

# We need the

# Employee FREE CHOICE ACT NOW!

## ‘Anyone Who Stood Up For the Contract Was Labeled a Troublemaker’

**M**y name is Joe Bordelon. In August of 2001, I was hired as a residential installer in the Baton Rouge office of Tyco/ADT Security. At the time, the office covered all of Louisiana except for New Orleans.

During my interview, the branch manager told me it was a union shop and asked how I felt about unions. I said that I didn't care for them. The branch manager said he agreed, and offered me the job.

About a month later, ADT purchased Security Link, a non-union company based in Lafayette, La. My office became a satellite office that answered to management in Lafayette. Soon, managers began asking technicians to sign a piece of paper that they claimed would let the company show employees what ADT could offer as an alternative to the union.

Uneducated about unions, many people — including me — signed. Three weeks later we learned the company used our signatures to petition the NLRB for a decertification election.

Furious, I decided to go to a union meeting to see what the company wanted to get rid of so badly. At this meeting, I was informed of my rights under collective bargaining and realized ADT was taking advantage of me. I joined the union the next day.

With the decertification vote coming up, I asked the shop steward how I could help. I did research, read my contract and started to study labor law. When managers at a captive-audience meeting urged us to vote out the union,

I told my coworkers that they could keep the union, where our wages, benefits and rights are guaranteed by our contract, or they could vote the union out and not know what tomorrow holds. The ADT director of labor relations called me a punk.

Afterwards, I became a union steward. When the vote took place a month later, we won by a large margin.

ADT was angry and our Baton Rouge office, with nearly 100 percent union membership, was the target. Managers began harassing employees who were in the union and rewarding employees who were not. Anyone who stood up for the contract was labeled a troublemaker. Managers made up a reason to fire a worker who had been a union steward for five years. CWA got his job back with full back pay.

When management harassment pushed technicians to the point of quitting, no one was hired to replace them in Baton Rouge. Instead, technicians were hired in Lafayette and made to drive more than 50 miles to work. They were told when hired that if they were caught talking to a union representative, they would be fired.

By this time, I had been elected chief steward. I placed a steward in the Lafayette office to start organizing. We worked hard for several years, but couldn't overcome management's threats and its lies about the union.

Ultimately, my office was placed

under new management out of New Orleans and I was offered a management job. For about six months, I was the number-one residential installation manager in the country. I hired four workers and things were going well. Then ADT announced plans to restructure. Suddenly we were put back under the jurisdiction of the Lafayette office, and the very next day I was terminated.

What managers didn't know is that I'd asked the supervisor who promoted me to write a letter stating that if my management job didn't work out that I could return to my old job. The company was forced to re-hire me and three weeks later I was elected chief steward again.

Our troubles continued and the company refused to bargain a new contract, walking away from bargaining in February 2008. Only with the help of a federal mediator did we finally get a contract, in late October, minus all the issues the company left on the table eight months earlier. We are still trying to organize in Lafayette, but ADT fights us every step of the way.

The companies that are trying so hard to kill the Employee Free Choice Act claim that the law already protects the right of workers to organize unions and bargain contracts. As you can see from my story — and thousands more like it — that's just not true. Whether workers decide they want a union or not, they have a right to make that decision without being harassed, threatened and put in fear of losing their jobs.



Joe Bordelon