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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Academics Urge Senator Specter to Support Employee Free Choice Act

HARRISBURG (June 1, 2009) — Academics across Pennsylvania have signed a letter asking Senator Arlen Specter to support legislation that will strengthen worker rights and help the economy rebound.

The letter, signed by 155 Pennsylvania college and university professors, urges Senator Specter to support the Senate's passage of the Employee Free Choice Act without amendments designed to weaken it.

This Act will reestablish checks and balances in the relationship between labor and management that have been eroded over the years. It will give employees the ability to form unions free from threats, illegal firings, and legal delays.

The Act will actually help the economy recover because it empowers middle-class workers to bargain for fair wages and benefits, the letter notes.

“Studies show that most workers would join a union if they had the opportunity,” the letter states. “Workers in unions earn better pay and benefits than their non-union counterparts but only if they get a contract.”

The Keystone Research Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization seeking to promote a more prosperous and equitable Pennsylvania economy.

The full text of the letter follows:

Pennsylvania Scholars in Support of the Employee Free Choice Act
June 1, 2009

Dear Senator Specter:

The undersigned faculty members work throughout the state of Pennsylvania in its universities and colleges. We are writing to support passage of the proposed Employee Free Choice Act. As both academics and Pennsylvania voters, we strongly encourage you to reconsider your stance on the measure, to oppose any amendments that may weaken its potential to help American workers and their communities, and to enable its passage in the Senate. We are not alone among your constituents in placing a high priority on your support of this measure.

We consider this amendment to the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to be critical for not only the working people of this state but also the economy as a whole. If we want to continue to promote good living standards, we need to support workers' rights to decide whether or not they want a union. Studies show that most workers would join a union if they had the opportunity. Workers in unions earn better pay and benefits than their non-union counterparts but only if they get a contract. We need the Employee Free Choice Act in order to ensure that workers get the unions they want and the first contracts they deserve, free from today's corporate-dominated process that subjects them to threats, illegal firings, coercion and delay.

It is long overdue for us to return to a labor-relations model that respects workers' rights to choose a union and encourages collective bargaining once they have done so. When the NLRA passed in 1935, the leaders of Congress understood the importance of protecting workers' right to choose unionization through the use of authorization cards. With our current economic crisis, it is now more urgent than ever that you and the other members of Congress have the vision to stop the erosion of workers' rights. We need leaders to look for ways that place well-paid people alongside corporate profits as indicators of economic prosperity. The Employee Free Choice Act will do just that by promoting a path to greater workplace fairness and middle-class living standards. We urge you to support this bill in its current form, and we look forward to its enactment in the near future.

Sincerely,

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Mark Aune, California University of Pennsylvania
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Ruth Baker, Community College of Philadelphia
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