

Barrett's Briefing: Interview With Pat Lynch

by Miki Saxon

Fulfilling one of Obama's campaign promises, Congress is now considering the [Employee Free Choice Act](#) (EFCA).

Because opinions run hot and strong on this proposed legislation, you should read both the [union perspective](#) and the [non-union perspective](#).

In short, this legislation would eliminate a secret ballot for union representation, replacing it with a public "card check," one key difference of opinion is how the card check would give employees a free choice.

But, regardless of your opinion on the legislation, Pat Lynch believes it should be called the "Employer Free Choice Act" because it gives employers a free choice – **either take care of their employees or the unions will.**

Pat Lynch, Ph.D., university professor and CEO of [Business Alignment Strategies](#) has studied unions extensively, focusing on their impact on the American economy. I interviewed her recently to learn more about the EFCA.

She started with a long-term perspective of unions. [Union membership](#) has declined as a percentage of the workforce, roughly corresponding to the decline in the manufacturing sector of the economy, to a low of 7.6% of the private workforce as of 2008. Even though union membership in the public sector has climbed to 36.8% in 2008, total union membership is still only 12% of the entire US workforce.

In Pat's opinion, unions believe EFCA will provide a significant opportunity to organize the newer businesses starting up in green industries. Especially with three key provisions in the proposed legislation:

No lower limit on company size. EFCA will apply to every company in the United States, whether 10,000 employees or 10 employees.

EFCA expands the definition of a union worker to include supervisors, in addition to line workers; with this expansion, unions can cover a much larger percent of a company's workforce.

EFCA gives unions the right to access the company's email directory for union communications.

Pat works with companies to improve employee relations. In her opinion, employees rate their job satisfaction on four primary issues:

Employee satisfaction with immediate supervisor

Employee voice – do employees feel safe in challenging the status quo, do employees believe their ideas will be considered

Employee perceptions of procedural fairness

Rewards and recognition – these go far beyond compensation, which is not a significant element of satisfaction. Recognition is extremely important.

Employers need to improve the actuality, as well as the perceptions, but it takes time. Pat recommends that employers start now—before the EFCA becomes law.

Start by offering an online satisfaction survey to your employees to learn how your employees perceive your team.

Then act on the results.

And come back Thursday to hear Miki's take on keeping employees happy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Butt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R" and a smaller "B" followed by "utt".