



International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers  
AFL-CIO & CLC

IFPTE 2016 Presidential Candidate 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, legislation that passed the House of Representatives in March, 2007, to provide workers an 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?*

Absolutely. I have used my position as a Senator to press for these kinds of reforms, and I would most certainly use the Presidency as a bully pulpit on this and many other issues affecting workers' rights. Rights are often won

through organizing, which is why I would make it easier for workers to join unions by fighting for the Employee Free Choice Act. One of the most significant reasons for the 40-year decline in the middle class is that the rights of workers to collectively bargain for better wages and benefits have been severely undermined. It's time for low-wage workers, including caregivers, to organize.

It is a national disgrace that millions of full-time workers are living in poverty and millions more are forced to work two or three jobs just to pay their bills. In the year 2015, a job must lift workers out of poverty, not keep them in it. The current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour is a starvation wage and must be raised to a living wage. Since 1968, the minimum wage has lost over 30 percent of its purchasing power. That is unacceptable. No American who works 40 hours a week should live in poverty. I have introduced legislation in the Senate to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2020. This legislation would directly benefit 62 million workers who currently make less than \$15 an hour. As President, I will fight to sign this legislation into law.

However, without the application of a cost of living index, increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour would only be a temporary solution. The application of a cost of living index would allow the minimum wage to go up without the need for new legislation by Congress. As Congress has allowed eight, sometimes nine years to go between raises in the minimum wage, millions of Americans have been seen their real wages go down while the cost of a college education, prescription drugs, childcare, housing, and other expenses have gone up. Applying a cost of living index would give peace of mind to millions of Americans. It would ensure a dignified living wage, not reliant upon begging future Congresses to raise the minimum wage, and it is the right thing to do.

## **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 into organizing drives, and have it apply retroactively to current contracts and contractors?*

As you know, I have fought for workers' rights all of my adult life. As President, I will stand unabashedly and unequivocally on the side of labor unions and the working people of our country.

I share IFPTE's concerns about the unprecedented attacks on unions and the working class at the local, state and Federal level. Funded by some of the wealthiest families in the country, the Republicans are trying to undermine the very laws and protections that unions fought so hard to pass over the past century. From Scott Walker's assault on unions in Wisconsin, to efforts to turn back the rights to organize and collectively bargain, and to eliminate prevailing wage laws, defined benefit pension plans, workers' compensation, workers' safety, unemployment insurance, and more, a war is being waged against the working class by some of the wealthiest people in this country whose greed has no end. This is a war that we cannot let them win.

One of the very first bills that I introduced in Congress in 1991 was the Workplace Democracy Act. I recently reintroduced an updated version of this legislation, and when I am President, I will make it a priority to sign this bill into law. This legislation would establish majority card check recognition, guarantee the right to a first contract, and strengthen and expand the enforcement authority of the National Labor Relations Board in cases where there is are violations of labor laws.

We have got to do everything we can to make it easier, not harder, for workers to join unions and collectively bargain for better wages and stronger benefits.

### **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 that are commensurate to the services they provide the American taxpaying public?*
- *Will you renew President Obama's Executive Order (no. 13522) that calls for a National Labor/Management Partnership?*

Yes. In my view, protecting the rights of employees to bargain with their employers over workplace issues should be an inviolable right. We should be protecting and enhancing the workplace rights of workers, rather than allowing state and local governments to strip away hard-fought rights to form a union or to collectively bargain. I was proud to co-sponsor the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act when it was introduced in the House in 2005; I was an original co-sponsor of the legislation when it was introduced in 2007 in the Senate; I voted for it when it came up for a vote in 2010; and, I would strongly advocate for its passage as President.

I am deeply committed to protecting the democratic right of workers to join unions and to collectively bargain for better conditions. Study after study has shown that when employees are involved in the decision-making that affects their jobs, they are more motivated, absenteeism goes down, worker productivity goes up, and people stay on the job for longer periods.

For far too long, the extreme right wing has demonized, belittled, and sought to destroy the federal workforce. That is wrong, that is unconscionable, and that has got to change. The fact of the matter is that no other worker has been asked to sacrifice more on the altar of deficit reduction than our federal workers. Over the past decade, federal workers have contributed \$159 billion towards deficit reduction.

For three long years, federal workers' wages were frozen (2011-2013), and today wages are still not even close to keeping up with inflation. Two years ago, 750,000 federal workers had their pay cut by a combined \$1 billion when the Republicans shut down the federal government. And arbitrary budget cuts are causing enormous pain not just to federal workers, but to the elderly, the children, the sick, and the most vulnerable people in this country. Not only must we end sequestration, but our federal workforce deserves a pay raise of at least 3.8 percent to keep up with cost-of-living increases. The time has come to fairly compensate public servants for the enormously important work that they do each and every day. That's why I am strongly supportive of the FAIR Act.

As President, I would renew President Obama's Executive Order (no. 13522) to extend the cooperative and productive National Labor/Management Partnership.

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

Federal lawmakers at both the 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 as 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?*

Yes. Let's be clear: Many private contractors provide jobs with low-pay and no benefits with little or no training. In many instances, privatization leads to poor service, high turnover, and an overall increase in taxpayer dollars.

For example, on the state government level, the State of New Jersey claimed it was going to save taxpayer dollars by privatizing its vehicle inspection program. What happened? According to a 2002 report, this program turned into a "mammoth boondoggle" that ended up costing taxpayers \$247 million more than it would have cost if it were run by the state.

In terms of the federal government, let's look at airport security. Before 9-11, airport security was in the hands of private contractors who paid their workers minimum wage with no benefits, hired felons, failed to conduct background checks, and lied to federal officials. This led to an employee turnover rate of 120% and a turnover rate as high as 400% for baggage screeners at some of the nation's largest airports. After 9-11, we decided that airport security jobs needed to be done by the federal workforce so that they would be better trained, better paid, and better equipped to secure our nation's airports. While this system is not perfect, I think most people would agree that airports are a much safer place today as a result of a federalized airport security workforce.

At a time when private contractors have been found to be two to three times more expensive than civilians, we must do everything we can to make sure that federal workers are given the opportunity to provide the services that the American people need, and when we do hire contractors that they are held to the same high standards we expect of our federal workforce.

## **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 with the impending 40% excise tax called for by the Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act. This law levies the tax on individual policies costing more than \$10,200 a year and family policies in excess of \$27,500, and is 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?*

Yes. During the debate over the Affordable Care Act, I filed an amendment with Senators Sherrod Brown and Al Franken to get rid of the so-called “Cadillac tax” and replace it with a surtax on millionaires. As we approach the 2018 implementation of the provision, it is becoming clear that the tax will affect many plans negotiated under collective bargaining agreements – just as I had feared. To my mind, it is absurd to put the burden of funding healthcare reform on the backs of union members who have negotiated decent health benefits, often in exchange for wage concessions.

Clearly, this needs to be fixed, which is why my office is involved in a Senate working group to find a path forward. The challenge will be narrowly crafting legislation that provides relief to union members, while not giving another tax break to high-earning corporate executives.

But let’s be clear, the long-term solution is to fight for a Medicare for all single-payer health care system in America to guarantee health care as a right of citizenship to every man, woman, and child in America.

It has been the goal of Democrats since Franklin D. Roosevelt to create a universal health care system guaranteeing health care to all people. Every other major industrialized nation has done so. It is time for this country to join them and fulfill the legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson and other great Democrats.

However, this means more than just providing health care to 29 million Americans who currently lack it. It means real savings for the middle class and working families. Last year, the average working family paid \$4,955 in premiums and \$1,318 in deductibles to private health insurance companies. Under this plan, a family of four earning \$50,000 would pay just \$466 per year to the single-payer program, amounting to a savings of over \$5,800 for that family each year. Businesses would save over \$9,400 a year in health care costs for the average employee. The average annual cost to the employer for a worker with a family who makes \$50,000 a year would go from \$12,591 to just \$3,100.

By moving to an integrated system, the government will finally have the ability to stand up to drug companies and negotiate fair prices for the American people collectively. It will also ensure the federal government can track access to various providers and make smart investments to avoid provider shortages and ensure communities can access the providers they need.

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

IFTPE 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 IFTPE 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 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 with the right to unionize?*

**Yes.** I strongly believe that our unfettered free policies have been a disaster for American workers. During my 25 years in Congress, I helped lead the fight against NAFTA, CAFTA, and Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China. These agreements have allowed corporations to close thousands of factories, and ship millions of jobs to low-wage countries where people are forced to work for pennies an hour.

I have been strongly opposed to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) ever since it was first announced, and I will do everything I can to defeat the agreement. I did not come to this position recently, nor as a matter of political convenience after praising it as the “gold standard” of trade deals. To my mind, the TPP is just a continuation of a failed approach to trade that began when President Bill Clinton championed NAFTA; an approach that boosts the profits of large corporations by offshoring jobs while undercutting worker rights, and environmental, health, and financial laws here and abroad.

In Vietnam, the minimum wage is 65 cents an hour, independent labor unions are banned, and people are thrown in jail for expressing their political beliefs or trying to improve labor conditions. In Malaysia, many migrant workers who manufacture electronics are modern-day slave laborers who have had their passports and wages confiscated and are unable to return to their own countries. American workers should not have to “compete” against people forced to work under these conditions. This is not “free trade;” it is a race to the bottom.

To rebuild the middle class and create the millions of good paying jobs we desperately need, we must fundamentally rewrite our trade policies. Corporations must start investing in America and create jobs here, and not just in low wage countries. Our goal must be to make sure that American made products, not American jobs are our number one export.

## **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 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 from having access to the U.S. labor market.

IFPTE has endorsed former Secretary of Labor, Ray Marshall's plan 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 laid in the Marshall Plan?*

I would substantially reform guest-worker programs like the H-2B and H-1B programs that are driving down the wages and benefits of American workers. Specifically, I would substantially increase the prevailing wages that employers are required to pay before they could hire guest workers, and I would require employers to offer jobs to Americans first at higher wages and decent benefits. Furthermore, Binding workers to specific employers creates a situation rife for abuse and exacerbates an already unequal relationship between the employer and the employee. To reform this program, we must substantially increase prevailing wages that employers pay temporary guest workers; if there is a true labor shortage, employers must offer higher, not lower wages.

## **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?*

Yes, I will reject any attempt to divest some or all of the valuable services provided by the TVA. The TVA has been wildly successful and I will block any attempts at divesting or privatizing the TVA. However, simply protecting the TVA isn't enough. Like Roosevelt's New Deal, I intend to put America to work rebuilding our infrastructure and expanding our public works. America's aging electrical grid – which consists of a patchwork of power generation, transmission, and distribution facilities, some of which date back to the early 1900s – simply isn't up to 21st century challenges, including resiliency to cyber-attacks. It is no wonder the World Economic Forum ranks our grid at just 24th in the world in terms of reliability, just behind Barbados.

The Rebuild America Act, which I introduced in Congress and will work to pass as President, will invest \$10 billion a year for power transmission and distribution modernization projects to improve the reliability and resiliency of our ever more complex electric power grid. This investment will also position our grid to accept new sources of locally generated renewable energy, and it will address critical vulnerabilities to cyber-attacks. Our country needs more publicly owned utilities, not less. Our country needs more TVAs, not less.

## **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 either since 2012. Earlier this year the Center for American Progress found that, “nearly one-third of nonretired 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?*

**At a time when senior poverty is going up, our job must be to expand benefits, not cut them.**

**Today, Social Security has a \$2.8 trillion surplus and can pay out every benefit owed to every eligible American for the next 18 years.**

**Although Social Security’s finances will remain strong for the next 18 years, I believe Congress must strengthen and expand it for generations to come.**

**How do we do that? Simple.**

**We demand that the wealthiest Americans in this country pay their fair share into the system.**

**Today, a Wall Street CEO who makes \$20 million a year pays the same amount of money into Social Security as someone who makes \$118,500 a year.**

That's because the Social Security payroll tax is capped.

My Social Security plan would lift the cap and make those earning over \$250,000, the wealthiest 1.5 percent, pay the same share into Social Security as the middle class.

Under my plan, 98.5 percent of Americans would not see their taxes go up by one dime under this plan.

By lifting the cap, my plan would raise enough revenue to do four things.

First, my plan makes sure that Social Security can pay every benefit owed to every eligible American for the next 50 years – until the year 2074.

Second, my plan expands Social Security benefits across-the-board by an average of \$65 a month.

Third, my plan lifts seniors out of poverty by increasing the minimum benefits paid to low-income workers when they retire.

Fourth, my plan increases cost-of-living-expenses to keep up with the rising cost of healthcare and prescription drugs.

Under my plan, senior citizens with an income of less than \$16,000 would see their benefits go up by more than \$1,300 a year.

And, very low-income seniors who put in a lifetime of work would see their benefits go up even more.

Seniors who today are trying to survive on less than \$10,000 a year would see their benefits go up to \$14,700 if they worked for 30 years under my plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bernie Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.