



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

IFPTE 2008 Presidential Candidate Survey

Submitted by: Representative Dennis Kucinich

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?*

I am proud to be a co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act. I most certainly will advocate for it as president and will sign it when passed. But the fight to get the Employee Free Choice Act past the hurdle of a Senate filibuster doesn't begin when I take office, it begins when I win the nomination. This nomination will be the spark that ignites a new progressive movement in the Congress, the one that lights the way for others to follow.

My campaign will be about building a coalition in the Congress, one that will return to traditional working-class Democratic values. Working together we can put enough progressive votes in the Senate to stop a filibuster on matters of importance to working families. I will campaign all over this nation on my platform of creating a new manufacturing policy that promotes the rebuilding of steel, aerospace, automotive and shipping as the key to both economic prosperity and national defense. In that context, we will endorse and support organized labor, knowing that the improved working conditions, safety standards, wages and benefits are the key to a more productive workforce.

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, but I will go far beyond that. The problem is not just that the current administration is spending money to fight unions, the problem is the anti-union culture which permeates the entire administration.

In contrast to that, the Kucinich White House will be a house of labor. We will, by example, create an environment where Labor is honored and respected, not rejected and taken for granted. In that light, and with the assistance of friends who we will help win seats in the Congress, we will not have to pass pro-worker

legislation in the dark of night, or as a hidden amendment to larger, often unrelated, legislation. We will create a time and space where bills of importance to Labor will be able to stand on their own, and the Congress will be proud to stand up and support them.

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, collective bargaining is a cornerstone of worker rights. In a Kucinich administration worker rights will be not only preserved, but respected. Contracts with unions representing DoD and all other federal employees will be honored, because it's the right thing to do, and because much of the security of our country is in the hands of civilian federal workers. We need the best and the brightest in these positions, and honoring their contract – and their service – is one way to do that. I will also see that Veteran's Preference provisions in all hiring policies are preserved. Our veterans deserve our thanks for their service and our support when they return to civilian service.

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?*

A primary role of government – at all levels – is to provide and maintain the public infrastructure needed for our country to be safe and our economy to prosper. That infrastructure includes defense and public safety, education, health care, education, communications, energy, and transportation. When public policy becomes dominated by private profit, the infrastructure – and the nation it supports -- becomes at risk. There is nothing wrong with American business having government as a customer, and those businesses that contract with the government should be entitled to a fair profit for producing a quality product. Without that, they will not be able to provide the wages and benefits their workers deserve.

But government must maintain ownership of the public infrastructure, and must be vigilant in protecting it. Government must operate on a policy of long-term vision, not short-term economics. As President I will see that the public infrastructure is maintained and improved. I am the sponsor of HR 3400, a bill to create an aggressive federal program to fund capital projects of state and local governments as they rebuild their infrastructure, so that our economy has the tools it needs to succeed. But a key component of that plan is that the public infrastructure stays in public hands, and that when the government lets a contract it is based on fair competition, quality work, worker rights, human rights and environmental protection.

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?*

It's important to understand that most of the Democratic candidates for president DO NOT support the concept of universal health care. Most support the concept of universal health INSURANCE -- often private insurance which, under some of the candidates' plans, would use tax money to subsidize those insurance companies. And, as Michael Moore's movie *SiCKO* points out, having health insurance does not guarantee you will have health care.

I am the leader among the candidates in advocating for true health care. I am the co-author and co-sponsor of HR 676, the Conyers/Kucinich bill, that will provide for true universal, single-payer, not-for-profit health care. Under HR 676, all residents of the United States will be fully covered for medical, dental, vision, mental health and long-term care. There will be no deductibles, no co-pays, and no insurance company employees whose job it is to deny you coverage so their company makes more money. With no insurance company overhead, no executive salaries, no advertising and no golden parachutes, the administration of health care will drop from 30 percent to three percent, which is what administering Medicare costs. The rest of that money will be available for delivered health care.

In addition, the federal government will negotiate prices with the drug companies, which will keep prices down. And, since health care will be centered on preventative care, many illness will be detected and treated much earlier, when treatments are faster and much less expensive.

Direct costs to employers will drop to 3.3 percent per employee -- \$1,650 per \$50,000 of payroll -- far less than the average cost of current employee health care benefits. Employees will also pay 3.3 percent, less than they currently pay in premiums, co-pays and deductibles. Companies will have stability in their health care. Workers will not have to juggle cost-of-living increases and health care benefits at the bargaining table.

Under HR 676, consumers will go to their provider of choice -- not be restricted to a list provided by an insurance company. Bills for service will go to the federal government. Health care will be complete and portable. We will not need some

new bureaucracy to arbitrate payments between insurance companies and consumers because there will be no insurance companies standing between you and your provider.

Passage of HR 676 will unleash a wave of entrepreneurial spirit in this country, as companies have additional capital, workers are healthier and more productive, and individuals can start their own businesses without fear of leaving their families unprotected.

My plan is the only practical, workable plan and is, in fact, the one that has succeeded around the world. The for-profit, employer-based system is anti-American, in that it puts U.S. businesses at an extreme disadvantage is competing with businesses in other countries that have national health care.

The most recent U.S. Census figures confirm that the number of people in the United States without health care continues to grow, while the personal income of those with health care is declining as workers are forced to trade wage increases for health care.

H.R. 676 is endorsed by more than 300 labor organizations, and by such health care groups as Physicians for a National Health Program, which represents more than 14,000 doctors.

There are five major elements to funding H.R. 676:

- There will be an end to corporate welfare.
- The tax breaks for the economically privileged passed in 2001 and 2002 will be reversed.
- The top 5 percent of taxpayers will pay an additional 5 percent while the top 1 percent (income more than \$418,000) will see a 10 percent tax surcharge. This is fair and rational because this is where the massive increases in wages have been taking place. These grateful Americans have the discretionary income to put American business on a more competitive playing field that will, in turn, help them.
- A 0.25 percent transfer tax will be placed on all stock and bond sales.
- Lastly, the 3.3 percent payroll tax will be paid by employer and employee.

Today employer and employee together pay more than \$13,000 to provide insurance for an the average family of four where the employee makes \$50,000. And as we know, that insurance provides far from complete medical coverage. Under HR 676, employer and employee together will lay out \$3,300 to cover that same \$50,000 employee and family.

We're already paying for universal health care, we're just not getting. HR 676 changes that.

The Democratic Party leadership has consistently rejected not-for-profit health care, in favor of keeping the insurance companies in the game. The Gore-Lieberman campaign in 2000, and the Kerry-Edwards campaign in 2004 refused to support this plan, because most Democrats rely on contributions from the drug and insurance companies.

This year is no different. Other candidates for President want to maintain this insurance-driven, for-profit system, which every day puts more workers at risk. On this issue, I am running against the Democratic Party. A political party – or a union -- that claims to support true health care reform, but at the same time supports candidates who do not, is, frankly, doing a disservice to its members.

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?*

My first act in office will be to notify the appropriate parties that the United States is pulling out of NAFTA and the WTO. No other candidate is ready to do that. I am the leading candidate in terms of restoring fair trade.

Under a Kucinich administration America will return to a system of bilateral trade based on worker rights, human rights and environmental protection.

We will grant most-favored nation status to our own United States, not to countries where workers and the environment are abused. With WTO gone we will be able to favor U.S. companies in bids and contracts.

We will rewrite the tax laws to encourage investment and job creation in the United States and discourage the moving of jobs off shore.

We will pass single-payer universal health care so businesses in the United States can compete with foreign customers.

We will rebuild our manufacturing capacity with a renewed emphasis on steel, automotive, aerospace and shipping, with a strong commitment to worker rights, worker safety, carbon reduction and clean air and water.

We will restore and improve our infrastructure – our roads and bridges, our water systems, our airports and harbors – thus making it more efficient for business to operate in the United States.

We will build a national fiber communications network that will provide businesses everywhere in the country access to the best technology the Internet has to offer. Lack of communication and Internet infrastructure is the biggest hurdle faced by companies that want to save costs through telecommuting.

We will turn our energy policy away from oil and towards sustainable, environmentally friendly and renewable sources of energy.

We will expand the educational opportunities for all Americans so that we can better design, build, and maintain this 21st-Century infrastructure.

We will pass and enforce strict health and safety regulations pertaining to the quality of food and merchandise coming into the United States from foreign sources. We will prosecute repeat offenders who import unsafe goods in order to skimp on costs.

We will protect our ports from becoming terrorist targets by certifying or inspecting all cargo coming into America. The costs of these inspections will be born completely by the importers, which in many cases may make it more economical to produce goods in the United States.

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 H1-B 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?*

Yes. The expanded use of H-1B and L-1 visas has had a negative effect on the workplace of Information Technology and other workers in America. It has caused a reduction in wages. It has forced workers to accept deteriorating working conditions and allowed U.S. companies to concentrate work in technical and geographic areas that American workers consider undesirable. It has also reduced the number of IT jobs held by Americans.

At its peak in 2000, there were 10.5 million people working in Information Technology in the United States. By 2001, there were fewer than 10 million -- despite continued global growth in Information Technology employment. Professor Norman Matloff of UC Davis estimates that in the spring of 2003 there were 500,000 unemployed and underemployed U.S. programmers, while there were 463,000 H-1B workers employed in the field. This downward spiral is continuing.

The government must ensure adequate funds for the enforcement of visa regulations -- including much-ignored regulations prohibiting the use of foreign nationals in critical infrastructure. A special investigator should be appointed to examine the extent and nature of H-1B and L-1 visa fraud and the reasons for heavy use of H-1B and L-1 visas at companies such as Enron, WorldCom, and Anderson. We should take seriously the allegations of perjury by corporate leaders who have testified before Congress to request expansion of this program, as well as allegations of the use of the H-1B and L-1 programs in corrupt organizations.

We need an industry fact-finding commission, including representatives of major U.S. investors, U.S. tech workers, and business leaders who have been competitive in the international marketplace without use of the H-1B / L-1 program. These representatives can make suggestions as to a new policy on the immigration of people with specialized knowledge or unique skills.

I have already set forth plans for major technical initiatives in the areas of renewable energy, pollution control, and promotions of Open Source software and media -- additional major initiatives will be considered -- creating a wider diversity of means by which technologists are funded outside of the service of major corporations. It may not be possible to undo the damage that corporate short-sightedness has done to the U.S. technical community -- but it is possible to give a real voice to the vision that the U.S. technical community has for a better America.

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?*

NASA already IS a priority for me. The NASA Glenn facility in Brook Park is a true asset to my congressional district. NASA's mission brings secure, well-paying jobs to the region and provides critical scientific knowledge. I have worked and will continue to work to protect and expand this economic and scientific center.

The Administration's proposal to drastically reduce funding for aeronautics at NASA for FY 06 was unacceptable. In response I convened a series of NASA summits at my Lakewood office. These summits were attended by representatives of local, state, regional and federal government; aeronautics industry; NASA employees; advocates of Cleveland's economic health; and concerned citizens.

These meetings showed that NASA Glenn and aeronautics were critical to our nation's airline safety, national security, economic well being and environmental quality. I organized the Ohio delegation on this issue, and worked closely with members from Virginia who faced cuts at NASA Langley. We met with Administrator Griffin and other NASA officials, testified at hearings, conducted dozens of media interviews on the topic, collaborated with aerospace industry, and much more.

The bipartisan outcry has been successful in ensuring that the jobs at Glenn stay there. The House Appropriations committee has halted involuntary layoffs, restored last years funding for aeronautics, required the Administration to submit a long term plan for aeronautics, and accepted language in the record valuing the specialties at NASA Glenn.

In addition, the NASA reauthorization bill rejected efforts to undermine aeronautics and scientific research at NASA Glenn. The bill rejects involuntary layoffs, rejects attempted cuts to aeronautics research funding, requires that any reshaping of the workforce be done in a way that keeps aeronautics intact, requires a national aeronautics policy, commits to meaningful microgravity research on the space station, and protects NASA Glenn's unique facilities like wind tunnels.

Under A Kucinich administration, NASA's valuable service to science and our citizens will be recognized and appreciated. It will be properly funded and given the human and financial resources it needs to continue its valuable contributions to national security as well as research and development which will continue to produce many technological breakthroughs benefiting not only space exploration but energy conservation, environmental protection and economic development.

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 am a strong supporter of protecting workers pensions and preserving the defined benefit pension system. With workers now changing jobs several times during their careers, pensions must be portable and employers must be held to their commitments to pay them. I have offered legislation to restore shutdown benefits and protect workers from having their pension plans frozen. I believe that when a company declares bankruptcy, the pensioners should go to the front of the line in terms of having their benefits protected.

We must reform, or repeal, the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision. Workers and their spouses who have worked in both the public or private sectors are entitled to all their pension benefits. It's their money, they negotiated for it, they earned it, and they should have it.

As for Social Security, despite what some are saying Social Security is projected to pay all promised benefits for the next three and one-half decades without any changes whatsoever. A projected shortfall occurring 37 years in the future is not a crisis. Social Security is secure.

But there are political forces at work trying to dismantle Social Security. Wall Street is seeking the privatization of Social Security because of the billions of dollars of fees it will be able to charge on retirement investment accounts, and these private interests seek the dismantling of Social Security because they oppose successful government programs. The President is guilty of stoking anxiety about Social Security for political advantage.

Stock market investment is inherently risky. Putting Social Security into the stock market would be like betting the rent money. There are also serious political costs to linking the subsistence retirement benefit Americans cannot do without to the stock market.

Social Security will become insolvent only if Congress says it should. Raising the average wage in America will make the most important contribution to Social Security's long-term projected financial balance, since Social Security derives almost all of its revenue from a wage-based tax. If Congress maintains real wage growth rate of two percent, Social Security's projections will remain in balance through 2049. A number of steps can be taken to set the economy in that direction, including reducing the legal barriers to unionization by passing the Employee Free-Choice Act, and raising the minimum wage to a living wage.

The debate about the future of Social Security is a debate about our priorities as a nation. If we value guaranteeing retirement security to our senior citizens, then we will make it a top priority and fund it.