



## AFL-CIO 2016 Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

*America's working people have lived through decades of stagnant and falling wages. We seek to support candidates for public office who have concrete plans to reform our economy so that working people share in the wealth we create. These questions are not "check the box" questions. They are invitations to share your thoughts with us about how you intend to raise wages.*

**However, policy positions cannot be separated from the people who will formulate and carry out policy. Can you please tell us who your current key economic and labor advisers are in your campaign, and whom you intend to rely on in these areas if you are elected?**

As President I would continue to rely on the analysis of those who understand the impact of economic policy of middle income and working families. Working families are as much a part of the economy as are the companies in the Fortune 500. In fact, spending by consumers represents 70 percent of economic activity in the country. That means any serious economic analysis must highlight the negative consequences of the growing income and wealth gap in the United States. Consumers cannot power the economy without good jobs and decent wages.

Despite what one reads in the media, corporate profits are not the only important economic measure. And when those profits are the result of wage cuts and off shoring they represent a negative for the overall economy. During my time in the US Senate I have relied on analysis of groups such as Economic Policy Institute; Center for Economic and Policy Research; Citizens for Tax Justice; and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

**What is your comprehensive approach to raising wages? What are your three most important, detailed economic policy ideas?**

A. The current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour is a starvation wage. We need to raise the minimum wage to a living wage. No one in this country who works 40 hours a week should be living in poverty. I would raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour over a period of years. Since 1968, the real value of the federal minimum wage has fallen by close to 30%. The erosion of the minimum wage is a major reason why more than 45 million Americans are living in poverty today. Today, 70 percent of our nation's economy is dependent on consumer demand – Americans who spend money at the grocery store, at restaurants, at movie theatres, and other small-and-medium sized businesses throughout the country. When minimum wage workers get a raise, they will spend all of that money immediately, which will help the entire economy grow and create more jobs.

B. We also need to address the overtime scandal in this country in which millions of Americans are working 50 or 60 hours a week but fail to get time-and-a-half for their efforts. Four decades ago, more than 65 percent of the workforce qualified for time-and-a-half pay for every hour worked over 40 hours a week. Today, that figure is down to just 11 percent. The threshold for overtime pay is now so low that it fails to cover middle class employees. Only



workers who earn \$23,660 a year currently qualify for overtime, which is below the poverty line for a family of four.

I would make sure that all workers who make up to \$1,090 a week are allowed to receive time-and-a-half pay for working overtime. This would increase the take-home pay of millions of workers who are now making less than \$57,000 a year.

C. Further, we need pay equity in this country so that women do not make 78 cents on the dollar compared to what a man makes for doing the same work. I am a proud co-sponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act that would close the pay gap by empowering women to negotiate for equal pay, eliminate loopholes courts have created in the law, and create strong incentives for employers to obey the laws.

**How would you ensure secure retirement for both current and future generations of workers? Should the way in which Social Security is funded be changed at all? Should there be changes to the benefit structure? If yes to either, in what ways? How are public and private employer provided pension plans a vehicle for retirement security for workers? What role would your administration play to increase access and strengthen worker pensions?**

Today, we have a retirement crisis in this country. Only one in five American workers have a defined benefit pension plan that guarantees income in retirement. Over half of the American people have less than \$10,000 in savings and have no idea how they will ever be able to retire in dignity. More than one-third of senior citizens depend on Social Security for virtually all of their income. And, twenty percent of the elderly are trying to live on an average income of just \$7,600 a year.

Given this reality, we must not to cut Social Security, we must expand Social Security.

In the Senate, I have proposed legislation to increase Social Security benefits by an average of \$65 a month; expand cost-of-living-adjustments so that seniors can afford the increased prices of prescription drugs and other healthcare expenses; and lift millions of seniors out of poverty by expanding the minimum Social Security benefits that seniors receive in retirement.

This legislation would be paid for by eliminating the cap on taxable income subject to the Social Security payroll tax. Right now, a Wall Street CEO making \$20 million a year pays the same amount of money into the Social Security system as someone making \$118,500. That is unfair. My legislation would change that.

If we scrapped the cap, and applied the Social Security payroll tax on all income above \$250,000, not only would we be able to expand benefits, we would also ensure that Social Security can pay every benefit owed to every eligible American for the next 50 years.

Further, I would protect the pensions of workers by reversing a provision included in last year's appropriations bill that allows the pensions of millions of workers and retirees to be slashed.



In addition, the most important thing we can do to both preserve and expand defined benefit pension plans is to make it easier for workers to join unions.

One of the most significant reasons for the decline in defined benefit pension plans is that the rights of workers to join together and bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions have been severely undermined.

Today, corporate executives are routinely negotiating obscenely high compensation packages for themselves, but then they deny their own employees the ability to bargain for a better life. That is wrong. We have got to turn this around.

That's why I support allowing workers to join unions when a majority sign valid authorization cards stating that they want a union as their bargaining representative.

**What steps would you take to increase workers' bargaining power? Specifically, how would you modernize American labor law so workers and their employers could bargain collectively to raise wages?**

I strongly believe that workers should be allowed to join unions when a majority sign valid authorization cards stating that they want a union as their bargaining representative. This is not a radical idea. Card check recognition was the law of the land from 1941-1966.

We must also strongly penalize employers that illegally fire or discriminate against workers for their union activity during an organizing or first contract drive.

And, perhaps most importantly, we have got to make it easier for workers who win union elections to negotiate a first contract.

Today, we have more wealth and income inequality in our country than at any time since 1928. There are lots of reasons for this.

The failure to raise the minimum wage is an obvious example. Unfettered free trade that forces American workers to compete against desperate workers in China, Mexico, and Vietnam is another.

But perhaps one of the most significant reasons for the decline in the middle class is that the rights of workers to join together and bargain collectively for better wages, benefits, and working conditions have been severely undermined. That will change under my Administration.

**Please explain your trade philosophy as it relates to raising wages for the American workforce. Specifically, do you support or oppose Fast Track and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)?**

I am strongly opposed to Fast Track and the disastrous Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

During my 24 years in Congress, I have led the fight against NAFTA, CAFTA, and Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China. These agreements have allowed corporations to shut down operations in the U.S. and move to low-wage countries where people are forced to work for



pennies an hour. These trade agreements are one of the reasons that we have lost almost 60,000 factories in our country since 2001, and millions of good paying jobs.

The TPP is a continuation of a failed approach to trade, an approach which benefits large multinational corporations and Wall Street, but which is a disaster for working families. Our trade policy must change. The TPP must be defeated. Corporations must start investing in America, and creating jobs here, and not just in China and other low wage countries.

I intend to do everything I can to defeat Fast Track and the overall TPP agreement. Here are just a few reasons why

Two of the countries in the TPP are Vietnam and Malaysia. In Vietnam, the minimum wage is 56 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, migrant workers who manufacture electronics products are working as 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." This is a race to the bottom.

The TPP is much more than a "free trade" agreement. It is part of an effort to boost the profits of large corporations and Wall Street by offshoring jobs; undercutting worker rights; and dismantling labor, environmental, health, food safety and financial laws.

If we are serious about rebuilding the middle class and creating the millions of good paying jobs we desperately need, we must fundamentally rewrite our trade policies. Our goal must be to make sure that American made products, not American jobs are our number one export. We must defeat the TPP.

**What is your plan for achieving full employment? How do you define full employment? How would this plan move the economy toward good, full-time jobs that raise wages and away from contingent, part-time employment?**

Creating good paying jobs and raising the wages of working class Americans are my top priorities. The first bill I introduced in the Senate this year would put at least 13 million Americans to work by investing \$1 trillion rebuilding our nation's crumbling infrastructure.

Today, the U.S. Department of Labor says the real unemployment rate – which counts those who have settled for part-time work but who would like to work full time, and those who have given up looking for jobs entirely – is a completely unacceptable 10.8 percent.

The best way to quickly put millions of people to work is to repair our nation's roads, bridges, dams, wastewater plants, railways, airports and other infrastructure needs. The projects that would be funded by this legislation require new equipment, supplies and services. And, the hard-earned salaries from the jobs created will be spent in countless restaurants, shops and



other local businesses. Further, all of this economic activity will generate new tax revenues to pay for the services that Americans expect and deserve.

We have also got to address the serious youth unemployment crisis in America. It is unacceptable that the youth unemployment rate is over 17 percent and the African-youth unemployment rate is off the charts. We have got to make sure that young high school graduates are able to find entry-level jobs to develop the skills, the experience and the confidence they need to break into the job market.

I would put at least one million young Americans to work all over this country by investing in a \$5.5 billion summer and year round jobs program for people between the ages of 16 and 24.

Moreover, we have got to make sure that the Federal Reserve fulfills its full employment mandate. We need a Federal Reserve that will require large financial institutions to substantially increase affordable loans to small-and-medium sized businesses to create jobs in the productive economy. Thanks to an amendment I inserted in Dodd-Frank, we learned that the Federal Reserve provided a total of \$16 trillion in virtually zero interest loans to every major financial institution in this country during the financial crisis. If the Fed can provide a \$16 trillion bailout to too-big-to-fail financial institutions, our central bank has a responsibility to do everything that it can to make sure that every American who is willing to work has a decent-paying job.

**How would you use minimum wage, overtime and other labor market policies, monetary policy, fiscal policy, tax policy, public investments and other structural policies to build an economy in which wages rise when workers are more productive?**

- I would raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour over a period of years and index it to inflation.
- I would increase the maximum overtime threshold for workers to be guaranteed time-and-a-half pay from the current \$455 a week to at least \$1,090 a week and index it to inflation.
- I would fight for equal pay for equal work so that women no longer earn only 78 cents for every dollar a man makes for doing the same work.
- I would enact card check legislation so that when a majority of workers sign cards to join a union they have a union to collectively bargain for better wages and benefits. I would also reform labor laws and regulations to make sure that it is easier for unions to successfully negotiate a first contract.
- I would work to reform the Federal Reserve so that it fulfills its full employment mandate and makes sure that financial institutions expand affordable lending opportunities to workers and small-and-medium sized businesses in the job-creating productive economy.
- I would fight for a \$1 trillion investment rebuilding our nation's crumbling infrastructure over a five year period to put at least 13 million Americans back to work.



· I would expand Davis-Bacon and Service Contract Act laws and regulations to make sure that federal contractors pay prevailing wages to all of their workers.

· 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.

· I would work to rewrite our disastrous trade policies to lift the living standards of American workers and end the race to the bottom.

· I would stop subsidizing the “performance-based” compensation packages of CEOs.

**Racism is a powerful factor in keeping wages low. How would you use legislation, your executive powers and the bully pulpit to raise wages by addressing immigration reform and mass incarceration?**

As the son of an immigrant--my dad came to this country at the age of 17 from Poland--I strongly support immigration reform.

I support a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in this country. Bringing undocumented workers out of the shadows and giving them legal status will make it more difficult, among many other things, for employers to undercut the wages and benefits of all workers and will be good for our entire economy.

I strongly support the DREAM Act to make sure the children of illegal immigrants who were brought into this country by their parents years ago are allowed to become citizens.

At a time when youth unemployment is over 17 percent and African-American and Hispanic youth unemployment is off the charts, we need to do everything we can to create jobs for young Americans.

I have introduced a \$5.5 billion youth jobs bill with Rep. John Conyers to put 1 million young Americans to work in summer and year round jobs. This legislation would also provide job training opportunities to hundreds of thousands of young Americans.

As someone who travelled to Mississippi to take part in the *Freedom Summer* movement back in 1964, I am struck by how far we have come – electing the first black President – but also by how much racial injustice persists in America.

Yes, we must reform our criminal justice system. Yes, we must end the mass incarceration of non-violent young Americans who do not pose a serious threat to our society. It is an obscenity that we stigmatize so many young Americans with a criminal record for smoking marijuana,



but not one major Wall Street executive has been prosecuted for causing the near collapse of our entire economy. This must change.

But criminal justice reform is not enough. An equally pernicious killer of our communities is economic deprivation. We live at a time when most Americans don't have \$10,000 in savings, and millions of working adults have no idea how they will ever retire in dignity. And the problems are even more serious when we consider race.

Most black and Latino households have less than \$350 in savings. The black unemployment rate has remained roughly twice as high as the white rate over the last 40 years, regardless of education. And then there's the problem of college affordability. According to a recent analysis by Pew Research Center, the average African-American household has a total net worth – the value of all of assets minus your debts – of just \$11,000. That's barely enough to cover a year of tuition at a place like the University of Maryland-Baltimore County. Meanwhile, the average white family has a net worth of \$141,900.

This is unacceptable. The American people in general, want change – they want a better deal. A fairer deal. A new deal. They want an America with laws and policies that truly reward hard work with economic mobility. They want an America that affords all of its citizens with the economic security to take risks and the opportunity to realize their full potential.

We can deliver that change, but we can't do it by tinkering with the system at the margins. We need to think bigger and bolder if we are going to deliver the kind of social and economic transformation that the American people are demanding.

We need to make a 4-year education at every public college and university in this country free. If Germany, Sweden and Denmark can afford to do this, then so can we.

We need to make health care a basic right in our society, and we need to move beyond the rhetoric about growth and prosperity and recommit to the principles of the Full Employment Act of 1946.

If we are going to rely on an economy that requires people to work in order to survive, then we must make certain that work is available to every American who needs a job. By guaranteeing the right to employment, we can ensure a minimum level of economic security to all.

This is an ambitious program that would lift millions of families out of poverty and provide a pathway to greater economic security for all Americans. Free college, free health care and a guaranteed right to employment. It will not heal all wounds or relieve all tensions, but it would go beyond anything we have tried before, and it would send a clear signal that the lives of all Americans matter.

**Do you believe public-sector workers should be able to bargain collectively with their employers?**

Yes, every worker in America should have this fundamental right.



**Are there any groups of public-sector workers you think should not have the right to organize and bargain?**

No.

**Over the past several decades, U.S. manufacturing has declined precipitously. If you think this is a problem, what is your plan for growing U.S. manufacturing?**

First and foremost, I would fundamentally re-write our trade policies to make sure that American jobs are no longer our number one export.

The fact of the matter is that NAFTA, CAFTA, Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China and other disastrous unfettered free trade agreements have failed. I would work to eliminate these disastrous policies and end the race to the bottom.

I would eliminate tax breaks that reward companies for outsourcing jobs overseas and provide tax credits for companies that bring good-paying jobs and benefits back to the U.S.

I would stop China and other countries from manipulating its currency which has made their products cheaper in the U.S. and has made our products more expensive overseas.

I would also expand worker ownership by making it easier for workers to own their own businesses through worker cooperatives and Employee Stock Ownership Plans. When workers own their own businesses, they will not move their own jobs to China and other low wage countries.

**Currently, we have a national infrastructure deficit of \$3.2 trillion, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. What is your plan for addressing that deficit? How much additional infrastructure spending should we be doing annually over the next 10 years? Beyond that, what is your plan to put the United States in a position of global competitive leadership in 21st century infrastructure technology?**

For years, we have significantly underfunded the maintenance and improvement of the physical infrastructure on which our economy depends. That has to change, and that is why I have introduced the Rebuild America Act, which would invest \$1 trillion over five years to modernize our infrastructure. I introduced a similar, but scaled down \$476 billion measure as a floor amendment to the Senate Budget Resolution. Both efforts would be paid for by closing tax loopholes that allow profitable American corporations to stash their profits in tax haven countries like the Cayman Islands.

The Rebuild America would go a long way toward closing the national infrastructure deficit identified by the American Society of Civil Engineers. In fact, I worked closely with ASCE in drafting the Rebuild America, and I am proud they endorsed the bill and participated in its rollout.

The Rebuild America Act would invest in roads, bridges and transit; intercity passenger and freight rail; airports; seaports and inland waterways; drinking water and waste water plants; dams and levees; electric transmission and distribution; and broadband.



Importantly, at a time when the real unemployment is more than 11%, the Rebuild America Act would create 13 million jobs that can't be outsourced or off-shored.

In terms of 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure technology, the Rebuild America Act would make a \$25 billion investment in broadband technology over five years. There is no question this investment is needed: the U.S. ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of broadband access (OECD) and 12<sup>th</sup> in the world for broadband speed (Akamai). It simply isn't acceptable that businesses, schools and families in Bucharest, Romania have access to much faster internet than most of the United States.

**What is your energy strategy? Are there sources of energy we should focus on or move away from? Specifically, what is your view of nuclear power? Of carbon capture and sequestration technology? Of coal? Of natural gas? What is your view of how to manage change in the energy sector and the effects on workers and communities?**

To my mind, climate change is the single greatest threat facing our planet. We are already seeing its effects, including more severe droughts, forest fires, flooding, and rising sea levels. Virtually the entire scientific community agrees that human activity is a significant driver of global warming, and that if we don't drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it will get much worse by mid-century.

I believe we must dramatically reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, which is why last Congress I introduced the Climate Protection Act, to tax carbon and methane emissions from coal, oil, and natural gas production, and use the revenue to make historic investments in energy efficiency and sustainable energy.

As we accelerate investments in energy efficiency and make the transition to clean energy, I believe we can create millions of decent paying jobs. I am proud to have been one of the authors of the Green Jobs Act, which created a green jobs workforce training program through the economic stimulus bill. The Climate Protection Act alone would weatherize one million homes every year, reducing family energy bills and creating millions of good-paying jobs. Replacing old power plants with new solar, wind and other sustainable energy facilities will also create hundreds of thousands of jobs.

In terms of nuclear energy, I have been a vocal critic of the huge corporate subsidies and special tax breaks the nuclear industry receives from the federal government, and I have called for an end to the Price-Anderson government liability insurance for nuclear reactors. These subsidies simply line the pockets of the nuclear industry, at a great cost to American taxpayers.

At the same time, I have been a strong proponent of protecting workers at those plants, and their families and neighbors in surrounding communities during decommissioning. Just last month, I joined some of my Senate colleagues in introducing three bills that improve the safety and security of nuclear plants. I also wrote to the Department of Commerce earlier this year asking to fund economic development efforts to mitigate job losses from plant closures.



**What is your view of the No Child Left Behind Act? What changes, if any, would you make to the law, and why? What provisions would you retain, and why? Do you support or favor vouchers and/or other programs that allow taxpayer dollars to be used for private and religious schools at the K-12 level, either as an experiment or as a full-scale program?**

**What is your plan for addressing the crisis of affordable higher education and student debt?**

- I voted against No Child Left Behind in 2001, because it placed far too much emphasis on high-stakes standardized testing to determine school effectiveness, and directed draconian interventions that were highly disruptive to schools, students, educators and communities. In my view, No Child Left Behind ignores several important factors that determine a student's academic performance, specifically the impact of poverty, access to adequate health care, mental health, nutrition, after school programs and family supports.

Furthermore, by placing such a heavy emphasis on standardized testing, No Child Left Behind has effectively narrowed the curriculum, and reduced students exposure to a well-rounded curriculum including the arts, STEM fields, computer science, social studies, civics, physical education and other subjects to focus on tested subjects. This approach ignores many of the skills and qualities that are vitally important in our 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, like problem solving, critical thinking, and teamwork, in favor of test preparation that provides no long-term benefit to students.

- As a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, I have worked hard to fix the many problems associated with this legislation. My top priorities during the most recent reauthorization effort have been:
  - Reducing the high-stakes nature of standardized testing by changing the bill's accountability system to include multiple measures of a school's effectiveness.
  - Securing inclusion of a pilot program that allows states to implement innovative systems of assessment that do not rely on standardized tests. Instead, new innovative assessments will empower educators by providing actionable information during the school year that can inform instructional practice.
  - Maintaining support for afterschool programs provided through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program.
  - The inclusion of wrap-around support services like health, mental health, nutrition and family supports.
- During the ESEA reauthorization process in the HELP Committee, I fought to maintain several provisions of the current bill that ensure federal funding is not diverted away from helping the lowest-income students. I strongly support the maintenance of effort and supplement-not-supplant provisions of ESEA that prevent states from cutting education funding, and ensure federal funds go to the neediest students. In addition, I strongly opposed Republican proposals to make Title I dollars "portable", which would dilute the effectiveness of Title I and rob the lowest-income schools of much needed federal funding. I strongly support keeping the four current Title I state-level concentration formulas that ensure the impact of federal funding is maximized in the school districts that need it most.



- I strongly oppose any effort to divert federal K-12 dollars to private or religious schools of any kind, including the use of tax credits to subsidize private education.
- There truly is a crisis of college affordability in this country. For more than a generation, public colleges and universities offered a pathway for millions of hardworking students from low and moderate-income backgrounds to pursue a higher education and join the middle class. However, over the last 30 years, states have substantially reduced appropriations for public higher education systems, and the cost of attendance has skyrocketed, putting college out of reach for hundreds of thousands of young people, and leaving millions more deeply in debt. In an increasingly global economy, I believe it is unfair to force our young people to compete with workers from other countries who can pursue a higher education at little to no cost.

Last month, I introduced the College for All Act, which would create a federal-state partnership to eliminate undergraduate tuition at public colleges and universities. In addition, this legislation would slash student loan interest rates, and allow borrowers to refinance their loans. If elected, I would continue my work to eliminate tuition at public colleges and to alleviate the burden of student debt.

**What is your view of the future of the United States Postal Service? Do you support cutting delivery schedules, cutting postal facilities or privatizing postal operations? Do you support postal banking? Do you have other ideas for expanding services at, and access to, the USPS?**

For more than 230 years, and enshrined in our constitution, the Postal Service has played an enormously important role for the people of our country and for our entire economy. And, that mission today remains as important as it has ever been.

The beauty of the Postal Service is that it provides universal service six days a week to every corner of America, no matter how small or how remote. It supports millions of jobs in virtually every other sector of our economy. It provides decent-paying union jobs to some 500,000 Americans, and it is the largest employer of veterans.

Whether you are an elderly woman living beside a dirt road in rural Vermont or a wealthy CEO living on Park Avenue, you get your mail six days a week. And, the American people pay for this service at a cost far less than anywhere else in the industrialized world.

Unfortunately, despite the success and the popularity of the Postal Service, it is under constant attack by those who want to privatize and destroy it. I am strongly opposed to privatizing or undermining the Postal Service.

Let's be clear, the people who are attacking the Postal Service are the same people who are out to destroy Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public education, and virtually every major piece of legislation that has protected working families over the past 80 years.



I have been leading the effort in the Senate to stop the Postal Service from slowing down the delivery of mail, shutting down up to 82 mail processing plants, and eliminating up to 15,000 decent-paying jobs.

As the Ranking Member of the Budget Committee, I offered an amendment in the Senate supported by more than 80 Senators calling for a moratorium on closing mail processing plants and a return to overnight delivery standards for first class mail.

We have been told that all of these horrendous cuts are necessary because the Postal Service is going broke. That is a lie.

The major reason that the Postal Service is in bad financial shape today is not because of e-mail or the Internet. The major reason why the Postal Service is suffering financially is because of a mandate signed into law by President George W. Bush in December of 2006, during a lame duck session of Congress that forces the Postal Service to pre-fund 75 years of future retiree health benefits over a 10-year period.

No other government agency or business in America is burdened with this mandate which has cost the Postal Service \$5.5 billion a year.

In fact, all of the so-called financial losses posted by the Postal Service since October 2012 are due to this pre-funding mandate. Excluding the pre-funding mandate, the Postal Service has actually made a profit of almost \$1 billion since the fall of 2012.

And before this pre-funding mandate was signed into law, the Postal Service was also profitable. In fact, from 2003 through 2006, the Postal Service made a combined profit of more than \$9 billion. This pre-funding mandate is a poison pill that is bleeding the Postal Service to death. It is time to end the pre-funding mandate once and for all and allow the Postal Service to thrive and prosper into the future.

While we will need legislation to end the pre-funding mandate, the Postal Service has all of the authority it needs to stop these plant closures in their tracks. The Postal Service can and it should re-instate strong overnight delivery standards. And, it does not have to eliminate up to 15,000 jobs.

At a time when the middle class is disappearing and the number of Americans living in poverty is at an all-time high, we can't afford to lose middle-class jobs at the Postal Service. At a time when senior citizens and small businesses depend on the Postal Service operating six-days a week, we cannot eliminate Saturday mail service. At a time when the Postal Service is competing with the instantaneous communications of e-mail and high-speed internet services, we should be putting in place policies to speed up delivery of mail, not slow it down.

We also have got to allow the Postal Service to sell innovative products and services that the American people want and need.



Right now it is against the law for post offices to make copies; notarize documents; ship wine and beer; sell hunting and fishing licenses; establish secure e-mail accounts; and provide basic banking services. I have introduced legislation to allow the Postal Service to do all of these things, and I strongly support allowing the Postal Service to provide basic banking services in post offices throughout the country.

**What direct steps would you take as an employer and as a contractor to raise living standards and ensure compliance with labor law?**

As a United States Senator, I pay all of my interns \$12 an hour.

As President, I would sign executive orders to make sure that all federal contractors paid their workers at least \$15 an hour with decent benefits and allowed their workers to collectively bargain for a better deal.

I would make sure that all Davis-Bacon and Service Contract Act prevailing wages were frequently updated and that all workers who work for federal contractors are paid the most up to date prevailing wage.

I would also make sure that the Labor Department aggressively eliminate wage theft so that employers do not cheat workers out of what they are legally entitled to receive.

**What is your plan for addressing the rise of low-paid precarious work, including the misclassification of employees as independent contractors and wage theft?**

I would fight in favor of legislation to prevent workers from being misclassified by their employers as independent contractors and denied benefits such as health and pension coverage, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, and basic workplace protections.

**What changes would you propose making in the Affordable Care Act, if any? Specifically, what changes, if any, would you make in the following areas:**

- **The employer shared responsibility provision?**
- **The rules governing access to the exchanges?**
- **The excise tax on high-cost plans?**

I start my approach to healthcare from a very basic point: healthcare should be a right, not a privilege. Our healthcare system is broken, and the Affordable Care Act was an important first step. It has done a lot of good things that have improved the health and economic security of millions of Americans. It made critical improvements to our flawed health care system, like closing the prescription drug donut hole for seniors, allowing young adults to remain on their parents' insurance plans, and banning insurance companies from discriminating based on pre-existing conditions or gender. But I believe the ACA didn't go far enough. I believe the best way to reform our broken healthcare system is to move to a single payer, Medicare-for-all type program. Opponents of this idea - particularly those who make exorbitant amounts of money off the current system - spread fear through words like "rationing" and "doctor shortages." But the truth is those problems already exist in our current system. A single payer system would reduce those problems, not increase them. I also believe an important part of a Medicare-for-all type system is a change in the way we pay our doctors. We must reward them for keeping people healthy - focusing on health outcomes and preventive care. We must pay primary care doctors just as well as we pay specialists, to help incentivize them to going into this much-needed field. We must also remove the arbitrary distinctions between physical health, oral



health, and mental health, so health providers can care for the entire person. This focus on primary care and health outcomes will also allow us to make great strides in reducing costs, improving Americans' health, and improving access to care.

Beyond these large-scale improvements, any specific changes to the Affordable Care Act must be done thoughtfully and with a few key principles in mind. First, it is important to understand the impact any changes will have on the rest of the health care system. For example, changes to the employer shared responsibility provision should not be done in a way that leads to higher premiums, reduced revenues, or a greater burden on the employee or retiree. Second, we must remember the ACA was designed with a balance of revenue and spending provisions that led to savings to the federal government over time. In order to preserve these savings, we must ensure that any changes to revenue provisions, like the excise tax on high-cost plans, are not made in such a way that they lead to a reduction in spending in other areas of the law, like exchange subsidies. Third, any such changes must not be used as partisan tools to chip away at the ACA under the guise of "fixing" unpopular provisions, while actually unraveling all the good the law has done. I welcome a true effort to improve upon the Affordable Care Act and believe the nation and the American workforce would be better for it.

**What steps would you take to restore the American people's faith in our democracy? Do you support universal voter registration? How would you curb gerrymandering? Do you support reversing the *Buckley* and *Citizens United* Supreme Court decisions?**

I believe the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* will go down as one of the worst Supreme Court decisions of all time. We absolutely must overturn that decision, and I have introduced a constitutional amendment that would overturn both *Citizens United* and *Buckley* by making it clear Congress and the states have the power to regulate both contributions and expenditures in elections. If I have the opportunity to nominate someone to the Court, I will have a litmus test—the nominee must want to get rid of *Citizens United*. Once we overturn that decision, we need to move to a system of public financing for elections.

But it's not only about getting the money out of politics. The United States has some of the worst voter turnout rates worldwide. This past November, 63 percent of eligible voters didn't vote. 80 percent of young people didn't vote. 75 percent of low-income voters didn't vote. This is not good for our democracy.

And why don't people vote? It's not because they're not interested. Census data shows that the vast majority of people who do not vote encounter some sort of logistical hurdle—they are too busy, they have transportation problems, they were out of town on Election Day, etc. Less than a quarter of non-voters say they weren't interested or that they didn't like the candidates.

So what can be done? First, I have introduced legislation to make Election Day a federal holiday. While this is not a cure-all, it would indicate a national commitment to create a more vibrant democracy.

We can also make it easier for people to register to vote. Automatic or universal voter registration is a good idea that we should explore. We should expand early voting and absentee



voting, and make it easier for people to find a polling place. We must get rid of these voter ID laws that do not prevent (nonexistent) voter fraud but do prevent eligible people from voting.

Finally, gerrymandering is a very serious issue and one we need to address. Nonpartisan commissions might be a good way. So might the use of computer software. These are all things we need to explore.

But we cannot be satisfied with a "democracy" in which so few people participate. We can and must do better.

**Please describe situations where you personally have supported specific groups of workers seeking to form a union or raise wages in their workplace. These might include situations where you made public policy changes that helped specific groups of workers to organize or bargain, or where you issued public statements or participated in public actions by speaking at rallies or walking picket lines with workers.**

Since the beginning of my political career 35 years ago, I have been proud to stand with workers in their efforts to organize and to bargain fair contracts. I have stood on dozens of picket lines over the years and have worked closely with organized labor in Vermont in advancing organizing victories and workers rights in the state. I have led public figures in the state for many years in publicly supporting organizing and contract campaigns. I was proud in 2001 and 2002 to publicly support and speak out in support of two important organizing victories in Vermont, the AFT campaign to organize some 620 full-time faculty members at the University of Vermont, and the AFT's victory at the state's largest hospital, Fletcher Allen, where over 1200 nurses won their union election by a 2-1 margin.

More recently, I was proud to support the CWA and IBEW in their successful strike with FairPoint Communications. During the strike I was concerned that FairPoint was putting the interests of multi-billion-dollar hedge funds, which own the company, ahead of its workers and customers. I worked closely with the leadership of both unions, held a press conference with the workers, and very publicly urged FairPoint to go back to the bargaining table, negotiate in good faith, and agree to a contract that was fair to the workers, the customers and the company. I was also honored to sponsor a Thanksgiving Dinner for all the strikers and their families, to make sure that everyone had a great holiday meal while they were on strike. Due to the outstanding work of the unions, a fair deal was reached.

Last year, I also worked with the Teamsters Local 597 in Burlington, Vermont who went on strike to ensure a fair contract was reached with the Chittenden County Transportation Authority. Again, I met with the union members in my office, and I even brought in the management team to urge them to settle.

From 2007 to 2011, I succeeded in getting the U.S. Department of Labor to conduct an investigation into allegations of wage theft by federal contractors at the Vermont Service Center which processes visa applications for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. As a result of this investigation, the Labor Department



awarded \$5.9 million in back wages to more than 700 contract workers who worked at this center. Many of these workers are represented by the United Electrical Workers union, a union that I publicly supported in their efforts to successfully organize some eight years ago.

I have believed in the principles of the trade union movement since I was a young man, and I think my record demonstrates that few public officials have been more willing to publicly stand with workers when they take collective action than I have. I look forward to carrying those same principles to the White House.