

Barack Obama for President

The past seven and one-half years have arguably been the most challenging in modern history for America’s working families and the unions that fight for their rights and economic security.

CWA has turned these difficult years into an opportunity to build a progressive political movement – a network of local leaders, members, retirees and their families across our country. Together, we have laid the groundwork to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, to enact universal health care, to emphasize *fair* trade over disastrous free trade policies, and to ensure financial security for retirees.

Now we have the opportunity to elect a United States President who shares our values and has pledged that our issues – the issues that affect the vast majority of Americans, whether they are union members or not – will be among his highest priorities. Imagine how revolutionary this will be after eight years of a White House that values wealth and corporate profits above all else.

After a long, hard-fought contest, Illinois Senator Barack Obama has the delegate support for the Democratic nomination. He emerged from a field of candidates who are all champions of working Americans, and we applaud and thank them profoundly. We especially recognize the dedication of Senator Hillary Clinton, a true friend to workers and unions, whose historic campaign has opened one of the last doors closed to American women.

The differences between Senator Obama and the presumptive Republican nominee, Arizona Senator John McCain, are clear.

Our choice is between fundamental changes to improve the lives of working Americans or four more years of policies that favor the rich, that ship jobs overseas, that thwart the rights of workers to organize and bargain contracts, that leave health care decisions to insurance companies, and that attempt, again, to privatize Social Security. And the list goes on.

Senator McCain is in such lockstep with President Bush that he has voted with the administration 89 percent of the time overall – a figure that went up to 95 percent in 2007.

Consider the differences between the candidates on CWA’s core issues: the Employee Free Choice Act, health care, retirement security, good jobs and fair trade.

The Employee Free Choice Act

Here’s Senator Obama, in his own words. He made essentially the same statement in April at CWA’s Legislative-Political Conference.

“It’s time we had a president who didn’t choke saying the word ‘union.’ A president who knows it’s the Department of Labor and not the Department of Management. And a President who strengthens our unions by letting them do what they do best – organize our workers. If a majority of workers want a union, they should get a union. It’s that simple. Let’s stand up to the business lobby that’s been getting their friends in Washington to block card check. I’ve fought to pass the Employee Free Choice Act in the Senate. And I will make it the law of the land when I’m President of the United States of America.”

Senator McCain’s track record clearly suggests that his administration would continue the harmful anti-worker policies and appointments of the Bush White House. 42
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Not only did McCain vote against the Employee Free Choice Act, but in 1996 he voted for a national “right-to-work” law that attempted to thwart states’ rights and eliminate unions. 44
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He voted to let employers hire permanent replacements during a strike and opposed collective bargaining rights for state and local police, firefighters and TSA airport screeners. 46
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Health Care 48 49

Much was made in the primary campaign about the details of Senator Obama’s and Senator Clinton’s health care plans. What is far more important than the minor differences between their proposals is that Obama and the Democratic Party are committed to fundamental change that will finally bring affordable, universal health care to all Americans. 50
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Senator McCain is not only opposed to universal health care; his proposal would put an even greater financial burden on workers by taxing employer-provided health care benefits. Experts in the field of health care and corporate benefits say this would lead most employers to cut the taxable coverage. McCain’s goal is to push workers into the private health insurance market, which would continue to refuse insurance to older Americans and to people with pre-existing conditions. 54
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Earlier this year, CWA launched our most aggressive campaign ever for health care reform. A growing army of activists is helping our members understand the urgency of this issue and is making it clear to local, state and national leaders that our support depends on their commitment to universal health care. We are bringing business leaders on board who are eager for solutions. We know we have to work together; we understand that health care costs are disadvantaging union employers. Senator McCain’s solution is to shift more of those costs to workers without doing anything to improve efficiency or quality. 60
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As we talk to people and politicians across the country, we are making it clear that we expect a new Congress to pass health care reform by 2010, and a new president to sign it into law. 67
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Senator Obama is as eager as we are for health care reform and has made that clear not just in his campaign, but in discussions with CWA President Cohen. He has indicated to President Cohen, as well as in interviews and in debates that he is open-minded about the route to universal health care and is willing to see his own plan evolve. 70
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Trade and Jobs 75

Speaking to CWA’s Legislative Conference in April, Senator Obama said, “We’re ready to play offense for America’s workers.” Senator Obama recognizes that *fair* trade agreements have an important role in the unstoppable train that is globalization, but he clearly understands the difference between fair trade and unfettered free trade. 76
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“What I refuse to accept is that we have to sign trade deals like the South Korea Agreement that are bad for America,” he told the Legislative Conference. “What I refuse to accept is that we have to sign trade deals that put the interests of multinational corporations ahead of the interests of American workers. I refuse to accept that we should sign trade deals that lack enforceable labor and environmental standards. I also oppose the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, because when organizing workers puts an organizer’s life at risk, as it does in Colombia, it makes a mockery of our labor protections.” 80
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Senator McCain has never seen a trade deal he didn't like. Despite the loss of more than one million good, American jobs that can be attributed directly to the North American Free Trade Agreement, he is an enthusiastic supporter of NAFTA. He has voted for all subsequent trade pacts, too, as well as for "fast track" bills allowing the president to negotiate trade deals without input from Congress.

Shortly before the Iowa caucuses in January, McCain told the Des Moines Register that NAFTA "has created millions of jobs, and it has helped the economies of all three nations."

That comment alone shows his shallow grasp of economics – which he's admitted to – and his lack of regard for the effect that unfair trade pacts have on American workers. The rights and safety of workers in countries where multinational corporations move U.S. jobs is not on his radar screen at all.

Retirement Security

Senator McCain supported President Bush's failed scheme to privatize Social Security, and he has voted many times to undermine the system. In 2005, he supported a plan for deep benefit cuts. In 2003, he voted to use Social Security funds to help pay down the national debt. And in 2001, he voted against a slight reduction in tax cuts for the wealthy in order to create a strategic reserve to protect Social Security.

Obama has made it clear that he will protect Social Security and will take steps to ensure that it remains solvent. Unlike McCain, he does not support a plan to raise the retirement age, thus pushing back eligibility for Social Security.

Obama has also laid out a strong agenda for corporate reform to protect Americans' pensions. He wants to change current bankruptcy laws that put bank and corporate interests first and that allow executives to collect fat paychecks and bonuses while workers lose their life savings. He also wants to eliminate income taxes for seniors making less than \$50,000, and he is proposing matching fund incentives to help low- and middle-income workers save for retirement.

On these four issues so critical to CWA members, the gulf between Senator Obama and Senator McCain is enormous. It is the difference between four more years of hardship and diminished hope for millions of America's working families, or a fresh start that we believe will rejuvenate not just our economy but our nation's soul.

Senator Obama's hopeful, spirited campaign has invigorated a new generation of voters and touched Americans of all ages – Democrats and Republicans – who have felt discouraged and hopeless over the last seven and one-half years.

He has spoken passionately of changing the culture in Washington, toning down the bitter partisan rhetoric, and working across the aisle to deal with our nation's many challenges. If anyone can inspire our leaders and all Americans to make this vision a reality, we believe it is Senator Obama.

His historic presidency will be a victory for every American – for workers and struggling middle-class families, as well as the wealthy few who have flourished at the expense of others in recent years. As proud and patriotic Americans, we look forward to a stronger, healthier, better educated, less divisive and more economically secure country under the leadership of President Barack Obama.

RESOLVED: The Communications Workers of America enthusiastically supports Democratic Senator Barack Obama for President of the United States. We will use every tool at our disposal and give generously of our time to elect him and to elect members of Congress who support his pro-worker policies in both the U.S. House and Senate.

RESOLVED: All CWA locals will be receiving campaign materials and are strongly urged to reach out to their members through meetings, worksite leaflets, e-mail, websites, and newsletters. CWA helped lead the labor movement's biggest-ever political mobilizations in 2004 and the midterm elections of 2006. We call on our locals and our entire membership to exceed those efforts.

RESOLVED: CWA will work as never before to get our members to the polls on November 4, 2008, to cast their votes to transform our country's political landscape and restore the rights, dignity and financial security of America's workers and working families.