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**Statement of Support for  
The Right to Form Labor Unions  
to be included in the  
Civil Rights Act**

Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice is pleased to issue a Statement of Support that would make labor organizing a right that is protected by the United States Civil Rights Act (1964). While it is illegal under the National Labor Relations Act (1935) to fire workers for exercising their right to join together to pursue fair wages and a voice in the workplace, the penalties are so weak that employers openly violate the law by engaging in union busting practices that include firing the organizers and intimidating their employees. Indeed some employers go through a great deal of trouble and wasteful financial expense by bringing in outside “union avoidance” experts who specialize in union busting activities.

**This wanton disregard for the rights of workers is gravely immoral.**

Catholic Social Doctrine holds that this behavior violates the natural right of free association that is rooted in the divine law and, therefore, constitutes a grave violation of the moral law. *This violation of the moral law cannot stand!* Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice strongly supports amending the Civil Rights Act to ban discrimination against workers who attempt to form labor unions. It is time in the United States to recognize labor organizing as a civil right that enjoys the same legal protection as discrimination based on race, sex, and national origin.

Support for labor unions enjoys a long history in the Catholic Church. Beginning in the medieval period and especially since the publication of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), the Church has given exceptional support for labor unions and the Popes—from Leo to Benedict XVI—have *encouraged* workers to form unions. The official teaching of the Catholic Church as found in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004) believes that workers’ rights should be “recognized in juridical systems.” (#301) The *Compendium* teaches that labor unions exert a “positive influence for social order and solidarity, and are therefore an *indispensable element of social life*. (#305)

In addition, in 1986 the Catholic Bishops of the United States writing in *Economic Justice for All* state: “The Church fully supports the right of workers to form unions or other associations to secure their rights to fair wages and working conditions...No one may deny the right to organize without attacking human dignity itself. The Bishops also call for “labor law reform” in order to “provide more timely and effective remedies for unfair labor practices.” (#104)

**February 18, 2013**