

# Candidate Questionnaire

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AFL-CIO LEGISLATIVE DEPT. \_\_\_\_\_

## 2008 Elections

### 1. FREEDOM TO CHOOSE A UNION

The right to form a union and engage in collective bargaining is enshrined in U.S. and international human rights laws, but for many U.S. workers it is a right that exists only on paper. More and more, workers who want to join together to form unions typically face intense employer opposition aimed at suppressing their freedom to unionize and bargain collectively. Workers, their families and the entire nation are paying a high price for the suppression of these basic freedoms. Wages have been suppressed, especially for workers on the lowest rungs of the job ladder—many of them women, minorities and immigrants. Secure guaranteed pensions and decent health care coverage common under union contracts have been denied to millions of nonunion workers who want collective bargaining but cannot have it. Disparities in income and wealth have reached levels not seen since the Great Depression, as workers blocked from access to collective bargaining lack the power to redress rising economic inequality.

Employers routinely resort to legal but coercive tactics as well as illegal ones to keep workers from forming unions. According to Cornell University's Kate Bronfenbrenner, when private-sector workers try to organize a union, 92 percent of employers force them to attend closed-door anti-union meetings and 78 percent have supervisors deliver anti-union messages to workers they oversee. Seventy-five percent hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns, half threaten to shut down if the union is voted in and 25 percent illegally fire workers.

Even when workers win a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election to form a union, one-third of the time their employer never negotiates a contract with them. And the penalties for all these forms of employer misconduct are so mild they do not serve as a deterrent to future misconduct. The law giving working people the legal right to form a union through NLRB elections is so weak, in fact, it is becoming irrelevant for workers seeking to improve their lives. Instead of a workers' rights law, it has become a structure for management to pressure and intimidate workers to reject unionization.

The current system for workers to form unions is broken. It must be repaired urgently to give all working people the freedom to make their own choice about whether to form a union and bargain with management for better wages and benefits. We know from over 70 years of experience with the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) that there is one proven way to give working people freedom to make their own choice: it's called "majority sign-up." The NLRA has always allowed workers to form

unions through “majority sign-up,” that is, when a majority of employees sign cards authorizing the union to bargain on their behalf with management. Since 1935 majority sign-up has been shown to reduce conflict, coercion, harassment and delay, as compared to the NLRB election process. But under current law, workers can only form a union through majority sign-up if their employer agrees to recognize the union. This makes no sense. Management should not get to dictate whether workers can use majority sign-up or whether they have to go through the NLRB election process, which typically triggers an inherently coercive anti-union campaign. Workers should be allowed to form unions through majority sign-up regardless of whether management agrees, as they did in the early years of the NLRA. We know from experience that, while majority sign-up promotes employee free choice by reducing coercion and intimidation by management, it has not resulted in any significant problems over the past 70 years.

*If elected, would you co-sponsor and vote for the Employee Free Choice Act (S.1041/H.R.800), which passed the House by a vote of 241-185 on March 1, 2007 but was blocked by a Senate filibuster in June, 2007 (the Senate failed to invoke cloture by a vote of 51-48 vote)? The Employee Free Choice Act, introduced by Senator Kennedy in the Senate and Representative George Miller in the House, would require employers to honor their workers’ decision to join a union after a majority of them signed a union authorization card or petition; establishes first contract mediation and arbitration; and creates meaningful penalties against employers who interfere with, coerce or fire workers for attempting to join a union.*

**Yes. In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, I was an original cosponsor of and voted for H.R. 800, the Employee Free Choice Act.**

*If elected, would you publicly support workers who are forming unions by reaffirming the importance of unions to our communities and by taking actions such as contacting employers and urging them to not interfere with employee free choice, issuing public statements, attending rallies supporting organizing, sponsoring public forums, etc.?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you oppose a national “right to work” bill that would prohibit unionized workers and their employers from voluntarily agreeing to “union security” provisions, which allow the union to recover the costs of collective bargaining from all of the workers that federal law requires it to represent in the workplace?*

**Yes**

## **2. JOBS AND THE ECONOMY**

For most U.S. workers, a good job means the difference between economic independence and diminished, if not dashed, hopes. Our manufacturing sector has been hit hardest, losing 3.1 million jobs between 2000 and 2006, but other sectors such as telecommunications and information technology have sustained major blows as well.

Construction jobs benefited from the boom economy of the 1990s but suffer from the federal government's current failure to invest public funds in essential public projects such as transportation, schools, water systems and other infrastructure. For every \$1 billion invested in transportation, 47,000 jobs are created.

U.S. unemployment, which dipped below 4 percent in 2000, was 4.6% in 2006—a rate that fails to take into account the hundreds of thousands who have dropped out of the labor force. Long-term unemployment is at historic levels, meaning millions of unemployed workers are running out of state unemployment benefits without finding a job and without any federal unemployment safety net. The effects of the Gulf Coast hurricanes are also still being felt. Workers' real wages, which rose across the board in the late 1990s, are falling, and family incomes are flat. The minimum wage has not been raised for nearly ten years, and inflation has eaten away all the gains of those increases. The minimum wage now stands at \$5.15, the lowest level in real-dollar terms since 1955.

The problem is not just lost jobs—the jobs we are creating are not as good. Income inequality in this country has grown, highlighted by the fact that average CEO pay is 411 times the earnings of frontline workers. The nation's 13,000 richest families, a mere 0.01 percent of the population, now have nearly as much income as the poorest 20 million households. Furthermore, only 25% of Americans have a "good job"—one that pays at least \$16/hr., has health insurance and a pension.

Meanwhile, massive tax cuts passed during the first three years of the Bush administration are responsible for 51 percent of our nation's \$2.3 trillion budget deficit. These cuts, which primarily benefited wealthy taxpayers, crowd out other critical investments such as repairing our schools, securing our homeland and providing health care to the nearly 45 million uninsured Americans

*If elected, would you support the repeal of the Bush tax cuts for the top income brackets?*

**Yes**

*If elected, will you support funding important infrastructure projects that generate good jobs, such as transportation systems, school modernization, airports and water systems?*

**Yes. Throughout my time in Congress I have aggressively supported millions of dollars in federal funding for local infrastructure projects that help address the needs of communities in the 5<sup>th</sup> district and across Maryland.**

*If elected, will you support a fiscal stimulus to enable states to meet increasing demands for Medicaid and education funding?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support an increase in the minimum wage to historic levels? (More than \$8 an hour in 2006 dollars)*

**Yes. I was a leader in moving legislation in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress which will result in the first increase in the minimum wage in 20 years – a three phased increase to \$7.25 by 2009.**

*If elected, would you support indexing the minimum wage to ensure automatic increases on an annual basis?*

**Yes**

### **3. MANUFACTURING AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY**

Our manufacturing sector has been hit hard, losing 3.4 million jobs since 1998. A staggering trade deficit of \$764 billion in 2006, an overvalued dollar, flawed international tax policy, rising health care costs, and the erosion of Buy American laws have all contributed to the challenges facing U.S. manufacturing. Overseas outsourcing of critical technological capability and manufacturing capacity undermines our national security and threatens the jobs and wages of even highly educated workers.

By 2005, more than one million workers had lost their jobs due to growing trade deficits since the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), according to the Economic Policy Institute. Expanding the flawed NAFTA model to dozens of additional countries in bilateral and regional trade agreements will only accelerate the loss of U.S. jobs, while doing little to address poverty and inequality in our trade partners.

The 2006 trade deficit with China, concentrated in manufacturing, grew by 15 percent to \$233 billion. It now accounts for 28 percent of the total goods deficit and a shocking 43 percent of our deficit in manufactured/non petroleum goods. Our deficit with China is the largest bilateral deficit in world history and accounts for the entire increase in the United States' non-oil trade deficit. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that growth in the trade deficit with China between 1996 and 2006 has displaced production that could have supported 2.16 million U.S. jobs.

The labor movement has opposed trade agreements that do not include enforceable protections for internationally recognized workers' rights and environmental standards, and we have opposed provisions on investment, government procurement, intellectual property rights, and services that undermine good jobs and good governance. We have opposed efforts to weaken our trade laws, including safeguard measures and those that protect against dumping, subsidies, and other unfair trade practices. We have filed trade cases against the Chinese government for violation of workers' rights and currency manipulation. The AFL-CIO supported the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement and the Cambodia apparel quota agreement, which did include strong workers' rights provisions. The AFL-CIO supports trade policies that support the creation and maintenance of good jobs at home and abroad, require adherence to the International Labor Organization's core workers' rights, protect the environment, and that do not undermine the ability of governments to regulate in the public interest and provide quality public services.

*If elected, would you support efforts to strengthen trade law enforcement and efforts to secure meaningful remedies for injuries resulting from unfair trade?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support legislation to reform tax provisions that encourage the movement of jobs and investment overseas?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you oppose legislation to implement bilateral, regional, or unilateral free trade agreements that do not require enforcement of internationally recognized workers' rights and environmental standards?*

**I strongly support the inclusion and enforcement of ILO labor standards as well as environmental standards into trade agreements.**

*If elected, would you oppose legislation to implement any further rounds of the WTO that weaken U.S. trade laws, alter our commitments with respect to immigration policies, or fail to make substantial progress on incorporating internationally recognized workers' rights?*

**I will consider these issues if legislation related to further rounds of the WTO is considered by Congress.**

*If elected, would you support adequate funding to fight abusive international child labor and promote the enforcement of internationally recognized workers' rights?*

**Yes**

*What will you do to address the trade imbalance with China and promote the rights of Chinese workers, especially the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining?*

**The United States should seek all remedies available through the WTO on these issues.**

*If elected will you support measures such as H.R. 782/S. 796, the bipartisan Fair Currency Act, to ensure that the Chinese government and other foreign nations cease illegal currency manipulation?*

**I am certainly concerned with the impact of illegal currency manipulation and will give careful consideration to any proposal which seeks to eliminate it.**

#### **4. HEALTH CARE**

The lack of affordable, quality health care in America continues to grow in scope and severity. Premiums are up more than 80 percent since 2000, compared with inflation growth of 18 percent and wage growth of 20 percent. The number of uninsured has grown to nearly 45 million in 2005. This growth in uninsured is driven primarily by a decline in the share of employers offering health insurance – from 69% of firms in 2000 to just 61% in 2006. Those firms that continue to offer coverage are asking workers to bear a greater share of the cost on their own, in the form of higher co-pays and deductibles.

For retirees, the picture is even bleaker. The share of employers offering retiree coverage has dropped substantially, from 66 percent of all large firms in 1988 to 35 percent in 2004. Without this coverage, retirees who do not qualify for Medicare have very limited options for obtaining affordable coverage. Unless Congress acts to address the growing cost burden on employers, U.S. companies will continue to be at a competitive disadvantage in the global market.

Yet for all we spend on health care, there is growing evidence that compromised quality is costing us too much in lost lives and lost money. 100,000 Americans die each year due to avoidable medical errors, and patients have a 50-50 chance of getting the right care at the right time. And about one third of all health care spending pays for poor quality care.

Unions bargain to provide health insurance to more than 40 million Americans—that is one out of every four Americans with employment-based coverage. For more than a decade, working families have lived through a vicious cycle of reduced health care access and higher costs. The AFL-CIO supports measures that provide comprehensive, affordable, quality health care for all Americans and strongly opposes any measure that will exacerbate the problem of the uninsured and rising health care costs.

*If elected, would you work to enact comprehensive health care reform that will guarantee quality, affordable health care for all Americans?*

**I believe it's imperative to continue to work to ensure that Americans have health care coverage. It is irresponsible that President Bush has twice vetoed legislation that would ensure that an additional 4 million children have the health care they deserve.**

*Would you support a plan modeled after an improved Medicare, with shared financing that doesn't penalize the companies that have been providing good coverage, or use an individual mandate to shift the burden to working families?*

**Clearly we must review the specifics of any proposal, but I agree that we must not erode good health care coverage that workers already have.**

*If elected, would you support legislation that shores up retiree health benefits by either providing help for employers for catastrophic health care costs or allowing 55 to 64 year olds to buy into Medicare?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support efforts to control rising health care costs, including pharmaceutical costs, in order to make coverage more affordable for workers and retirees?*

**Yes**

*Until we have guaranteed coverage for all Americans, would you oppose legislation that would undermine coverage for 160 million Americans who are insured through their employer, including proposals that encourage cost shifting to workers through Health Savings Accounts and high-deductible health plans? Imposing a cap on the amount of health benefits that are excluded from*

*taxation? Allowing Association Health Plans to sell insurance that is exempt from state rules and coverage guidelines, thereby driving up premiums for most workers in small firms that already offer coverage?*

**Yes**

*In light of the success of public programs in keeping the number of uninsured from growing more than it already has, would you support efforts to restore Medicaid coverage lost in the Deficit Reduction Act and expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to reach the 6 million uninsured children eligible for coverage but unenrolled?*

**I have been proud to help lead the efforts to pass legislation that would provide \$35 billion in funding for SCHIP to cover 10 million low-income children, and to halt Bush Administration regulations that would harm states' efforts to provide health services to those most in-need under Medicaid.**

*If elected, would you support legislation that would establish minimum nurse staffing ratios and prohibit mandatory overtime in our nation's hospitals to ensure safe patient care?*

**Generally speaking, I have been supportive of efforts to address the nursing crisis and ensure patient safety, but would like to review individual legislative proposals.**

## **5. PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**

The Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) of 2003 established a drug benefit that provides too little help for seniors' drug costs and is delivered only through private plans that have broad discretion to determine what coverage to offer, what prices to charge and which drugs to cover. At the same time, the Act made significant structural changes to the Medicare program, providing substantial overpayments to private managed care plans. Implementation began in January 2006 and has revealed many of the shortcomings of the private plan approach and other provision of the law. Congress must enact improvements to the Part D prescription drug benefit and eliminate the overpayments to managed care plans in order to put traditional Medicare back on a level playing field with the private health plans.

*If elected, would you support efforts to rein in rising drug prices, starting with requiring the Secretary of Health and Human Services to use the bargaining power of 40 million Medicare beneficiaries to get better drug prices?*

**Yes. In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress I was an original cosponsor of and voted for H.R. 4, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiations Act.**

*If elected, would you work to strengthen traditional Medicare and shore up program financing, beginning with preventing private plans known as Medicare Advantage plans from undermining the program through inflated payments totaling \$150 billion over 10 years and "cherry picking" the healthiest seniors? Would you also support repealing the accounting trick known as the 45 percent "trigger," which is designed to create a funding crisis that would require cuts be made?*

**I strongly supported and helped move through the House legislation that would have eliminated the overpayments under Medicare Advantage, which are driving up premiums for Medicare beneficiaries, and would have reinvested those savings in traditional Medicare to improve services for the vast majority of seniors who rely on it and add two years of solvency to Medicare. I believe that Congress must deal with the fiscal challenges created by entitlement programs such as Medicare, but I agree that the Medicare trigger is an arbitrary measure that places unreasonable limits on the policy options Congress can consider. I would support replacing the Medicare trigger with a more rational process which allows Congress to consider all options for addressing this issue.**

*If elected, will you work to fix the prescription drug benefit to make coverage more affordable and stable, including requiring Medicare to negotiate for lower prescription drug prices and providing beneficiaries with an option to get their drug coverage directly from Medicare rather than a private plan? Would you support using the savings from drug price negotiation and eliminating the Medicare Advantage plan overpayments to fill the gap in coverage and eliminate the asset test that has kept many low income individuals from enrolling and qualifying for financial help with their costs? Would you support repealing the income test for Part B premiums, which undermines the social insurance foundation of the program?*

**Yes, I was proud that the House passed bills that would have required the government to negotiate for lower drug prices and eliminate Medicare Advantage overpayments. Savings from those efforts would have been more effectively used to improve our health care system, such as by ensuring more children have health care coverage and improving Medicare to ensure seniors have access to doctors, to improve care, and to extend the solvency of Medicare.**

## **6. LABOR STANDARDS**

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is the nation's basic labor standards law. It protects all workers who might otherwise be subjected to unfair wages, pay discrimination and extended hours of work without overtime pay. The FLSA limits child labor and industrial homework and protects the disabled. FLSA protections are regularly under attack and are often eroded by lack of enforcement.

The Davis-Bacon Act requires the payment of prevailing community wages on federally financed construction projects. The law ensures local contractors that uphold prevailing rates of pay and local labor standards in a geographic area a fair chance to compete for government projects without being undercut by outside firms using cut-rate labor. The act also protects the government from unreliable operators seeking to win federal contracts by bidding too low to attract competent craftsmen.

The Service Contract Act (SCA) is based on the principle that the federal government should not award contracts for services to employers that underbid by paying workers less than the actual rates of pay for the same work in a geographic area. SCA protects the living standards of those who are employed as a direct result of federal service contracts, particularly those in low-wage occupations.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, which requires employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid (but job-protected) family or medical leave, took a major step in helping workers balance the demands of work and family. But the effectiveness of the FMLA is constrained by its limited coverage and the inability of millions of workers to afford leave without pay, and the FMLA is threatened by employer-backed proposals to limit the circumstances under which FMLA leave can be taken. Almost 41 million workers are not covered by the FMLA and according to a 2000 Labor Department study, 78% of workers who needed leave but did not take it said they could not afford to take it. To address these shortcomings, Congress needs to expand FMLA eligibility and provide for limited wage replacement during periods of leave. Congress must also resist calls by employers to curtail FMLA rights by limiting the circumstances under which employees can take leave. And in addition to family and medical leave already provided under the FMLA, Congress should guarantee at least seven paid sick days for every worker.

*If elected, would you oppose any effort to exclude more workers from the protections of the 40-hour workweek or to deny more workers the absolute right to overtime pay?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you oppose any effort to allow employers to avoid paying cash overtime for work in excess of 40 hours per week or to exclude certain forms of compensation from the calculation of overtime pay?*

**I would oppose any effort to enable employers to avoid paying cash overtime for work in excess of 40 hours, such as offering comp time in lieu of cash.**

*If elected, would you oppose any proposed legislation that would either weaken or repeal the Davis-Bacon Act?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you oppose any legislation that would weaken or repeal the Service Contract Act?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you oppose any regulatory or legislative efforts to limit the circumstances under which an employee is able to take FMLA leave?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support an effort to expand the FMLA to cover workers in companies with fewer than 50 employees?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support legislation to provide for wage replacement during periods of FMLA leave?*

**Yes. In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, I cosponsored bipartisan legislation that would provide all federal employees with eight weeks of paid parental leave.**

*If elected, would you support legislation to require that companies guarantee seven paid sick day per year?*

**Yes**

## **7. RETIREMENT SECURITY: PENSIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

Retirement security is fast becoming a goal beyond the reach of most Americans. Our private pension system is fraying, with fewer workers now covered by pension plans. Only one-tenth (11 percent) of private-sector employers now sponsor a defined benefit pension plan, covering one-fifth (21%) of private sector workers.

Companies increasingly view bankruptcy as a business strategy to eliminate pensions. The bankruptcy code provides little protection for workers' retirement security, as it promotes reorganization at almost any cost. Companies in entire industries are able to shed their pension obligations with hardly a look back while the workers left behind have no legal claim for their benefits. Even healthy companies are renegeing on long-standing commitments to help provide their employees with a secure retirement by freezing their plans or closing them to new hires.

The facts about how little workers are saving for retirement offer little hope that 401(k) plans or other contribution plans will make up for the loss of traditional pensions. Half of all American families have no retirement savings whatsoever. Among those near-retirement families with some retirement savings, half have less than \$83,000 – enough for a monthly retirement income at age 65 of only several hundred dollars. Moreover, individual savings plans, like 401(k) plans and IRAs as they exist today, do not offer the benefits of real pensions which include lifetime income, survivor and disability protections as well as early retirement benefits and post-retirement benefit increases, in many cases. By contrast, individual savings plans require workers to bear all the risk, are often insufficiently diversified, suffer from poor returns and typically carry very heavy fees and expenses.

Accordingly, although workers' ability to achieve retirement security has long been premised on a system of mutual responsibility—employer provided pensions, personal savings, and government-provided Social Security—only Social Security now guarantees a universal benefit. Social Security is the foundation of retirement income for U.S. workers and their families and the principal insurance against family impoverishment due to death or disability. It has reliably and efficiently provided benefits to the elderly and the disabled, helped millions of Americans escape poverty and given the elderly the financial means to live their last years with independence. The Social Security system is an extraordinarily well-crafted plan with a progressive benefits structure that delivers higher returns to lower-wage workers, ensures workers and beneficiaries will not outlive their benefits and protects those benefits from erosion by inflation.

The AFL-CIO is committed to corporate bankruptcy reform that protects workers' pensions and to providing a universal guaranteed retirement benefit to all workers through collective bargaining and legislation. The AFL-CIO supports legislation that would protect benefits and strengthen the financial integrity of the Social Security system.

*If elected, would you support measures to curb corporate abuse of the bankruptcy process so that workers have a claim in bankruptcy court for lost pensions, just like unpaid wages?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support measures to ensure employer responsibility in providing workers with a secure retirement?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support measures to protect the retirement savings of workers who participate in 401(k)s by reducing the big fees paid out their retirement accounts, ensuring their access to independent investment advice and mandating worker representation on 401(k) boards?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you oppose measures to replace any part of Social Security's guaranteed benefits with individual investment accounts?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you oppose efforts to increase the retirement age or to penalize workers who retire before Social Security's full benefit age (which is already increasing to 67 under current law)?*

**I believe that Congress and the President must work together to put Social Security on a sound financial basis for future retirees as well as those currently receiving benefits. A solution will require both additional revenues and changes in benefits, but any changes in benefits must ensure that Social Security continues to provide a solid foundation for a secure retirement.**

*If elected, would you oppose measures that would reduce Social Security's guaranteed defined benefit under current law?*

**I believe that Congress and the President must work together to put Social Security on a sound financial basis for future retirees as well as those currently receiving benefits. A solution will require both additional revenues and changes in benefits, but any changes in benefits must ensure that Social Security continues to provide a solid foundation for a secure retirement.**

***If elected, would you support measures to protect the retirement savings of workers who participate in 401(k)s by broadening their diversification rights, ensuring their access to independent investment advice and mandating equal worker representation on 401(k) boards?***

**Yes**

## **8. OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

More than three decades ago, Congress enacted the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) in response to the unacceptable numbers of workers who were being killed or seriously injured in the workplace. Since then, significant progress has been made in reducing the number of fatalities and injuries in the workplace but for some workers, including immigrant workers and Hispanic workers certain groups of workers, job fatalities are increasing. Millions of workers are not covered by the law, and for other workers, protections are inadequate. The Bush Administration has failed to take action to address major problems. In the past six years, the administration repealed workplace ergonomic protections, withdrew dozens of important safety rules, favored employer voluntary compliance programs over enforcement and proposed budget cuts for job safety programs. Legislation has been proposed in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress to expand the OSH Act's coverage to all workers, to strengthen whistleblower protections and to strengthen enforcement, which the AFL-CIO strongly supports.

***If elected, would you support: Proposed legislation to extend OSHA coverage to the millions of state and local employees currently excluded from the OSH Act; Proposed legislation to strengthen whistleblower protections for workers who raise job safety concerns; Proposed legislation that would make criminal violations involving a death of a worker a felony instead of a misdemeanor?***

**Yes**

***If elected, would you support a new OSHA ergonomics standard to protect workers from musculoskeletal disorders (e.g. back injuries, repetitive strain injuries), which account for 30% of all workplace injuries?***

**Yes.**

## **9. EDUCATION**

It is in the interest of our nation that we maintain quality public education for everyone. Private school vouchers, K-12 education savings accounts and other schemes, such as education tax credits for K-12 private school expenses, undermine public education by taking scarce public funds away from public schools, which are open to all students, and shifting them to private schools.

Too many of our nation's rural, suburban and urban public schools are overcrowded and in poor condition. A growing number of public schools all across the country are being forced to set up classrooms in trailers, hallways and closets in order to accommodate their rapidly rising enrollments. One-third of all public schools also need extensive repair or replacement.

***If elected, would you actively oppose all private school voucher proposals and other schemes intended to divert taxpayer dollars from public to private schools?***

**Yes**

***If elected, would you actively support legislation that would help states and local school districts reduce their class sizes and finance school repair, construction and modernization projects at local prevailing wages?***

**Yes**

## **10. EQUAL PAY**

In 1963, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act to end the widespread practice of pay discrimination against women. The Equal Pay Act makes it unlawful to pay women less than men for work deemed substantially equal and/or identical, unless the pay difference is based on seniority, experience or other legitimate factors. Although equal pay has been the law for 44 years, women are still paid less than their male counterparts—despite having similar education, skills and experience.

***If elected, would you support federal legislation to end pay discrimination against women and provide more effective remedies for its victims?***

**Yes**

## **11. PRIVATIZATION**

Citing budgetary pressures and, in some cases, ideology, government officials continue to support the widespread use of private contractors to perform government work. However, recent studies have found that cronyism, cost overruns and poor performance often result from the rush to contract public work to the private sector. These studies have shown that privatization schemes are often shortsighted and unnecessary. Moreover, the public sector should not be relying on private firms to make crucial decisions where confidentiality, unbiased information and public accountability are paramount.

***If elected, would you oppose efforts to privatize public services and instead support efforts to work with public employees to improve services through cooperative job redesign, training and labor-management coordination?***

**Yes**

## **12. IMMIGRANT WORKERS**

The AFL-CIO supports full workplace rights for immigrant workers and an opportunity for qualified undocumented workers and their families to adjust to permanent legal status. Reforms to provide legal status to the millions of hardworking, undocumented workers living in this country must

be comprehensive and fair. They cannot and should not be designed primarily to provide a steady stream of vulnerable workers for American companies.

Instead, immigration reform must provide a certain path to legalization for workers from around the world who are already living and working in the United States; repeal and replace employer sanctions with stiffer penalties for employers who take advantage of workers' immigration status to exploit them and undermine labor protections for all workers; reform, not expand, temporary worker programs; and reform the permanent immigration system so those who play by the rules are not penalized by unconscionably long waiting periods.

*If elected, would you support legislation that would provide otherwise law-abiding undocumented workers and their families who work here and contribute to their communities with permanent legal status through a new legalization program?*

**I have long felt that our approach to immigration reform should be a comprehensive one. It is my firm belief that strong border control and effective law enforcement are essential parts of any effective immigration reform measure. However, such legislation must also include provisions to ensure the responsible and fair treatment of long-term immigrants.**

*If elected, would you support legislation to protect immigrant workers' workplace rights, including the right to improve their lives by freely joining or forming a union?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support reform, but not expansion, of guest-worker programs to give greater protection to workers?*

**I have consistently supported efforts to protect workers' rights.**

### **13. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

The federal-state Unemployment Insurance (UI) system provides vital income support to laid-off workers during their job search as well as acting counter-cyclically to shorten recessions, since the money workers receive from UI goes right back into the community to boost and stabilize the economy. UI benefits are financed by taxes paid by employers (a cost which is passed on to workers in the form of reduced pay), so workers are effectively putting aside money for a rainy day while they are employed. Federal payroll taxes fund the states' costs of administering the program and provide loans and other assistance to states experiencing surges in unemployment or other difficulties.

In recent decades, many state unemployment systems have failed to keep up with changes in the workforce, especially the rise of short-term and contingent employment and the increased participation of women in the workforce. Today, 64 percent of unemployed workers are unable to collect unemployment insurance because of outdated eligibility rules, which hit women, low-wage and part-time workers particularly hard. Many states have reduced employer taxes and cut UI benefits to grossly inadequate levels, now replacing only 35 percent of laid-off workers' lost wages on average, compared with about 50 percent as recently as the 1970s and 1980s. Workers can no longer rely on UI even as a

temporary support during brief spells of unemployment, since the average benefit of \$273 per week is insufficient to pay for housing, health care, food, utility and transportation costs.

*If elected, would you support efforts to strengthen our unemployment insurance system by covering part-time workers, recent hires and those affected by compelling family reasons such as domestic violence, as well as increasing the weekly benefit?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you oppose proposals to replace UI with private, worker-funded accounts, as well as proposals to use UI trust funds for wage insurance (e.g. wage subsidies)?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support allowing workers to collect extended unemployment benefits while in approved training?*

**Yes**

*If elected, would you support using revenue from a continuation of the .2% federal unemployment payroll surtax to address the unmet needs in the UI system?*

**Yes**

#### **14. NONDISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE**

Since there is no federal law that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, it is currently legal to fire working men and women in 33 states because of their sexual orientation. As a result, working people can be denied employment opportunities on the basis of something that has no relationship to their ability to perform their work. The AFL-CIO strongly opposes employment discrimination based on sexual orientation.

*If elected, would you oppose employment discrimination based on sexual orientation?*

**Yes**

#### **15. UNION DUES**

As part of a continuing anti-labor effort to weaken unions, legislation has been proposed at both the state and federal levels to restrict the ability of unions to collect and spend funds for legislative and political activity. These bills would prohibit unions from using dues to fund voter registration, lobbying and all forms of political communication. The proponents of so-called “paycheck protection” legislation argue that unions spend this money without the consent of the membership. However, unions are voluntary organizations that operate under majority rule, and, in fact, large majorities of union members support their unions’ legislative and political activities.

*If elected, would you oppose restrictions on the use of union dues for political and legislative activities?*

**Yes**

## **16. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA VOTING RIGHTS**

More than 500,000 U.S. citizens live in our nation's capital and fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship every day. However, while they serve in the armed forces, pay federal taxes, and sit on federal juries, they have no voting representation in the U.S. Congress. This intolerable situation is an affront to the very principles of democracy we hold dear.

*Would you support legislation that would partially remedy this grave injustice by allowing the delegate elected by citizens of the District of Columbia to vote in the House of Representatives?*

**Yes. I have helped lead the fight in Congress to provide the citizens of the District of Columbia with a vote in the House of Representatives. The citizens of the Nation's Capital are taxpaying citizens and they deserve full democratic representation in Congress.**

## **17. ENDING THE IRAQ WAR**

No U.S. foreign policy can be sustained without the informed consent of the American people. Last November, the people spoke clearly, calling on the president and Congress to change course in Iraq. Rather than heed the will of the citizenry or listen to the military leaders speaking out against the current policy in Iraq, the president has chosen to escalate military action. This blind pursuit of the war now undermines the very war on terror that was its justification. An unending military presence will only waste lives and resources, undermine our nation's security, and weaken our military.

We should not be asking our young men and women who serve this nation in its armed forces to remain in Iraq on extended tours without proper armor or equipment, caught in an endless occupation in the midst of a civil war. The men and women risking their lives in Iraq come from America's working families. They are our sons and daughters, our sisters and brothers, our husbands and wives. They have answered their call to duty with the utmost courage and dedication. And the best way now to recognize and honor their service is to take them out of harm's way.

The AFL-CIO supports the call from members of Congress to establish a timetable for withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. It is time to bring our military involvement in Iraq to an end.

Our returning troops should be afforded all resources and services available to meet their needs. They should be able to return to their jobs, with seniority and benefits. The AFL-CIO calls on Congress and President Bush to expand benefits for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, including a new G.I. Bill and a Veterans' Administration (VA) housing program to meet current needs.

*Would you support the call from members of Congress to establish a timetable for rapid redeployment of US troops from Iraq and call for a commitment to bring them home quickly?*

**I strongly support efforts to bring our troops home. Most recently, I voted for the Orderly and Responsible Iraq Redeployment Appropriations Act of 2008 (H.R.4156), which would have required the President to begin withdrawing our troops within 30 days, with a goal of completion by December 15, 2008.**

*Would you support expanded benefits for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, including a new G.I. Bill and a VA housing program to meet current needs?*

**Yes**