

FREE CHOICE:

Defeated. *But not dead.*

OCSEA activists quickly sprung into action this summer to get the U.S. Senate to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, a measure the U.S. House had already agreed to that would give workers protection from being harassed or fired for supporting unions.

AFSCME affiliates in Ohio, including OCSEA, launched a “no holds barred” mail and phone campaign to convince Ohio Senator George Voinovich that passing the Act was the right thing to do. An Ohio delegation that included OCSEA members delivered 5,000 cards to the Senator’s office in June.

Unfortunately, although the Senate majority voted for the measure, the Republicans blocked a floor vote that ultimately defeated the bill.

With this setback, some are wondering where labor goes



PHOTO COURTESY PAUL TANEDO

A diligent Ohio delegation of OCSEA, Council 8 and OAPSE activists left an impressive stack of letters and cards in support of the EFCA as they met with aides of Senator Voinovich in Washington, D.C. in June.

from here. Certainly the Senate votes against the EFCA will be brought up during the 2008

campaigns to try to unseat lawmakers who don’t support labor.

Some believe labor should initiate litigation so that current laws are upheld, while others think that legislative action should be taken at the state level. Some are calling for better organizing strategies to attract younger workers, such as online campaigns that focus on signing people up electronically.

Whatever happens next, it’s widely known that the benefits of the EFCA would have been far-reaching and go beyond just making more workers union employees. In fact, according to a study by the Institute for Americans’ Future, the EFCA

would have caused an additional 3.5 million workers to receive employer provided health care and would have helped 2.8 million workers gain a retirement pension.

The act also would have made employer harassment and firing of pro-union employees illegal, punishable by fines against the company.

“It’s not just about organizing more union members, it’s about improving people’s quality of life and work life. We know based on history that unions have the ability to bring up the benefits, wages and quality of life for not just union employees, but for all workers,” said OCSEA Operations Director Bruce Wyngaard. ■

Maria Sepeda (ODJFS) joined others in supporting the EFCA legislation at the WAC conference in May.

