§ 681. Declaration of policy. In order to establish a more harmonious and cooperative relationship between government and its public employees, it is hereby declared to be the purpose of this article to provide by law for the settlement of certain differences between public employees and their employers through procedures under which employees may present grievances, free from coercion, interference, restraint, discrimination or reprisal. The provisions of this article shall be liberally construed for the accomplishment of this purpose.