



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

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**

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 an original co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act and voted for the legislation because I firmly believe that workers should choose whether they want to join a union without fear of intimidation, coercion, or threats to their livelihoods. I am convinced that millions of Americans would join a union if given a fair opportunity, but the National Labor Relations Act in its current form too often allows employers to violate workers' rights with impunity. The Employee Free Choice Act is a bipartisan effort to make the process of organizing less vulnerable to employer lawbreaking by requiring card-check recognition and increasing penalties on employers that violate the law.

I was disappointed that the Senate failed to pass EFCA. Strengthening our workers' right to organize shouldn't be controversial. It will be working Americans, united and organized, that will help us restore a sense of shared prosperity and security to this nation. I will continue to advocate for EFCA as a senator and will sign it as president. EFCA is a starting point, but there is more to do. I will work to ban the permanent replacement of striking workers and use the power of the office to appoint members of the National Labor Relations Board who understand the situation of working families and respect their desire to organize. As a Senator, I have worked to overturn some of the most crippling decisions Bush's NLRB has issued, the "Kentucky River" decisions, which threatens to revoke the rights of hundreds of thousands of workers to join a union. As President I will continue to work for legislation that protects and empowers the labor movement and will use the bully pulpit of the presidency to educate our nation about the important role of unions in our society.

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?*

President Bush has systematically wiped out labor-management cooperation in the federal government. I will restore it. Under my administration, taxpayer funds will not support efforts to prevent workers from unionizing because I will direct federal agencies under my control to remain neutral in federal employees' efforts to organize. All workers, including federal employees, should choose whether they want to join a union without fear of intimidation, coercion, or threats to their livelihoods.

I have been a consistent supporter of federal employees' right to organize and have fought to protect their rights in the workplace. In 2006, I introduced the FAA Fair Labor Management Dispute Resolution Act of 2006, which would prevent the FAA Administrator from imposing contract changes on FAA employees and requires the use of binding neutral arbitration when negotiations stall. I believe unions improve our government and help it to better serve both taxpayers and government's customers by giving workers a voice in the work they do. I would use the bully pulpit of the presidency to educate Americans on unions' important role in our society, including in our government.

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?*

The Bush administration has aggressively sought to undermine the ability of federal workers to have a voice in the workplace. From the revoking of Executive Order 12933, which mandated Labor-Management partnerships in all federal agencies, to revoking the right of DHS employees to bargain collectively, the Bush administration has consistently and forcefully made it clear that it does not think workers should have a substantive voice in the work.

Collective bargaining plays a vital role in giving workers a voice in the work they do. When workers have a voice, they are able to increase productivity and reduce costs. We know from an Office of Personnel Management report that when labor and management cooperate in the federal government, productivity increases and costs are cut. These actions by the Bush administration have only sought to aggravate labor-management relations, reducing worker productivity and increasing costs to American taxpayers.

At DHS, however, costs are not only monetary. When we don't listen to DHS's employees, we also compromise our national security. As a Senator, I will support the current legislative efforts to restore collective bargaining rights to DHS employees, and as President I will make sure DHS and other federal employees have a real and effective voice in the work their workplaces.

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?*

There is honor in public service at every level. Our public servants deserve respect and fair treatment and our taxpayers deserve to have their money spent wisely. But over the past several years, we have seen a new “Ownership Society” philosophy in Washington that says government has no role in solving our problems and that the services provided everyday by government employees are better left to the whims of the private sector. I have been a consistent critic of this philosophy.

We should not privatize public services for the sake of privatization. The benefits of privatization are often outweighed by the devastation caused to communities by a loss of jobs or health care benefits. And often, services that are contracted out were being done well and efficiently by public servants.

I would use strict guidelines when determining whether to contract out any government service. I will not contract out vital government services without first considering whether the private sector can actually provide a better service and whether so-called hidden costs of privatization are fully accounted for in the cost estimate. I will also require consideration of the economic impact of every privatization proposal for the federal government.

In the event that contracting out may be appropriate, it is important that the federal government attach serious conditions and provide accountability mechanisms to make sure that privatization is not used as an end-run around federal labor standards. We can mandate, for instance, that contractors continue to adhere to government hiring preferences and requirements. In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Administration waived Davis-Bacon requirements, which ensure that workers receive prevailing wages. I was an original co-sponsor of the bill to repeal this waiver; all federal contractors must be accountable to our nation’s labor laws and workers must be ensured fair treatment and fair wages. In that vein, I also believe that we need to make clear that private contracts will not be awarded if minimum wage and benefit standards are not met.

Finally, I will provide an opportunity for union and employee input into all contracting decisions. These decisions should be made in an open forum that provides all stakeholders the opportunity to present their analysis of the quality and cost estimates that will inform the ultimate decisions. Moreover, unions and employees should be permitted to offer their own bids in competitive bidding processes. I will make sure that they have the opportunity to do just that.

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?*

The United States is one of the wealthiest nations in the world, yet approximately 45 million Americans have no health insurance. The United States spends more on health care than any other country, nearly \$2 trillion, yet ranks 19th in life expectancy at birth and 28th in infant mortality.

As President, I will sign a universal health care bill by the end of my first term. My plan will lower costs for the typical family by up to \$2,500, cover the uninsured and lower costs to families and businesses. I will allow people who do not have access to group coverage through their employers or public programs (such as Medicaid, SCHIP, and Medicare) to buy into a national pool, which will offer a new public plan similar to the one I have as a member of Congress. My plan will also allow people to buy private plans that offer comprehensive benefits and meet quality standards. If they wish, unions and employers will be able to supplement the comprehensive coverage in the public plan. Federal subsidies will be made available to those who need it to make coverage more affordable. And employers will have access to reinsurance to protect them from volatile and high increases in the cost of insurance. Finally, my plan will mandate health insurance coverage for every child in America.

I will go after runaway health care costs by investing in information technology, focusing on preventive care, increasing health care quality, reducing medical errors, and stopping price-gouging by drug and insurance companies. Together, these changes would mean a reduction in premiums of up to a thousand dollars a year for the average family.

I have a proven record on expanding access to affordable health care. In the Illinois State Senate, I spearheaded successful legislation to extend health care coverage under KidCare and FamilyCare to 154,000 residents, including 70,000 children.

We are not short on ideas to address the problem, but what we have lacked is consensus and political will. Solving our health care crisis depends on transforming our politics.

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?*

I am firmly convinced that American workers and employers can compete with anyone in the world if the playing field is level and our government understands that its role is to serve the interests of the American people.

I would use our trade agreements to spread strong and enforceable labor and environmental standards around the world. Companies operating overseas must not gain a competitive advantage by exploiting workers or the environment. I opposed the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) because it did not satisfy this important principle. I also oppose the South Korea Free Trade Agreement because, while it would be a boon for banks, telecommunications firms, and some in corporate agriculture, it fails to ensure that U.S. products -- especially our cars and trucks, rice and beef -- receive fair treatment in the Korean market. The U.S./Korea Trade agreement does not do enough to change these discriminatory practices or to enforce commitments by Korea to open up its market.

But merely adding words to the core of our trade agreements is not enough. We must enforce our agreements through the World Trade Organization and other existing mechanisms and pressure our trading partners to end unfair government subsidies to foreign exporters, non-tariff barriers on U.S. exports, and artificially devalued currency, like China's, that puts U.S. companies at a perpetual disadvantage. As President, my trade policy will open foreign markets to create and support good American jobs while spreading rights and environmental protections around the world.

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?*

I support the H1-B visa program as a way to fill the need for skilled workers, when American employees are not available. As a stopgap measure, bringing some of the world's most talented people to America to fill jobs that employers are having a hard time filling has positive results. On the whole, highly educated immigrants add value to our communities and help create wealth. I recognize, however, that there are loopholes in our legislation that allow this program to be abused, and as president I would work to close those loopholes and reform the program to reduce exploitation of workers.

Before letting the program grow any further, I would empower the Department of Labor to crack down on employers who abuse H1-B workers. These workers should not be hired because employers want to hire them; they should only be hired if there is really no American willing to do the job at a fair wage. I would take action on this principle by forcing employers to offer the job to Americans first at a fair wage.

The H-1B program is not an effective long-term strategy to deal with our worker shortage. We need to train Americans and encourage them to go into the science and math fields that H1-B visa holders pursue. Further, we need to address the chronic underrepresentation of women and minorities in these fields, so we can expand the work force and close the labor gap. I have led on this issue by introducing successful amendments to the American COMPETES Act which would help support women and minority students and professionals pursuing work in these fields. We will not be able to eradicate our workforce shortage or take advantage of our full potential to innovate in these industries until we fully tap the diversity of our nation as a competitive strength.

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?*

Absolutely. We need to restore the status of NASA and invest in what the agency and its public servants do so well -- push the boundaries of science and our knowledge of space.

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 want to make retirement saving easier, cheaper, more portable, and more automatic for working people. The personal saving rate is at its lowest level since the Great Depression. Only 55 percent of Americans working full-time hold a job with a retirement savings plan. The percentage is even lower for part-time workers and minorities. My plan will provide incentives for automatic enrollment in 401(k) programs, establish automatic enrollment in IRAs for employees who are not covered by 401(k) plans, and expand and improve the Saver's Tax Credit to help more low and moderate income households save. I am a co-sponsor of the Save More for Retirement Act, which provides incentives for

automatic enrollment in 401(k) programs. These measures will increase retirement savings and help workers to have a single pension upon retiring.

As President, I will work to amend our bankruptcy laws so that companies can no longer file for Chapter 11 in order to avoid paying workers their pensions. I have supported new rules to force companies to properly fund their pension plans so taxpayers don't end up footing the bill. And as a U.S. Senator, I worked closely with Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) and the Association of Flight Attendants to help protect flight attendants' pension plans during the United Airlines bankruptcy crisis. I also voted to shore up the funding of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, the federal agency that guarantees retirees receive at least some of their pension monies if their companies go out of business.

I believe we need to preserve Social Security by stopping any efforts to privatize it. I will work in a bipartisan way to maintain Social Security's solvency for future generations. The focus of reform options should be on protecting the basic integrity and fairness of the Social Security program, which provides a vital safety net to millions of seniors and Americans with disabilities. Social Security is more than just a retirement plan; it is also a program of social insurance. The problems with Social Security are real but manageable. I believe everything has to be on the table that is genuinely intended to strengthen the program—insisting on only one solution, as President Bush did, is not a recipe for bipartisan cooperation.