



## **Resolution Workers' Right to Organize**

*Adopted September 6, 2006*

**Whereas** the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 states: "Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests;" and

**Whereas** 11 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates have called upon every nation, including the United States, to protect and defend workers' rights, including the right to form unions and bargain collectively; and

**Whereas** 73 percent of the American public say laws protecting the freedom to join unions are important; and

**Whereas** only 12.5 percent of U.S. workers belong to a union; and

**Whereas** nearly 6 in 10, or 59 percent, of American workers would be in a union if workers could choose freely; and

**Whereas** 57 million nonunion workers say they want to join a union; and

**Whereas** employer attempts to obstruct unions is widespread and escalating; and

**Whereas** over half (52 percent) of private-sector U.S. employers, when faced with employees who want to start a union, threaten to shut down or cut back operations if employees join a union; and

**Whereas** a quarter of employers illegally fire at least one worker for union activity during organizing campaigns, and three-quarters of employers hire consultants or union-busters to help them fight union organizing drives; and

**Whereas** more than 20,000 American workers are illegally disciplined or fired for engaging in union activity annually, up from 6,000 in 1969 and under 1,000 per year in the 1950s; and

**Whereas** 45 percent of workers who win a union election still don't have a union contract two years later because of employer delaying tactics and unwillingness to bargain in good faith; and

**Whereas** employers regularly use an array of administrative and procedural delays in the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) representation election process and in court proceedings; and

**Whereas** employers engage in unfair labor practices with impunity because the 1935 National Labor Relations Act's penalties are weak and infrequently enforced; and

**Whereas** Human Rights Watch in 2000 reported that U.S. labor laws were grossly out-of-compliance with international human rights norms and were failing utterly to protect workers' basic freedom to form unions and bargain collectively; and

**Whereas** the Government Accountability Office in 2002 estimated that 32 million U.S. workers lacked even the minimal legal protections to form unions and bargain collectively; and

**Whereas** since taking office, President Bush and his NLRB appointees have stripped federal labor law coverage, and hence protection, from graduate student employees, certain disabled workers, and employees of temporary help agencies; and

**Whereas** governors in Indiana, Kentucky and Missouri recently rescinded collective bargaining for state workers and half the states continue to deny public employees the basic right to bargain collectively with their employers.

**Therefore, be it resolved** that the Alliance for Retired Americans supports passage of bipartisan legislation such as the Employee Free Choice Act (S. 842 and H.R. 1696) introduced by Senators Edward Kennedy and Arlen Specter, and Representatives George Miller and Peter King respectively, which:

- Provides for the certification of a union when a majority of the employees at a workplace has signed written authorizations stating they wish to have union representation;
- Gives both employees and employers access to mediation and binding arbitration to reach an initial collective bargaining agreement on a timely basis; and
- Imposes stiff and quick enforcement of penalties for illegal employer conduct violating workers' rights.

**Be it further resolved** that the Alliance for Retired Americans supports efforts to protect public sector workers from federal workplace rules or gubernatorial orders that undermine collective bargaining agreements and any attempts to privatize public sector jobs.