

## ELCA Brief

### Workers Rights Assembly Action CA91.6.35 (1991)

To approve the following recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee as amended:

Whereas, Our Lutheran traditions affirm the basic dignity of the individual, and we place a high value on the human person and consider human well-being an important criterion for determining moral and ethical commitments; and

Whereas, Our faith makes us particularly sensitive to those who are adversely affected by economic dislocation and powerlessness; and

Whereas, The collective-bargaining process is fundamental for the attainment of economic justice in American society; and

Whereas, In those instances where the two parties are unable to reach an agreement, employees have the right to engage in a legal work stoppage or strike; this right to withhold labor as a last resort is an integral part of the collective-bargaining process; and

Whereas, For many years, it was generally recognized that employees who engaged in a legal work stoppage as part of the collective-bargaining process would not be penalized by the permanent loss of their jobs; and in more recent time a growing number of employees have responded to these legal work stoppages by hiring persons to replace permanently the striking workers, and, unfortunately, this practice is allowed under existing labor laws, but until recent years was not widely used by employers; and

Whereas, This practice is a direct threat to the collective-bargaining process as it has developed in this country since the mid-1930s, causing hardship in families and entire communities where employees have, in effect, been fired from their jobs for engaging in collective-bargaining, and a weakened collective-bargaining process deprives

American workers of their right to participate effectively in decisions that impact their lives and future; and

Whereas, Legislation to protect the rights of striking workers is being considered in U.S. Congress and various state legislatures; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the 1991 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

1. offer its support and prayers for labor and management who engage in collective-bargaining to reach acceptable agreements in their working relationship;
2. urge employers, corporations, and workers to commit themselves to negotiated settlements;
3. express concern for workers and their families who endure hardship and job insecurity due to the breakdown of the traditional collective-bargaining practices;
4. call for an end to recriminations against workers who participate in strikes;
5. call upon the appropriate churchwide units, synods, congregations, and members to support legislation that would strengthen the viability of negotiated settlements and prevent the permanent replacement of striking workers;
6. call upon the Division for Church in Society to have available information to assist the members of this church to understand these issues; and
7. commit itself to public policy advocacy and advocacy with corporations, businesses, congregations, this church, and church-related institutions to protect the rights of workers, support the collective-bargaining process, and protect the right to strike.