



Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO, 1925 K St. NW #410, Washington, DC 20001
Telephone: 202-756-4150 Fax: 202-756-4151 Website: www.dclabor.org

March 14, 2006

Dear Congressional Candidate:

Attached is the Maryland State & District of Columbia, AFL-CIO questionnaire for federal offices. In order to be eligible to receive the AFL-CIO endorsement, it is necessary to complete this questionnaire. The completed questionnaire must be received by Friday, April 7, 2006. The answers to these questions may be shared with other individuals or organizations.

After completing the questionnaire, please e-mail your responses to:

csimpson@dclabor.org

You should also send a hard copy to

Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO
Attention: Craig Simpson
1925 K Street NW #410
Washington, DC 20006

Once we have reviewed your questionnaire, we will decide which candidates, if any, our Executive Board will be interviewing. Following any interviews, the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO will make recommendations to the Maryland State & DC AFL-CIO.

The Maryland State & DC AFL-CIO is scheduled to meet April 25, 2006 to consider endorsements for federal offices.

If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joslyn N. Williams".

Joslyn N. Williams
President

Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO
Candidate Questionnaire
2006 Elections

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Name: Chris Van Hollen

Address: 10605 Concord Street, Suite 202

City: Kensington, MD

Zip: 20895

Phone: 301-942-3768

Mobile: _____

E-Mail: samantha@vanhollen.org

Office Seeking : U.S. House of Representatives District : Maryland's 8th District

Party: Democrat

Campaign Committee Name: Van Hollen for Congress

Campaign Committee Address: 10605 Concord Street, Suite 202, Kensington MD 20895

Campaign Committee Phone: 301-942-3768

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E-Mail: samantha@vanhollen.org

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Campaign Staff: Samantha Gross

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Does your campaign accept PAC contributions? Yes

PREVIOUS ELECTED/APPOINTED OFFICES:

U.S. House of Representatives – MD 8th District
2003-Present

Maryland State Senate
1994-2002

Maryland House of Delegates
1991-1993

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED LABOR'S ENDORSEMENT? Yes

When? Yes, I have consistently received support from AFL-CIO.

PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY YOU SEEK LABOR'S ENDORSEMENT:

I value the support of an organization dedicated to improving the lives and working conditions of working men and women.

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO
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1. FREEDOM TO CHOOSE A UNION

The right to form a union and engage in collective bargaining is enshrined in U.S. and international human rights laws, but for many U.S. workers it is a right that exists only on paper. More and more, workers who join together to form unions typically face intense employer opposition aimed at suppressing their freedom to unionize and bargain collectively. Workers, their families and the entire nation are paying a high price for the suppression of these basic freedoms. Wages have been suppressed, especially for workers on the lowest rungs of the job ladder—many of them women, minorities and immigrants. Secure guaranteed pensions and decent health care coverage common under union contracts have been denied to millions of nonunion workers who want collective bargaining but cannot have it. Disparities in income and wealth have reached levels not seen since the robber-baron era, as workers blocked from access to collective bargaining lack the power to redress rising economic inequality.

Employers routinely resort to legal but coercive tactics as well as illegal ones to keep workers from forming unions. According to Cornell University's Kate Bronfenbrenner, when private-sector workers try to organize a union, 92 percent of employers force them to attend closed-door anti-union meetings and 78 percent have supervisors deliver anti-union messages to workers they oversee. Seventy-five percent hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns, half threaten to shut down if the union is voted in and 25 percent illegally fire workers.

Even when workers win a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election to form a union, one-third of the time their employer never negotiates a contract with them. And the penalties for all these forms of employer misconduct are so mild they do not serve as a deterrent to future misconduct.

The law giving working people the legal right to form a union through NLRB elections is so weak, in fact, it is becoming irrelevant for workers seeking to improve their lives. Instead of a workers' rights law, it has become a structure for management to pressure and intimidate workers to reject unionization.

It's time to go back to the practice of the original federal labor legislation, under which the NLRB accepted worker signatures on union cards as proof of the decision to form a union and elections were required only if there was credible evidence of coercion in the signing process or more than one union was being sought to represent workers. Ironically, present law leaves it up to the employer to decide whether to recognize a union on the basis of authorization cards or other evidence of majority support for the union—no matter how overwhelming that support may be—or to force workers to go through an NLRB-conducted election.

This state of affairs is directly contrary to the original intent of the Wagner Act, which was to give employees freedom to decide among themselves whether to have a union, without participation or interference by the employer. As a result, tens of thousands of workers every year are subjected to employer campaigns of misinformation, disinformation, threats, intimidation, surveillance, illegal discharge of union activists and supporters or lengthy delays.

If elected, would you co-sponsor the Employee Free Choice Act (S. 842/H.R. 1696), which was introduced in the 108th Congress by Senators Kennedy and Specter in the Senate and Representatives George Miller and Peter King in the House? The Employee Free Choice Act would require employers to honor their workers' decision to join a union after a majority of them signed a union authorization card or petition; establishes first contract mediation and arbitration; and creates meaningful penalties against employers who interfere with, coerce or fire workers for attempting to join a union. This bill would amend the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act to allow workers to form unions as they did when the Wagner Act became law in 1935.

Yes, I am already a co-sponsor.

If elected, would you publicly support workers who are forming unions by reaffirming the importance of unions to our communities and by taking actions such as contacting employers and urging them to not interfere with employee free choice, issuing public statements, attending rallies supporting organizing, sponsoring public forums, etc.?

Yes, on a case-by-case basis.

If elected, would you oppose a national "right to work" bill that would prohibit unionized workers and their employers from voluntarily agreeing to "union security" provisions, which allow the union to collect dues from all of the workers that federal law requires it to represent in the workplace?

Yes

2. JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

For most U.S. workers, a good job means the difference between economic independence and diminished, if not dashed, hopes. Our manufacturing sector has been hit hardest, losing 2.8 million jobs between 2000 and 2004, but other sectors—telecommunications, information technology and transportation—have sustained major blows as well.

Construction jobs benefited from the boom economy of the 1990s but suffer from the federal government's current failure to invest public funds in essential public projects such as transportation, schools, water systems and other infrastructure. For every \$1 billion invested in transportation, 47,000 jobs are created.

U.S. unemployment, which dipped below 4 percent in 2000, is now 5%—a rate that fails to take into account the hundreds of thousands who have dropped out of the labor force. Long-term unemployment is at historic levels, meaning millions of unemployed workers are running out of state unemployment benefits without finding a job and without any federal unemployment safety net. The effects of the Gulf Coast hurricanes are also still being felt. The overall unemployment rate is 24.5% with unemployment among African-American and Latino workers a staggering 42%. Workers' real wages, which rose across the board in the late 1990s, are falling, and family incomes are flat. The minimum wage has not been raised for six years, and inflation has eaten away all the gains of those increases. The minimum wage now stands at \$5.15, the lowest level in real-dollar terms in 50 years in all but one year.

The problem is not just lost jobs—the jobs we are creating are not as good. Income inequality in this country has grown, highlighted by the fact that average CEO pay is more than 400 times the earnings of frontline workers. Average hourly earnings have fallen since November 2001 and the nation's 13,000 richest families, a mere 0.01 percent of the population, now have nearly as much income as the poorest 20 million households. Furthermore, only 25% of Americans have a “good job”—one that pays at least \$16/hr., has health insurance and a pension.

Meanwhile, massive tax cuts passed during the first three years of the Bush administration wiped out nearly half of the projected budget surplus over the next 10 years and will cause Congress to raid the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds just to keep the government running. These cuts, which primarily benefited wealthy taxpayers, will also crowd out other critical investments such as repairing our schools, securing our homeland and providing health care to the 46 million uninsured Americans

If elected, would you support the repeal of the Bush tax cuts for the top income brackets?

Yes

If elected, will you support funding important infrastructure projects that generate good jobs, such as transportation systems, school modernization, airports and water systems?

Yes

If elected, will you support a fiscal stimulus to enable states to meet increasing demands for Medicaid and education funding?

Yes

If elected, would you support an increase in the minimum wage to historic levels? (More than \$7 an hour in 2004 dollars)

Yes, I am a cosponsor of this legislation.

3. MANUFACTURING AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Our manufacturing sector has been hit hard, losing almost 3 million jobs since 1998. A staggering trade deficit that is likely to exceed \$700 billion in 2005, an overvalued dollar, flawed international tax policy, rising health care costs, and the erosion of Buy American laws have all contributed to the challenges facing U.S. manufacturing. Overseas outsourcing of critical technological capability and manufacturing capacity undermines our national security and threatens the jobs and wages of even highly educated workers.

By 2005, more than one million workers had lost their jobs due to growing trade deficits since the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), according to the Economic Policy Institute. Expanding the flawed NAFTA model to dozens of additional countries in bilateral and regional trade agreements will only accelerate the loss of U.S. jobs, while doing little to address poverty and inequality in our trade partners.

The labor movement has opposed trade agreements that do not include enforceable protections for internationally recognized workers' rights and environmental standards, and we have opposed efforts to weaken our trade laws, including safeguard measures and those that protect against dumping, subsidies, and other unfair trade practices. The AFL-CIO supported the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement and the Cambodia apparel quota agreement, which did include such provisions. The AFL-CIO supports trade policies that require adherence to internationally recognized workers' rights, protect the environment, and that do not undermine the ability of governments to regulate in the public interest and provide quality public services.

If elected, would you support efforts to strengthen trade law enforcement and efforts to secure meaningful remedies for injuries resulting from unfair trade?

Yes

If elected, would you support legislation to reform tax provisions that encourage the movement of jobs and investment overseas?

Yes

If elected, would you oppose legislation to implement bilateral, regional, or unilateral free trade agreements that do not require enforcement of internationally recognized workers' rights and environmental standards?

Yes, I will review these on a case-by-case basis.

If elected, would you oppose legislation to implement any further rounds of the WTO that weaken U.S. trade laws, alter our commitments with respect to immigration policies, or fail to make substantial progress on incorporating internationally recognized workers' rights?

Yes, I will review these on a case-by case basis.

If elected, would you support adequate funding to fight abusive international child labor and promote the enforcement of internationally recognized workers' rights?

Yes

What will you do to address the trade imbalance with China and promote the rights of Chinese workers, especially the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining? What actions will you take to ensure that the Chinese government ceases manipulating its currency?

We must use our leverage at the WTO and through our trade relationship to insist on changes in these areas.

4. HEALTH CARE

The lack of affordable, quality health care in America continues to grow in scope and severity. Premiums are up more than 73 percent since 2000, compared with inflation growth of 14 percent and wage growth of 15 percent. The number of uninsured has grown to nearly 46 million in 2004, an increase of 6 million since 2000. This growth in uninsured is driven primarily by a decline in the share of employers offering health insurance – from 69% of firms in 2000 to just 60% in 2005. Those firms that continue to offer coverage are asking workers to bear a greater share of the cost on their own, in the form of higher co-pays and deductibles. These recent trends in cost shifting and coverage dropping are especially dangerous for retirees, low wage workers and workers with serious health conditions.

Despite these staggering statistics, the Administration and Congress have pursued policies that would make matters worse by undermining employer-sponsored health insurance – the main source of coverage for Americans. Employer-sponsored health insurance provides coverage for nearly three of every five Americans under age 65.

Growing evidence also shows an alarming rate of avoidable mistakes in the delivery of care. The Institute of Medicine's landmark study, *To Err is Human*, found up to 100,000 deaths each year are due to avoidable mistakes.

Unions bargain to provide health insurance to more than 40 million Americans—that is one out of every four Americans with employment-based coverage. For more than a decade, working families have lived through a vicious cycle of reduced health care access and higher costs. The AFL-CIO supports measures that provide comprehensive, affordable, quality health care for all Americans and strongly opposes any measure that will exacerbate the problem of the uninsured and rising health care costs.

If elected, would you support efforts to control rising health care costs, including pharmaceutical costs, in order to make coverage more affordable for workers and retirees?

Yes

If elected, would you support legislation that helps laid-off workers purchase COBRA continuation coverage?

I believe the entire benefit structure should be redesigned.

If elected, would you support legislation that strengthens the employment-based system of coverage, including a federal reinsurance program that stabilizes premiums for employer coverage by helping cover the highest cost individuals?

Yes

If elected, would you oppose legislation that would undermine coverage for 160 million Americans who are insured through their employer, including proposals that encourage cost shifting to workers through Health Savings Accounts and high-deductible health plans? Imposing a cap on the amount of health benefits that are excluded from taxation? Stripping important consumer protections and driving up premiums for most workers in small firms because of unfair competition with association health plans?

Yes

In light of the success of public programs in keeping the number of uninsured from growing more than it already has, , would you support efforts to ensure enough funding for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to keep pace with the growing need? Would you oppose efforts to block grant Medicaid, thereby shifting greater costs onto states and threatening coverage for low-income families, the elderly and people with disabilities?

Yes

If elected, would you support legislation that would establish minimum nurse staffing ratios in our nation's hospitals to ensure safe patient care?

I support the intent of this legislation. I want to review the details.

5. PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

In 2003, Congress enacted a Medicare prescription drug bill that provides limited coverage for prescription drugs and makes major reforms to the program designed to increase the private sector role in delivering Medicare benefits. The new drug benefit, which begins coverage on January 1, 2006, contains major flaws that will adversely affect seniors and the disabled while providing significant new funding to private insurers and drug companies. Specifically, the new law creates a woefully inadequate benefit, with no help for seniors on prescription drug costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100 in 2006, does nothing to control skyrocketing prescription drugs prices, puts millions of retirees and low-income seniors at risk of being made worse off than they are today and establishes funding and rules that favor private plans over traditional Medicare. In addition, early experience with enrollment and beneficiary education suggests the resources for helping beneficiaries make choices may be inadequate and some of the information may be inaccurate or incomplete. More must be done to help improve the drug benefit outreach, education and enrollment; to protect beneficiaries from the harsh consequences of delaying their decision or making a bad choice; and to improve the drug benefit and other aspects of the 2003 law.

In light of the difficulty and confusion surrounding the roll out of the new Part D benefit, would you support legislation that would protect beneficiaries from the harsh penalties associated with delaying or making a bad choice, including delaying imposition of the late enrollment penalty, allowing beneficiaries to change plans within the first year, and preserving retiree health benefits for retirees to return to in the first year if they were unaware of the full consequences of leaving their employer's plan?

Yes

If elected, would you support efforts to improve coverage by eliminating the federal payment gap for individual expenditures (which will be for drug costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100 in 2006 but will grow with annual drug cost increases)?

I believe the entire benefit structure should be redesigned.

If elected, would you support efforts to rein in rising drug prices, starting with requiring the Secretary of Health and Human Services to use the bargaining power of 40 million beneficiaries to get better drug prices?

Yes

If elected, would you work to preserve traditional Medicare and prevent private plans from undermining the program through inflated payments and "cherry picking" the healthiest seniors?

Yes

If elected, will you work to reverse the new law's discriminatory treatment of retirees who have employer-provided prescription drug benefits?

Yes

If elected, will you oppose efforts to use the new accounting rules (known as the "cost containment" provisions and expected to be triggered for the first time in 2007) to cut back on Medicare benefits and/or charge beneficiaries more for their coverage?

Yes

6. LABOR STANDARDS

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is the nation's basic labor standards law. It protects all workers who might otherwise be subjected to unfair wages, pay discrimination and extended hours of work without overtime pay. The FLSA limits child labor and industrial homework and protects the disabled. FLSA protections are regularly under attack and are often eroded by lack of enforcement.

The Davis-Bacon Act requires the payment of prevailing community wages on federally financed construction projects. The law ensures local contractors that uphold prevailing rates of pay and local labor standards in a geographic area a fair chance to compete for government projects without being undercut by outside firms using cut-rate labor. The act also protects the government from unreliable operators seeking to win federal contracts by bidding too low to attract competent craftsmen.

The Service Contract Act (SCA) is based on the principle that the federal government should not award contracts for services to employers that underbid by paying workers less than the actual rates of pay for the same work in a geographic area. SCA protects the living standards of those who are employed as a direct result of federal service contracts, particularly those in low-wage occupations.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, which requires employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid (but job-protected) family or medical leave, took a major step in helping workers balance the demands of work and family. But the effectiveness of the FMLA is constrained by its limited coverage and the inability of millions of workers to afford leave without pay, and the FMLA is threatened by employer-backed proposals to limit the circumstances under which FMLA leave can be taken. Almost 41 million workers are not covered by the FMLA and according to a 2000 Labor Department study, 78% of workers who needed leave but did not take it said they could not afford to take it. To address these shortcomings, Congress needs to expand FMLA eligibility and provide for limited wage replacement during periods of leave. Congress must also resist calls by employers to curtail FMLA rights by limiting the circumstances under which employees can take leave. And in addition to family and medical leave already provided under the FMLA, Congress should guarantee at least seven days of paid sick leave for every worker.

If elected, would you oppose any effort to exclude more workers from the protections of the 40-hour workweek or to deny more workers the absolute right to overtime pay?

Yes

If elected, would you oppose any effort to allow employers to avoid paying cash overtime for work in excess of 40 hours per week or to exclude certain forms of compensation from the calculation of overtime pay?

Yes

If elected, would you oppose any proposed legislation that would either weaken or repeal the Davis-Bacon Act?

Yes

If elected, would you oppose any legislation that would weaken or repeal the Service Contract Act?

Yes

If elected, would you oppose any regulatory or legislative efforts to limit the circumstances under which an employee is able to take FMLA leave?

Yes

If elected, would you support an effort to expand the FMLA to cover workers in companies with fewer than 50 employees?

I support replacing the cap at 50 with another reasonable cap at a lower level.

If elected, would you support legislation to provide for wage replacement during periods of FMLA leave?

I want to review the specifics.

If elected, would you support legislation to require that companies guarantee seven days of annual paid sick leave?

I want to review the specifics.

7. PENSIONS

In the United States, 50 percent of the workforce is covered by employer-based retirement plans. While pensions have become a crucial component of retirement security, private pensions are poorly distributed among U.S. workers, with vast gaps among low-and even moderate-wage workers, as well as among women and minorities. The AFL-CIO is committed to advancing pension coverage for all workers through collective bargaining and legislation.

If elected, would you support measures to encourage the creation and expansion of defined benefit plans?

Yes, so long as the companies have the assets to support them.

If elected, would you support measures to protect the retirement savings of workers who participate in 401(k)s by broadening their diversification rights, ensuring their access to independent investment advice and mandating equal worker representation on 401(k) boards?

Yes

8. OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT

More than 30 years ago, Congress enacted the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) in response to the unacceptable numbers of workers who were being killed or seriously injured in the workplace. Since then, significant progress has been made in reducing the number of fatalities and injuries in the workplace but for some workers, including immigrant workers and Hispanic workers certain groups of workers, job fatalities are increasing. Millions of workers are not covered by the law, and for other workers protections are inadequate. At the same time, the OSH Act has come under constant attack from members of the business community who oppose government oversight to protect workers' safety and health. Legislative proposals have been made to weaken OSHA enforcement, shift the emphasis from enforcement to voluntary compliance and to cut the job safety budget.

The AFL-CIO opposes any legislative or budgetary attempts to weaken the OSH Act or the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). We support efforts to expand the OSHAct's coverage to all workers, to strengthen whistleblower protections and to strengthen enforcement.

If elected, would you oppose: Proposed legislation that would weaken the OSH Act by weakening job safety enforcement or shift the emphasis to voluntary compliance; Proposed legislation that would rely on third party audits instead of OSHA inspections; Any budget cuts that would weaken the ability of OSHA to protect the safety and health of U.S. workers?

Yes

If elected, would you support: Proposed legislation to extend OSHA coverage to the millions of state and local employees currently excluded from the OSHAct; Proposed legislation to strengthen whistleblower protections for workers who raise job safety concerns; Proposed legislation that would make criminal violations involving a death of a worker a felony instead of a misdemeanor?

Yes

9. SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security is the foundation of retirement income for U.S. workers and their families and the principal insurance against family impoverishment due to death or disability. It has reliably and efficiently provided benefits to the elderly and the disabled, helped millions of Americans escape poverty and given the elderly the financial means to live their last years with independence. The Social Security system is an extraordinarily well-crafted plan with a progressive benefits structure that delivers higher returns to lower-wage workers, ensures workers and beneficiaries will not outlive their benefits and protects those benefits from erosion by inflation. The AFL-CIO supports legislation that would protect benefits and strengthen the financial integrity of the Social Security system.

If elected, would you oppose measures to replace any part of Social Security's guaranteed benefits with individual investment accounts?

Yes

If elected, would you oppose efforts to increase the retirement age or to penalize workers who retire before Social Security's full benefit age (which is already increasing to 67 under current law)?

Yes, But a solution to the Social Security problem must allow for a discussion of a range of ideas.

If elected, would you oppose measures that would reduce the guaranteed defined benefit under current law?

Yes

10. EDUCATION

It is in the interest of our nation that we maintain quality public education for everyone. Private school vouchers, K-12 education savings accounts and other schemes, such as education tax credits for K-12 private school expenses, undermine public education by taking scarce public funds away from public schools, which are open to all students, and shifting them to private schools.

Too many of our nation's rural, suburban and urban public schools are overcrowded and in poor condition. A growing number of public schools all across the country are being forced to set up classrooms in trailers, hallways and closets in order to accommodate their rapidly rising enrollments. One-third of all public schools also need extensive repair or replacement.

If elected, would you actively oppose all private school voucher proposals and other schemes intended to divert taxpayer dollars from public to private schools?

Yes

If elected, would you actively support legislation that would help states and local school districts reduce their class sizes and finance school repair, construction and modernization projects at local prevailing wages?

Yes

11. EQUAL PAY

In 1963, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act to end the widespread practice of pay discrimination against women. The Equal Pay Act makes it unlawful to pay women less than men for work deemed substantially equal and/or identical, unless the pay difference is based on seniority, experience or other legitimate factors. Although equal pay has been the law for 35 years, women are still paid less than their male counterparts—despite having similar education, skills and experience.

If elected, would you support federal legislation to end pay discrimination against women and provide more effective remedies for its victims?

Yes

12. PRIVATIZATION

Citing budgetary pressures and, in some cases, ideology, government officials continue to support the widespread use of private contractors to perform government work. However, recent studies have found that cronyism, cost overruns and poor performance often result from the rush to contract public work to the private sector. These studies have shown that privatization schemes are often shortsighted and unnecessary. Moreover, the public sector should not be relying on private firms to make crucial decisions where confidentiality, unbiased information and public accountability are paramount.

If elected, would you oppose efforts to privatize public services and instead support efforts to work with public employees to improve services through cooperative job redesign, training and labor-management coordination?

Yes, but certain proposals must be examined on a case-by-case basis.

13. IMMIGRANT WORKERS

The AFL-CIO supports full workplace rights for immigrant workers and an opportunity for qualified undocumented workers and their families to adjust to permanent legal status. Reforms to provide legal status to the millions of hardworking, undocumented workers living in this country must be comprehensive and fair. They cannot and should not be designed primarily to provide a steady stream of vulnerable workers for American companies.

Instead, immigration reform must provide a certain path to legalization for workers from around the world who are already living and working in the United States; repeal and replace employer sanctions with stiffer penalties for employers who take advantage of workers' immigration status to exploit them and undermine labor protections for all workers; reform, not expand, temporary worker programs; and reform the permanent immigration system so those who play by the rules are not penalized by unconscionably long waiting periods.

If elected, would you support legislation that would provide otherwise law-abiding undocumented workers and their families who work here and contribute to their communities with permanent legal status through a new legalization program?

I support the thrust of the McCain-Kennedy legislation.

If elected, would you support legislation to protect immigrant workers' workplace rights, including the right to improve their lives by freely joining or forming a union?

Yes

If elected, would you support reform, but not expansion, of guest-worker programs to give greater protection to workers?

Yes

14. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

The federal-state Unemployment Insurance (UI) system provides vital income support to laid-off workers during their job search as well as acting counter-cyclically to shorten recessions, since the money workers receive from UI goes right back into the community to boost and stabilize the economy.

UI benefits are financed by taxes paid by employers (a cost which is passed on to workers in the form of reduced pay), so workers are effectively putting aside money for a rainy day while they are employed. Federal payroll taxes fund the states' costs of administering the program and provide loans and other assistance to states experiencing surges in unemployment or other difficulties.

In recent decades, many state unemployment systems have failed to keep up with changes in the workforce, especially the rise of short-term and contingent employment and the increased participation of women in the workforce. Today, 65 percent of unemployed workers are unable to collect unemployment insurance because of outdated eligibility rules, which hit women, low-wage and part-time workers particularly hard. Many states have cut UI benefits to grossly inadequate levels, now replacing only 41 percent of laid-off workers' lost wages on average, compared with about 50 percent as recently as the 1970s and 1980s. Workers can no longer rely on UI even as a temporary support during brief spells of unemployment, since the average benefit of \$263 per week is insufficient to pay for housing, health care, food, utility and transportation costs.

If elected, would you support efforts to strengthen our unemployment insurance system by covering part-time workers and recent hires and increasing the weekly benefit?

Yes

If elected, would you oppose so-called “devolution” proposals to weaken or eliminate the historic federal role in funding UI program administration and overseeing the states’ UI systems?

Yes

If elected, would you support providing federal extended benefits during periods of high long-term unemployment?

Yes

15. NONDISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Since there is no federal law that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, it is currently legal to fire working men and women in 38 states because of their sexual orientation. As a result, working people can be denied employment opportunities on the basis of something that has no relationship to their ability to perform their work. The AFL-CIO strongly opposes employment discrimination based on sexual orientation.

If elected, would you oppose employment discrimination based on sexual orientation?

Yes

16. UNION DUES

As part of a continuing anti-labor effort to weaken unions, legislation has been proposed at both the state and federal levels to restrict the ability of unions to collect and spend funds for legislative and political activity. These bills would prohibit unions from using dues to fund voter registration, lobbying and all forms of political communication. The proponents of so-called “paycheck protection” legislation argue that unions spend this money without the consent of the membership. However, unions are voluntary organizations that operate under majority rule, and, in fact, large majorities of union members support their unions’ legislative and political activities.

If elected, would you oppose restrictions on the use of union dues for political and legislative activities?

Yes

17. THE WAR IN IRAQ

The AFL-CIO supports the brave men and women in all branches of the armed services risking their lives in Iraq, many of whom are our members, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, husbands, and wives. They deserve leadership that fully values their courage and sacrifice, including a commitment from our country's leaders to bring them home rapidly. An unending military presence will only waste lives and resources, undermine our nation's security, and weaken our military. The AFL-CIO supports the call from members of Congress for the establishment of benchmarks in the key areas of security, governance, reconstruction, and internationalization.

The bedrock of any democracy is a strong, free, and democratic labor movement, and the AFL-CIO supports the efforts of Iraqi workers to form independent labor unions. The AFL-CIO condemns the fact that Saddam's decree No. 150, which denies union rights for workers in the extensive Iraqi public sector, has not been repealed. The AFL-CIO calls on the Iraqi government, as a top priority, to replace the old anti-worker laws and decrees with a new labor law that conforms to internationally recognized International Labor Organization (ILO) standards that call for protecting the right of workers to organize free from all government and employer interference, and the right to organize and bargain collectively in both the public and private sectors. These rights must include full equality for working women. In the absence of an adequate labor law, the AFL-CIO calls on the Iraqi government, as well as domestic and international businesses operating in Iraq, to respect and meet the ILO standards.

Our returning troops should be afforded all resources and services available to meet their needs. They should be able to return to their jobs, with seniority and benefits. The AFL-CIO calls on Congress and President Bush to expand benefits for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, including a new G.I. Bill and a Veterans' Administration (VA) housing program to meet current needs.

Would you support the call from members of Congress for the establishment of benchmarks in the key areas of security, governance, reconstruction, and internationalization, and call for a commitment to bring our troops home rapidly?

I support the proposal put forward by Senator Carl Levin and a majority of the Senate Democrats.

Would you publicly call for the recognition of a strong, free, and democratic labor movement as a necessary bedrock of Iraqi democracy?

Yes

Would you support expanded benefits for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, including a new G.I. Bill and a VA housing program to meet current needs?

Yes

18. DEDICATED FUNDING FOR MASS TRANSIT

An efficient and effective mass transit system is essential for economic growth in the D.C. area, and the growing cost of such a system cannot be borne by the riding public. The federal government and local business are both beneficiaries of mass transit.

If elected will you work to insure that: the federal government will commit funding to the operating cost of WMATA base on the number of federal workers who ride mass transit; such dedicated funding will not be an excuse for modifying the labor protection features of the WMATA compact; such dedicated funding will not be the sole source of government support and will also focus on raising money from the business community?

Yes

19. FULL VOTING REPRESENTATION FOR RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The U.S. Revolutionary War was fought against the tyranny of taxation without representation; and American citizens who live in Washington, D.C., still live under the tyranny of being governed and taxed by people for whom they do not have the right to vote, at a time when the U.S. government is proclaiming the virtues of democracy and touting free elections as the keystone of democracy for the rest of the world, the lack of democracy in our nation's capital is especially egregious; and residents of the District of Columbia have fought and died in every war from the Revolution to the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, yet are denied the right to democracy in their own country.

If elected will you endorse and strongly support the No Taxation Without Representation Act; and work for passage of legislation supported by the organization called Our Nation's Capital to deal with the structural imbalances in the finances of the District of Columbia that makes it impossible for the District to meet its expenses?

Yes