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State of Minnesota

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION

HOUSE FILE No. **554**

February 1, 2007

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The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Commerce and Labor

March 12, 2007

Committee Recommendation and Adoption of Report:

To Pass

Read Second Time

- 1.1 A resolution
- 1.2 memorializing Congress to support the Employee Free Choice Act relating to workers'
- 1.3 rights to form and join unions.
- 1.4 WHEREAS, in 1935, the United States established, by law, that workers must be free
- 1.5 to form unions; and
- 1.6 WHEREAS, the freedom to form or join a union is internationally recognized by the 1948
- 1.7 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a fundamental human right; and
- 1.8 WHEREAS, the free choice to join with others and bargain for better wages and benefits is
- 1.9 essential to economic opportunity and good living standards; and
- 1.10 WHEREAS, unions benefit communities by strengthening living standards, stabilizing tax
- 1.11 bases, promoting equal treatment, and enhancing civic participation; and
- 1.12 WHEREAS, union workers receive better wages and benefits, with union workers earning
- 1.13 29 percent more than workers without a union, 35 percent are more likely to have health
- 1.14 insurance, and they are four times more likely to have a guaranteed defined-benefit pension; and
- 1.15 WHEREAS, unions help raise workers' pay and narrow the income gap for minorities and
- 1.16 women by increasing median weekly earnings by 31 percent for union women workers, 31
- 1.17 percent for African-American workers, 50 percent for Latino workers, and nine percent for
- 1.18 Asian-American workers; and
- 1.19 WHEREAS, workers across the nation are routinely denied the freedom to form unions and
- 1.20 bargain for a better life with 25 percent of private-sector employers illegally firing at least one
- 1.21 worker for union activity during organizing campaigns; and

2.1 WHEREAS, 77 percent of the public believes it is important to have strong laws protecting
2.2 the freedom for workers to make their own decision about having a union, and 58 percent of
2.3 workers would join a union if they had the chance; and

2.4 WHEREAS, in 45 percent of successful organizing campaigns, employers often refuse to
2.5 bargain fairly with newly unionized workers by dragging out the first contract bargaining for
2.6 up to two years; and

2.7 WHEREAS, each year millions of dollars are spent to frustrate workers' efforts to form
2.8 unions, and most violations of workers' freedom to choose a union occur behind closed doors,
2.9 with 78 percent of employers forcing employees to attend mandatory antiunion meetings; and

2.10 WHEREAS, when the right of workers to form a union is violated, wages fall, race and
2.11 gender pay gaps widen, workplace discrimination increases, and job safety standards disappear;
2.12 and

2.13 WHEREAS, a worker's fundamental right to choose a union free from coercion and
2.14 intimidation is a public issue that requires public policy solutions, including legislative remedies;
2.15 and

2.16 WHEREAS, the Employee Free Choice Act has been introduced in the United States
2.17 Congress in order to restore workers' freedom to join a union; and

2.18 WHEREAS, the Employee Free Choice Act will safeguard workers' ability to make their
2.19 own decisions on joining a union without coercion, provide for first contract mediation and
2.20 arbitration, and establish meaningful penalties when employers violate workers' rights; and

2.21 WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Minnesota supports the Employee Free
2.22 Choice Act which would authorize the National Labor Relations Board to certify a union as
2.23 the bargaining representative when a majority of employees voluntarily sign authorizations
2.24 designating that union to represent them; and

2.25 WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Minnesota supports the Employee Free Choice
2.26 Act which would provide for first contract mediation and arbitration of a first contract; and

2.27 WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Minnesota supports the Employee Free Choice
2.28 Act to establish meaningful penalties for violations of a worker's freedom to choose a union;
2.29 NOW, THEREFORE,

3.1 BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota that it urges, the President
3.2 and the Congress of the United States to pass the Employee Free Choice Act to protect and
3.3 preserve for America's workers their freedom to choose whether or not to form a union.

3.4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State of the State of Minnesota is
3.5 directed to prepare copies of this memorial and transmit them to the President of the United
3.6 States, the President and the Secretary of the United States Senate, the Speaker and the Clerk
3.7 of the United States House of Representatives, the chair of the Senate Committee on Health,
3.8 Education, Labor, and Pensions, the chair of the House Committee on Education and Labor, and
3.9 Minnesota's Senators and Representatives in Congress so that they may be informed of the stand
3.10 of the Minnesota Legislature in this matter.