

Unions hold the key to unlocking dreams

letters@TimesRecord.Com 04/03/2009 By Sheila Mellow

After spending a recent Sunday afternoon with my two young grandsons, my 6-year-old looked at me and said, "I guess we'll just always be poor, Grammy?" It brought tears to my eyes and compelled me to speak out for the future of our children and America, the land that I love.

Wages are dropping, health-care costs are rising and the middle class has all but vanished. An entire generation is unable to retire because of the rising cost of health care and the elimination of traditional pensions.

Worse, we must witness our grown children in a constant struggle to make ends meet and provide for their children, many surviving paycheck to paycheck and, some, day to day.

I've seen the ads on television that claim if the Employee Free Choice Act is implemented, average American workers will be pressured by "big union thugs" to sign union cards. I'm here to say that I just happen to be a union organizer. Everything I have — a home, health care, a secure pension and good wages — I have because of my union.

As a grandmother with two wonderful grandchildren, I firmly believe that without the Employee Free Choice Act, my children and theirs don't stand a chance. We need to create an economy that works for everyone, and that means good jobs with decent wages and benefits along with affordable, quality health care. The ability to unionize is the key to unlocking the door to this American Dream for millions of working Americans.

Remember, it was unions that gave us the eight-hour work day, overtime after eight hours, pensions and health care, just to name a few. The decline of unionization was brought on by years of corporate-friendly laws and bad trade agreements. The American Dream is slipping away and in its place are foreclosures, substandard wages and the disappearance of traditional pensions. These are reasons why I chose to become an organizer.

We need to level the playing field, and the Employee Free Choice Act does just that.

Under today's broken labor laws, working men and women are powerless to bargain for better wages and health care. Companies are free to break the law without fear of any real penalties. The Employee Free Choice Act would put the power back in the hands of workers to join together to bargain for better wages, benefits and secure pensions, all of

which will continue to build and secure the future of the middle class.

Our future — that of our children and theirs; of Mainers and the United States — depends on the survival of the American Dream. Let's join together and bring back the American Dream, and secure the middle class for generations to come.

E-mail or write to Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins and tell them to vote for the Employee Free Choice Act.

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