



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL ENGINEERS  
AFL-CIO & CLC

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# **IFPTE 2008 Presidential Candidate Survey**

**Distributed to Declared Candidates, July 6, 2007**

**Senator Joe Biden, Senator Sam Brownback, Senator Hillary Clinton,  
Senator Christopher Dodd, Senator John Edwards, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani,  
Senator Mike Gravel, Gov. Mike Huckabee, Rep. Duncan Hunter,  
Rep. Dennis Kucinich, Sen. John McCain, Sen. Barack Obama, Rep. Ron  
Paul, Gov. Bill Richardson, Gov. Mitt Romney, Rep. Tom Tancredo,  
Gov. Tommy Thompson**

*Submitted by Sen. John Edwards*

## **LABOR LAW REFORM**

**Regrettably most American workers in all sectors and professions do not have a voice on the job. They are forced to helplessly watch as their jobs are being sent overseas or they are being replaced right here at home by foreign workers through the government sanctioned H-1B and L-1 Visa programs. Real wages are down, healthcare and retirement benefits are under attack, and job stability is quickly becoming a thing of the past. Given these circumstances it is no surprise that American workers by the millions want the union advantage of being able to bargain collectively and have a voice in the very decisions that will have lifelong impacts on their working futures.**

**While employers are permitted to break the law on a daily basis when it comes to organizing campaigns, workers are suffering the consequences. Intimidation, captive audience meetings, and outright firings are common business practices for many companies when illegally blocking unionizing drives. All done without even a slap on the wrist.**

**IFPTE, along with the entire US Labor Movement, believes the time has come for meaningful labor law reform. To their credit, the House passed the Employee Free Choice Act (HR 800) earlier this year by a bipartisan vote of 241-185. Unfortunately however the Senate could not see its way to look past partisanship by failing to invoke cloture on EFCA.**

- *The Employee Free Choice Act is a much needed labor law reform for American workers. If you were President, would you advocate for this legislation's passage and sign it into law?*

Yes. I am a proud supporter of the Employee Free Choice Act. Illegal employer efforts to block union drives have unfortunately become commonplace. To level the playing field, we need to make it easier for workers to organize themselves into unions. If a person can join the Democratic or Republican Party by signing their name to a card, any worker in America ought to be able to join a union by doing exactly the same thing. Making the Employee Free Choice Act the law of the land will be a top priority when I am president.

Organized labor has been the most important anti-poverty movement in American history, strengthening the middle class and providing good-paying jobs for millions of Americans. Unions have fought for and made better the lives of every working man and woman by giving them a voice. We need stronger unions in this country, and we need a national effort to get them.

Over the last few years, I have helped working families all around the country. I have helped more than 20 national unions organize thousands of workers into unions. I have participated in more than 170 labor activities and organizing drives since 2004. Walking picket lines, calling and writing to employers, and meeting with workers behind closed doors, I have seen firsthand

what unions go through every day trying to protect the right to organize, bargain collectively, get decent wages and benefits.

On a personal note, union membership is personal for me. My mother worked for the U.S. Postal Service and she and my father got health care because she was a member of the Rural Letter Carriers Association. I know what a difference the union and the benefits they won made in the life of our family.

## **FEDERAL TAXPAYER RESOURCES AND UNION BUSTING**

**IFPTE is currently involved in a campaign to organize over 1,400 Analysts employed by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Much to the dismay of IFPTE, the AFL-CIO and the workers at GAO, Comptroller General David Walker has elected to engage in union busting behavior that would be envied by private sector corporations like Wal-Mart. Among Mr. Walker's strategic moves aimed at preventing a union vote at GAO was to hire a private sector, "union avoidance" law firm to assist him in preventing the analysts at GAO from forming a union.**

**While this type of behavior in the Private Sector is common place and should not be allowed to continue, it is virtually unprecedented in the Federal Sector. IFPTE believes that using taxpayer appropriated monies for the purposes of preventing Federal employees from organizing is a reckless misuse of taxpayer resources.**

- *As President, will you prevent the use of taxpayer funds by any Federal Government Agency from being used to prevent workers from unionizing?*

Yes. Since the enactment of the National Labor Relations Act, it has been the policy of the federal government to protect the exercise by workers of full freedom of association. No federal agency should be engaged in union-busting. I support legislation preventing federal agencies from hiring law firms and consultants for the purpose of deterring union organizing.

## **FEDERAL EMPLOYEES CIVIL SERVICE & COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROTECTIONS**

**Since 2002 the current administration has undertaken a strategic plan aimed at eroding Title V civil service protections, collective bargaining rights, veterans preference, and the pay of federal employees. This is particularly true when it comes to the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and Defense (DoD).**

**With respect to the DoD, where IFPTE represents tens of thousands of Civil Servant workers, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld unilaterally created the so-called National Security Personnel System (NSPS) to supposedly govern the human resources practices for upwards of 700,000 DoD Civilian workers. As the Congress and the workers quickly learned however, the true intention of NSPS was not to enhance national security,**

but was to effectively eliminate the role of unions within the department, as well as do away with most protections afforded civil servants under Title V.

IFPTE, in coordination with the 36 member United DoD Workers Coalition (UDWC), has worked in a bipartisan fashion to encourage Congress to repeal much of NSPS through the FY08 Defense Authorization bill. However, this attack on workers has taken its toll on the morale, recruitment and retention in the federal sector.

- *Will you actively work to preserve the collective bargaining, Title V Civil Service protections, pay and Veteran's Preference of federal employees, as well as work to overturn the damaging reforms implemented since 2001?*

Yes. The Bush Administration led the largest union busting campaign in history when it stripped almost a million public employees in the Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security of collective bargaining rights. They send a message that no worker, whether in the public sector or private sector, is safe from their anti-union zeal.

If we want to help working men and women provide a better life for themselves and their families, then we need to protect the basic rights of America's workers. Federal employees have as much right to enjoy the benefits of being in a union as workers in other industries. As President, I will ensure that right is protected.

## **PRIVATIZATION OF FEDERAL & PUBLIC SECTOR JOBS**

In recent years, Federal and State governments have claimed that contracting out saves taxpayer dollars and can help solve their budget woes. Unfortunately however most privatization of government sector work ends up costing taxpayers more money and result in inferior services.

In the Federal Sector the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) does not base their contracting out decisions on the best value for the taxpayer. Instead OMB simply requires that all government agencies reach a quota in terms of the numbers of jobs put up for competition. When that doesn't work they simply award no-bid contracts to companies like Halliburton.

In the public sector governments like New Jersey view the privatization of the roadways as a quick influx of cash as a short term fix to their dire budget situation. However, New Jersey's politicians ignore the fact that privatization of the Turnpike and other roadways will lead to a long term disaster for those who are paying the tolls, and will end up being even more costly for the taxpayers.

In Washington State, for example, an IFPTE Local 17 report entitled, *Value Subtracted, The High Cost of Contracting Out WSDOT Engineering*, found that the State Department of Transportation, "overspends between 20 and 30 percent on design costs when such engineering work is sent to private companies."

- *As President, will you turn back unfair Federal outsourcing practices and replace them with a fair, human and equitable contracting out system? Also, will you support contracting out practices in State governments that are not based on short term influxes of cash, but are instead in the best interest of the taxpaying public?*

Yes. I believe we have to set real standards for firms that perform government contracts, so that we are not rewarding irresponsible contractors or subcontracting to sweatshop producers. Government procurement should create higher standards and better working conditions for American workers. Contractors who work for the federal government should meet a gold standard for labor relations with their own employees. Firms that violate the law ought to have their current and future contracts put in serious jeopardy.

We need to hold contractors to the same high standards as we do government workers. They must be held accountable for meeting federal laws and for the quality of the services they provide. As president, I would reinstate the contractor responsibility rules that were suspended by the Bush administration directing federal contracting officers to consider a company's record of compliance with labor, environmental, tax, antitrust and consumer protection laws before awarding government contracts.

I will halt President Bush's efforts to outsource federal jobs to private contractors without giving public employees a fair chance to compete for the work. Rather than conducting even-handed competitions, the Bush Administration has run an ideological effort to send as many jobs as possible to the private sector. Employees are not guaranteed the right to submit their own best bids, and contractors can gain an unfair advantage by providing inferior benefits. I co-sponsored the Truth, Responsibility and Accountability Act when I served in the Senate to address these issues.

And there is some work – work that involves inherently governmental functions -- that simply should never be contracted out by any level of government when federal funds are being used.

Finally, we must make sure Washington works for regular families, not special interests like big contractors that use their corporate assets to land lucrative contracts. First, I will bar federal contractors – including their senior executives, lobbyists and directors – from making donations to presidential candidates and political parties for one year before or after bidding on a major government contract. Second, I will stop the revolving door for contractors: In my administration, private sector executives seeking government contracts will not be able to take official contracting jobs for 12 months, and similarly, those with responsibility for contracting would not be able to go to firms seeking contracts for 12 months.

## **AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE**

**According to recent estimates, as many as 45 million Americans are uninsured, and those with coverage face rising co-payments, deductibles and skyrocketing premiums. Moreover, workers represented by a union are forced to make salary and other concessions at the**

**expense of keeping a hold of health coverage that is comparable to what they currently enjoy. In many cases, even union workers are forced to accept inferior health coverage plans. Workers, union negotiators and even employers that want to provide health coverage are all feeling the squeeze.**

**Unfortunately, each time our elected leaders even come close to considering a fix to the US healthcare crisis, the pharmaceutical and healthcare lobby simply squash any reform that will benefit ordinary citizens. It is clear that the time has come for our elected leaders to turn their collective backs on the healthcare giants and instead stand up for everyday Americans by passing universal healthcare right here in the United States.**

- *As President, will you use the power of the bully pulpit to support measures that would provide universal healthcare for our nation's uninsured while relieving the burden of skyrocketing healthcare costs for workers and employers?*

I will use more than the power of the bully pulpit to achieve true universal health care. I was proud to be the first major presidential candidate to propose a specific plan to guarantee quality affordable health care for every man, woman and child in America. Under my plan, businesses will either cover their employees or help pay their premiums. The government will make insurance affordable through new tax credits and by leading the way toward more cost-effective care. New "Health Care Markets" will give families and businesses purchasing power and a choice of quality plans, including one public plan. Finally, once these steps have been taken, all American residents will be required to take responsibility and get insurance.

Guaranteeing quality, affordable health care will help working families negotiate for better pay and stronger pensions at the bargaining table.

Under my plan, families without insurance will get coverage at an affordable price. Families that have insurance today – who sometimes have trouble paying their share of health insurance payments – will pay less and get more security and choices. Businesses and other employers will find it cheaper and easier to insure their workers. I have proposed steps that will save an average family \$2,000 to \$2,500 a year and eliminate at least \$130 billion a year in wasteful health care spending.

America spends more per person on health care than anywhere else in the world, but the results of all that spending are often disappointing. Universal coverage will bring down premiums. The cost of caring for the uninsured adds \$922 to an average family policy. Health Care Markets will bring down costs through negotiating power and administrative efficiencies. Giving individuals in Health Care Markets a choice of insurance plans including a public plan based on Medicare will force private insurers to operate in a more competitive market, holding down costs and improving care.

I will cut the cost of and improve treatment for chronic conditions -- which account for three-quarters of national health care spending -- by requiring health care plans to proactively monitor the health of patients with chronic ailments, reducing complications and hospitalizations.

Thirty cents of every dollar spent on health care goes toward administration and system waste. My plan requires insurers to spend at least 85 percent of their premiums on patient care.

Nearly one-third of patients experience medical mistakes, medication errors, or lab problems. Overall, better, more consistent quality could save 100,000 to 150,000 lives and \$50 billion to \$100 billion a year. I will require health care providers to use information technology that protects privacy, bring the private sector together to establish standards, and provide targeted help with implementation.

The Medicare prescription drug benefit is needlessly expensive due to giveaways to drug companies. When I am president, I will rewrite this drug bill to put patients and people above drug companies and HMOs. I will clamp down on skyrocketing drug costs by empowering the government to negotiate better drug prices.

## **GLOBALIZATION/LIBERAL TRADE POLICIES**

**It is clear that United States trade policies such as NAFTA, CAFTA or PNTR, have costs millions of US workers their jobs. To their credit, the new Congress sees the fallacy that is free trade and allowed Fast-Track trade authority to expire. Based on the dismal record of the aforementioned trade agreements, no President should have unchecked power to unilaterally negotiate away American jobs through corporate backed trade agreements.**

**Even without Fast-Track however, the Administration continues to pursue anti-American worker trade deals. Currently on the table are agreements with South Korea, Columbia, Peru and Panama, and the Administration is more than willing to negotiate more bilateral agreements that fail to enforce workers' rights laws, among many other flaws.**

- *As President, will you negotiate bilateral trade agreements with countries that include enforceable workers' rights provisions that are consistent with the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, provide reasonable wages and benefits, and provide all workers around the world the right to unionize?*

Yes. I will change our trade policies. Trade deals need to make sense for American workers, not just corporations, and include strong labor and environmental standards. NAFTA is an example of exactly the wrong kind of trade deal. I have spoken out against the proposed South Korea Free Trade Agreement, which would be the largest trade deal since NAFTA.

We need to invest in education, science, technology, and innovation to create good jobs and to compete in the global economy. And we need to do much more for the workers and communities that are hurt by global competition.

## **GUEST-WORKER PROGRAMS**

**As a union that represents tens of thousands of highly technical workers, IFPTE has seen first hand the damaging impact that the H-1B and L-1 guest-worker programs have had on U.S. workers. As the programs are currently constructed, H-1B and L-1 visas disproportionately place skilled American workers in an unfair labor market by encouraging employers to seek foreign high-tech workers based on bottom line purposes and not because there is a shortage of workers. Furthermore, the H-1B and L-1 visa programs give employers the power to exploit foreign workers by paying them significantly less than the prevailing wage, providing little to no benefits, preventing them access to U.S. labor laws and blocking their ability to have a voice on the job by belonging to a union.**

**Over the last many years, the U.S. high-tech industry has successfully manipulated the federal legislative process by encouraging Congress to expand guest-worker programs at the expense of American workers. In fact, it was widely expected that the latest attempt at immigration overhaul legislation in the Senate would include huge increases in H-1B visas, along with a massive liberalization of the already flawed program. Fortunately for US high-tech workers, that latest effort failed.**

- *Will you support legislative and regulatory efforts aimed at protecting American high-tech workers from the importation of low cost high tech labor through guest-worker visa programs such as H-1B and L-1?*

Businesses should not be allowed to misuse the H-1B and L-1 guest worker programs to hire foreign workers who will just work for less when American workers are capable of doing the work. In the H-1B program, labor law violations grew by 133% between 2000 and 2005. And there has been wide publicity about abuses of the L-1 program to outsource U.S. jobs.

Guest workers may be necessary to America's economy where there are worker shortages, but I will eliminate abuses of the program by strengthening labor law enforcement, and requiring employers to demonstrate that they could not recruit American workers and that they pay the prevailing wage. I will also increase the employer fee in the H-1B visa program, with the resources continuing to support science and math education because we must prepare more Americans for high-paying jobs of the future.

## **SUPPORT FOR NASA**

**The current Administration, while publicly stating its strong support for the cutting edge work done by NASA, has not stepped up to the plate in proposing budgets that are reflective of their rhetoric. IFPTE, as NASA's largest Civil Servant union, remains concerned that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle don't fully appreciate the importance that NASA has to the nation and the world. Furthermore, NASA's contribution to US national security is not only underappreciated, in most cases it is irreplaceable.**

**Budget proposals that would drastically cut the funding for U.S. Aeronautics, Science and Technology R&D are now annual events in Washington. These proposed cuts have led to threats by NASA management over the last several years to lay-off through a Reduction-in-**

**Force (RIF) upwards of 1,000 Civil Servant workers. Given the unique talent at NASA, IFPTE believes such a move would be an irreversible blunder that the US would not soon recover from.**

- *As President, would you make NASA a priority in your administration by adequately funding the space agency's aeronautics, science and technology missions through your annual budgets, and work to preserve and grow the uniquely talented Civil Service workforce that is NASA?*

Yes. I am a strong supporter of our space program. It reflects the best of the American spirit of optimism, discovery and progress. I believe the talent and expertise of NASA's civil servants are essential to the success of our space program.

## **PENSIONS & SOCIAL SECURITY**

**While the last Congress and our current President found a way to effectively prevent middle-class Americans from declaring bankruptcy anymore, they have yet to address the raiding of workers pensions through corporate bankruptcy scandals. Furthermore, the current Administration's affinity for corporate America resulted in a debunked effort to privatize the Social Security benefits of retired Americans.**

**It is clear that the retirement security of American workers is quickly becoming a thing of the past. Corporate bankruptcies allow companies to simply turn their backs on their financial obligations to workers while simultaneously advocating for privatizing Social Security so that Wall Street can cash in. No longer can workers depend on their employers to do the right thing with their pensions, nor can they count on Social Security.**

- *As President, will you work to reform our pension system so that no matter how often you change jobs every worker will have a single pension upon retiring, and corporations will no longer be permitted to turn their backs on worker pensions by declaring bankruptcy? Will you also work to make Social Security solvent and oppose any effort for privatization of this important program?*

I support steps to strengthen defined benefit pensions. For a century, defined benefit pension plans have allowed workers, particularly unionized workers, to retire with security and dignity. Too often, however, employers have not kept their promises to workers.

Employees who have worked hard all their lives should not be denied the pension benefits they have earned. While younger workers may like the mobility of cash-balance plans, these pensions can penalize older workers. We cannot allow companies to switch out of defined-benefit plans in order to deny long-term workers their pensions. We need to protect these workers and ensure they do not lose retirement benefits. I will also work to promote the solvency of the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation and that executives do not walk away with millions while companies are going bankrupt.

Social Security is one of the most successful government programs in history. It lifts 13 million senior citizens out of poverty every year. I am committed to protecting retirement benefits for working Americans. I strongly oppose President Bush's efforts to privatize Social Security, which would cut guaranteed benefits and risk individuals' Social Security funds in the stock market.

Ultimately, we cannot solve Social Security without a package of reforms that earns the support of both Democrats and Republicans. Like the Greenspan commission appointed in 1981 – when the trust fund had only two years left – any solution should be non-ideological, strongly bipartisan, and committed to the goals of ensuring every American can retire with dignity and extending the life of the Trust Fund.