

We need the

**Employee
FREE
CHOICE ACT
NOW!**

‘Workers Were Fired For No Reason’

My name is Chinazo Okolo and I have been an employee of the “new AT&T (formerly Cingular Wireless/BellSouth Mobility) for the past 10 years.

Even though employees at our parent company were unionized, we weren’t. And our bosses took full advantage. Work rules were inconsistently applied and things got even more confusing when Cingular Wireless took over.

The confusion worked to the company’s advantage. For me, it meant a large and arbitrary pay cut and a huge increase in my insurance premiums. Our schedules were changed without notice and employees were disciplined when they couldn’t keep up with the changes. Worst of all, some workers were fired for no reason and they had no recourse because Louisiana is an “employment at will” state.

By 2001 things had gotten so bad that some of my coworkers approached CWA about organizing a union. We wanted:

(a) a clear and precise contract that outlined the rights and responsibilities of both employer and employee and the processes for change.

(b) to gain protection from the arbitrary use of power by capricious or inept members of management.

(c) to have a voice at work so the company would take our opinions into account when making policy decisions affecting us.

Despite all the problems we’d had with the company in the past, we are among a fortunate, small number of American workers who have been able to organize a union without interference from management. CWA had negotiated an agreement with Cingular so that the company would remain neutral in organizing campaigns and would recognize a union if a majority of workers signed cards asking for representation.

Unfortunately, most American work-



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ers don’t have the same opportunity we did. That’s why we need the Employee Free Choice Act. It protects employers, too. Employers can ask for federal mediation after 90 days. So can the union, if the employer is being unreasonable. And employers who fire union supporters without cause would face steep fines — right now

there’s no punishment at all.

The Employee Free Choice Act is in support of all things American: the essential concepts of freedom and justice. Scripture says that “a workman is worthy of his wages” and that workers should be treated fairly by employers. As a supporter of the Employee Free Choice Act, my response is a resounding AMEN! The Employee Free Choice Act is essential to maintaining job satisfaction for America’s workforce and to keeping jobs in America.