

This below report by research experts at the Center for American Progress (CAP), deserves review. CAP is Democratic policy research center, associated with John Podesta, who is on a leave while serving as the transition chief for the Obama Administration. (See links for fact sheets and an interactive map).

Also attached below is a story in today's Post-Gazette (Pittsburgh) featuring a USW-led press forum in the lobby of our headquarters on the subject of the CAP report to build support of EFCA. The published photo showed USW's Jamal Craig speaking.

Gary/usw

Center for American Progress Action Fund

Unions Are Good for the American Economy

By *David Madland, Karla Walter*



State fact sheets (pdfs): [Alaska](#) | [California](#) | [Delaware](#) | [Maine](#) | [Montana](#) | [Nebraska](#)
| [Pennsylvania](#) | [Wisconsin](#)
[U.S. fact sheet](#) (pdf)

The essence of what labor unions do—give workers a stronger voice so that they can get a fair share of the economic growth they help create—is and has always been important to making the economy work for all Americans. And unions only become more important as the economy worsens. Passing the Employee Free Choice Act and making it harder for management to threaten workers seeking to unionize would be good for American workers. It would help boost workers' wages and benefits. And putting more money in workers' pockets would provide a needed boost for the U.S. economy. Increasing unionization is a good way to get out of our current economic troubles.

Also, see the interactive map: [Unions Are Good for Workers and the Economy in Every State](#)

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PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE -- Feb. 19, 2009

Labor's pain:

Wages don't reflect rise in productivity, economist says



Lake Fong/Post-Gazette

Jamaal Craig, vice president, Pittsburgh Chapter, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, talks about the current economic crisis as Keli Vereb, member of USW Local 1408 and Jack Shea, President of Allegheny County Labor Council listen at the United Steelworkers building

By Ann Belser, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

As an economist, Mark Price can see the trends as easily as he can see lines on a graph.

From 1947 until 1973, real incomes for families doubled across the economic spectrum. It was a time, he said, of "broadly shared prosperity" and high union membership.

In 1973, union membership was just below a third of all workers, but since then membership has dropped to about 16 percent. Since then, the bulk of the prosperity has shifted to the upper rungs of

the economic ladder, with the middle class typically losing ground.

So, while productivity has continued to see gains, compensation for all but the top percentage of earners has remained flat, and workers are taking home \$2,000 less per year than they did in 2000, in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Mr. Price was speaking to a group of unionists gathered at the United Steelworkers building, Downtown, as part of the labor movement's renewed push for the Employee Free Choice Act, which would, in part, make it easier to form a union.

"Union membership raises wages by 10 percent," Mr. Price said.

Jack Shea, the president of the Allegheny County Labor Council, said that, according to a survey by a labor organization, "60 million [Americans] said 'I would join a union tomorrow if I had the opportunity.' "

"Once you start building the unions, you're building the middle class," Mr. Shea said. "The people who are against the Employee Free Choice Act are the same people who got us into this mess to begin with."

The discussion yesterday coincided with the release of a report by the Center for American Progress which pointed out that union members are 28.2 percent more likely to receive health insurance from their employers and 53.9 percent more likely to have pension plans from their employers.

In a national report, the center noted that if union membership were to return to 1983 levels, those newly unionized workers would earn a total of about \$49 billion more per year. In Pennsylvania , that would translate into a 5 percent increase in union membership, and an increase of \$852 million in wages for those workers.

Keli Vereb, a member of Lincoln Borough Council, also is a member of the United Steelworkers Local 1408 and schedules when work will be done for U.S. Steel.

She was a single mother, living with her parents, in the early 1990s when she worked during the day and went to school at night. After her college graduation, she started out in a low-paying job with no benefits. Then she landed at U.S. Steel. As a union member, her paycheck more than doubled, she and her daughter received health insurance, and she entered a company-sponsored pension plan. Now, as a borough council member, she has worked to make sure her local police remain in a union, and the borough has adopted a "Buy American" policy.

Geneva Turner has her own plan to campaign for the Employee Free Choice Act. Ms. Turner is the secretary-treasurer of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 325, which represents workers at the former H.J. Heinz plant, now owned by Bay Valley Foods.

Ms. Turner will carry pamphlets to Wal-Mart urging workers there to support the Employee Free Choice Act. She said she would hide pamphlets in a cart and hand them to employees. Wal-Mart has taken a strong stance against unionization.

Mr. Price said it was easy to see the effect of a decrease in union membership in the country:

"Productivity is continuing to rise, but it's not being realized in wages."

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