

New Poll Shows Many Americans Are Convinced Unions Are Key To Improving Working Conditions

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DENVER (September 6, 2006) - A new Employment Law Alliance (ELA) poll, surveying working Americans just prior to the Labor Day holiday, finds the nation sharply divided over the perception of organized labor and the role it plays in the changing workplace.

In the latest "America At Work" public opinion survey sponsored by the ELA, more than 40% of those polled believe that unions have had a substantial impact on improving the working conditions of average American workers. At the same time, 35% of Americans believe that unions need to focus more on organizing new members and less on electoral politics. This finding is significant in light of last year's rift within the AFL-CIO which saw key unions including the Teamsters and SEIU reportedly breaking away out of frustration that the AFL-CIO was not spending sufficient money and attention on aggressively recruiting new members.

The poll also shed significant light on the reasons why workers turn to organized labor. By far and away, the top four reasons identified by employees as the most important factors driving them to unionization include:

- workplace safety (63%)
- getting better benefits (60%)
- obtaining higher wages (57%)
- increasing job security (54%)

Workers reported that factors related to poor management were much less important in deciding whether to join a union: poor communication (34%); inconsistent discipline (33%); having union representatives speak on their behalf (31%); and managers playing favorites (29%).

Jude Biggs, a Board Member of the ELA and a Partner in Holland & Hart's labor and employment law practice group, finds the polls results revealing. "These results indicate to me that most companies have done a good job recently dealing with employee relations issues such as workplace respect, effective communication and consistent discipline," said Ms. Biggs. "Those factors have been the primary drivers recently which caused employees to look to unions for help. Now, employees are telling us that workplace safety, wages, benefits and job security are areas where they think unions can help them. Ironically, these are some of the same reasons that gave

birth to the union movement originally."

Ms. Biggs added, "In light of recent corporate scandals, news reports indicating executive manipulation of stock options and continued outsourcing of work overseas, business people need to take this information seriously. Whenever there is a sense of unfairness, people are more willing to organize. If managers don't start communicating now with their people -- emphasizing the steps the company has taken to make pay fair, the workplace safe, and the company stable -- you will see an increase in unionization."

View the survey charts and graphs.

The Employment Law Alliance is the world's largest integrated, global practice network comprised of premier, independent law firms distinguished for their practice in employment and labor law. There are members in all 50 U.S. states and more than 75 countries. Since 2001, ELA has commissioned and published 16 public opinion polls as part of its "America at Work" series. The polls, with a samples size of 1,000 and a confidence interval of +/- 4 percent, focus on the most pivotal and timely issues in the American workplace. The research is conducted by Reed Group-Research, of Philadelphia, under the direction of Dr. Ted Reed.

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