



Forward by Secretary Elaine L. Chao

In the two years since the first Index for Worker Freedom was published in 2007, the worldwide economy took a stunning turn for the worse, with America's collapsed housing and credit markets at the epicenter. Business failures soared and government intervention through bailouts and "stimulus" spending occurred on a record-setting level. Few in the private sector have not been significantly impacted by the downturn.

Several million workers have lost their jobs. Unemployment reached double digits in 2009 and is poised to worsen in 2010. It is a grievous and tragic injustice that these millions of Americans who are hungry to work, prosper and provide for their families are stymied by economic destruction they did not cause, could not control and even few so-called economic experts imagined would ever occur. The cost to these workers sidelined as time passes, job opportunities fail to materialize and their families despair, is incalculable.



Two things are certain: America's economy will not recover until America's private sector does, and; economic freedom, for workers and entrepreneurs, has always been the underpinning of American prosperity.

Unemployed Americans will not have job opportunities until the private sector is in a position to create them. Workers' wages will not rise significantly until our nation once again nears full employment. Consumer and investor confidence will not be where it needs to be until job creation is once again in high gear. Incredibly, even with the private sector reeling, millions out of work and tens of millions more worried about being out of work, there is an unprecedented effort by policymakers to impose further regulatory and taxation burdens on employers and severely restrict worker freedom in many critical ways.

The 2009 Index for Worker Freedom shines needed light on important public policy issues at the state level that go to the heart of the ability of America's private sector to prosper and create jobs for American workers. And it draws attention to government policies directly impacting workers' ability to control their own destiny, their paychecks and something so fundamental as whether or not they will be forced to join a labor union.

The Index is a useful reference tool for policymakers at all levels of government. And employers and workers should digest the data within to judge for themselves whether the policies of the state they are in are really in their best interest.

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