stand to benefit if our laws are changed to reflect the wishes of America's workers who want union representation to improve their wages, benefits, and secure a brighter future for their families.

¹ From January 2003 to April 2008, over half of a million American workers organized through the majority sign-up process. This number was derived from press accounts, union websites, and from data provided to American Rights at Work by the following unions: AFSCME, AFT, CWA, FLOC, IAMAW, IBEW, IBT, IFPTE, SEIU, UAW, UFW, UNITE HERE, and USW.

² For more on workers' experiences organizing through majority sign-up, see: Adrienne E. Eaton and Jill Kriesky, "NLRB Elections vs. Card Check Campaigns: Results of a Worker Survey," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, forthcoming 2008.

³ State laws include: California Government Code, 3507.1; California Government Code, 3577; California Government Code, 71636.3; California Education Code, 92625.3; General Statutes of Connecticut, Chapter 561, Section 31-106; General Statutes of Connecticut, Chapter 166, Section 10-153b; Illinois Public Labor Relations Act, 5 ILCS 315/9; Kansas Statute, 72-5415; Maryland Code, Education, 6-405; Maryland Code, Education, 6-506; Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 150E: Section 4; Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 89; Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 50A: Section 5; New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated, Title XXIII, Section 273-A:10; New Jersey P.L. 2005, Ch. 161; New Jersey P.L. 2005, Ch. 161; Consolidated Laws of New York, New York State Labor Relations Act, Chapter 31, Article 20, Section 705; Consolidated Laws of New York, Chapter 18, Article 2, Section 12; North Dakota Century Code, 15.1-16-11; Oklahoma Statutes, 70-509.2; Oklahoma Statutes, 11-51-211; Oregon Revised Statutes, 243.682

⁴ The number of workers who organized through the National Labor Relations Board process from January 2003 to April 2008 was derived from data provided by the agency through a FOIA request submitted by American Rights at Work on May 5, 2008.