



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

---

# **IFPTE 2016**

## **Presidential Candidate**

### **Survey**

**Distributed to Candidates on December 11, 2015**

*Governor Jeb Bush -- Dr. Ben Carson -- Governor Chris Christie*

*Secretary Hillary Clinton -- Senator Ted Cruz -- Carly Fiorin*

*Governor John Kasich -- Governor Martin O'Malley -- Senator Rand Paul*

*Senator Marco Rubio -- Senator Bernie Sanders -- Donald Trump*

## **Presidential Candidates:**

Below is a series of questions addressing several issues of importance to the members of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE). We respectfully request that you provide IFPTE with answers to these nine questions, and we will in turn provide them to the membership across the nation.

Please reply to Matt Biggs, IFPTE Legislative Director, [mbiggs@ifpte.org](mailto:mbiggs@ifpte.org), or mail to:

IFPTE  
501 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW  
Suite 701  
Washington, DC 20001

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Matt Biggs at (202) 239-4880.

Thank you in advance for answering this survey.

---

### **1. Labor Law Reform, Minimum Wage**

Unfortunately most American workers in all sectors and professions do not have a voice on the job. Real wages are down, healthcare and retirement benefits are under attack, and job stability is quickly becoming a thing of the past. While professional and manufacturing workers are forced to watch as employers' ship their jobs overseas or replace them with cheaper imported labor through our unjust STEM visa programs, millions of other minimum wage workers are living in poverty. Regrettably, 1.3 million workers in our nation are earning the \$7.25/hour minimum wage, with another 1.7 million earning even less than that. 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.

However, when workers do explore the opportunity of forming a union their efforts are frequently met with employer interference. 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.

- *Will you use the power of the bully pulpit to advocate for, and sign into law, meaningful and fair labor law reform like that embodied in The Employee Free Choice Act? This legislation passed the House of Representatives in March 2007 to provide workers the ability to decide to form and join unions absent employer threats and interference.*
- *Will you support an increase in the nation's current \$7.25/hour minimum wage to at least \$15/hour?*

## **2. Federal Taxpayer Resources and Union Busting**

President Obama signed Executive Order 13494 (EO 13494) in January 2009, forbidding government contractors from spending taxpayer dollars on union avoidance law firms and others for the purposes of frustrating their employees' ability to decide whether or not to form unions. While IFPTE applauds the intent of this EO, we are disappointed that it only applies to those contracts put in place after the EO was signed. In other words, its impact is meaningless for many workers.

- *As President, will you prevent the use of taxpayer funds by any federal contractor from being used to frustrate and otherwise interfere with organizing drives, and have it apply retroactively to current contracts and contractors?*

## **3. Federal Employee Civil Service & Collective Bargaining Protections**

Since 2011 our nation's federal employees have sacrificed at least \$159 billion for our nation, mostly through years of pay freezes and pension cuts that went towards deficit reduction, while some was used to offset the 2012 extensions of the payroll tax cut and Unemployment Insurance (UI), as well as to help pay the bill to avoid sequestration through FY15. Government employees have also experienced furlough days and job insecurity due to the government shutdown and sequestration. Despite these huge sacrifices, there continue to be attacks in Congress aimed at federal worker pay, pensions, health care and worker protections.

- *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 ensure that there will be no more cuts to federal employee pensions, and that federal workers will receive pay raises commensurate to the services they provide the American taxpaying public?*
- *Will you renew President Obama's Executive Order (EO 13522) that calls for a National Labor/Management Partnership?"*

## **4. Privatization of Public Sector Jobs**

Federal lawmakers at both federal and state governments continue to claim that contracting out saves taxpayer dollars and can help solve their budget woes. However, in most cases privatization of government sector work ends up costing taxpayers more money and sometimes even results in inferior public services.

In the federal government, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) does not base their contracting out decisions on the best value for the taxpayer, leading to the privatization of critical government services. In the public sector states like New Jersey, for example, view the privatization of the roadways, vital services provided students at state colleges & universities, and other services as a quick influx of cash and a perceived short term fix to their budget

situation. What is lost in the rush to privatize government functions is that the consequences will have dire long term ramifications for both workers and taxpayers.

- *As President, will you turn back unfair federal outsourcing practices and replace them with a fair 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?*

## **5. Excise Tax on Health Benefits**

Workers in all sectors of our economy have forgone pay and other benefits in exchange for adequate employer-provided health care coverage. At the bargaining table, for example, workers are accepting lower or no pay increases, reduced pensions, and the curtailing of other important benefits in exchange for an employer provided health benefit that is both affordable and meets the health needs of their families. As health care costs have skyrocketed, and absent any cost controls put into place by national lawmakers, workers have been forced to fend for themselves by negotiating these kinds of unfortunate trade-offs for many years.

While IFPTE applauds measures to ensure that everyone has access to health care—including a single-payer national health insurance system—we are concerned about the impending 40% excise tax called for by the Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act. This law levies a tax on individual policies costing more than \$10,200 a year and family policies in excess of \$27,500, and is slated to go into effect in 2018. Millions of workers will see sacrifices made at the bargaining table fall by the wayside, suffer reduced employer provided benefits, and will ultimately have to incur the cost of any tax that will be passed on from the employer to the employee.

- *As President, will you work to eliminate this burdensome tax on working families by endorsing policies similar to those laid out in S. 2075, The American Worker Health Care Tax Relief Act of 2015, sponsored by Senator Sherrod Brown, and other similar bipartisan measures currently pending in Congress?*

## **6. Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)**

IFPTE sees little improvement in the TPP compared to the NAFTA model. TPP's labor chapter will do nothing to help improve working conditions for workers abroad, and lacks any enforceable language giving workers an authentic right to collectively bargain. It will not guarantee or even promote workplace rights and labor standards. As is the custom in past trade agreements, this one has no real enforcement mechanism within the labor chapter, leaving it up to the discretion of the nations themselves to remedy any labor dispute. When you compare that unenforceable system to the enforceable investor-state process allowing corporations to sue governments at the expense of the public good, it is not surprising that IFPTE and many others are disappointed with the TPP agreement.

There is little doubt that if the TPP agreement is permitted to move forward it will lead to the loss of even more American manufacturing jobs to low wage nations who have little to no worker protections.

- *As President, will you reject the TPP, and instead embark on a new trade policy by negotiating bilateral trade agreements with countries that include enforceable workers' rights provisions consistent with the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, provide reasonable wages and benefits, and provide all workers around the world with the right to unionize?*

## **7. 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. In fact, just this year companies like Disney World and Southern-Cal Edison fired hundreds of their workers and replaced them with H-1B visa holders. 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 from having access to the U.S. labor market.

IFPTE has endorsed a plan by former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall to “base future entry levels on the real needs of the labor market.” The Marshall Plan is to improve, not expand temporary worker programs, which urges movement away from indentured work that results from the H-1B and L-1 visa programs. As stated in the Marshall Plan, “Our country has long recognized that it is not good policy for a democracy to admit large numbers of workers with limited civil and employment rights.”

- *As President, will you propose and/or support legislative and regulatory efforts aimed at reforming the H-1B and L-1 Visa programs consistent with the principles in the Marshall Plan?*

## **8. Support for the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)**

IFPTE remains concerned with the current Administration's recent budget proposals “to explore options to end federal ties to TVA...”. IFPTE believes that this language is misguided, as TVA's mission of providing inexpensive and reliable power services to those in the Tennessee Valley has served as an incredibly successful economic engine for Tennessee and parts of the other six states it serves. With over 13,000 employees—many in family wage, union represented jobs—the TVA generates approximately \$11.2 billion in annual revenues. Since 2005, TVA has been responsible for saving and creating over 300,000 jobs and spurring \$32 billion in business investment in TVA serviced areas. TVA has 155 power distributor customers

that they sell electricity to, and serves some 56 industries and federal entities. IFPTE sees no compelling reason to even consider divesting TVA's functions. Even the Administration's very own commissioned Lazard Study recommended last year "against pursuing a divestiture of TVA...".

- *As President, will you reject any notion of divesting some or all of the valuable services that the TVA provides to the citizens in the Tennessee Valley states?*

## **9. Pensions, Social Security**

It is clear that the retirement security of American workers is quickly becoming a thing of the past, leading to a retirement crisis for Americans of epic proportion. In 2012, former Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman, Tom Harkin, issued a report that found that half of Americans have less than \$10,000 in savings for retirement, just one in five private sector workers is covered by a defined pension benefit, and the retirement to income deficit between actual retirement savings versus projected retirement savings is \$6.6 trillion. Things have not gotten any better since 2012. Earlier this year the Center for American Progress found that, "nearly one-third of non-retired Americans have no retirement savings or pension."

Despite this looming crisis facing America, national lawmakers have advocated for everything from privatizing Social Security to raising the retirement age. Others, including the Obama Administration, have advocated for cutting the Social Security COLA by tying its increase to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). And, adding insult to injury, some also want to end Medicare as we know it and replace it with a voucher system.

IFPTE believes any cuts to Social Security and Medicare are misguided. Instead, we must not only strengthen these programs, we must expand them.

- *As President, will you work to reject any cuts to Social Security and Medicare, including tying the COLA to the CPI, and instead work toward thoughtful and worker friendly reforms to expand both Social Security and Medicare?*