



SOLIDARITY

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Senator Barack Obama: Labor's Candidate for President

A Quick Look at the Numbers

The Candidates' records on jobs, health care, workers' rights and other working family Issues as compiled by the AFL-CIO

- ◆ **Barack Obama** – Lifetime: **98%** / 2007: **100%** / 2008 Interim: **100%**
- ◆ **John McCain** – Lifetime: **36%** / 2007: **0%** / 2008 Interim: **No votes recorded** (didn't show up)

After eight long years of what many scholars and historians have already labeled the “worst presidential administration in U.S. history” the people of the great state of Florida are finally in a position to help reverse America’s current course, which has proven disastrous for working families. We must put our nation back on a path that makes the prospects of fulfilling the American dream a reality for everyone. Volumes have been written about the numerous crimes and failures of the George W. Bush regime but they all have one thing in common; the surrendering of our nation’s people, her resources and her promise to the biggest and most powerful multi-national corporations. These corporations have reaped unprecedented power and profits while working families struggle to make ends meet.

The richest have become richer, the poor have become poorer and the middle class has all but been eliminated. Our brave men and women in uniform are giving life and limb for private no-bid contracts, our nation’s health care system has been handed on a silver platter to the private insurance market while our people suffer without access to basic health care, people are losing their homes while the deregulated and unscrupulous mortgage companies responsible for the current crisis keep their profits, companies continue to receive generous tax handouts to ship millions of jobs overseas, workers are being denied their most basic rights under the business friendly, Bush appointed National Labor Relations Board, working families are being victimized by high gas prices by an oil monopoly that has been given unprecedented tax subsidies...and on and on and on. Now, more than ever, the very survival of this great nation relies on electing new leaders who will have the courage to stand up to the current power structure and force real change. Barack Obama is that kind of leader.

Barack Obama said at the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Conference that “politics didn’t lead me to working folks; working folks led me to politics.” After college, he worked with a church-affiliated organization as a community organizer in a Chicago neighborhood devastated by the closing of steel mills. He worked with community members to get a job-training program in the area and get the city to test the housing projects for asbestos. He talks about his time in that community as being the inspiration for what he does as a public servant.

Barack Obama has shown that he will side with workers and support the policies we need to turn this country around. In the Illinois State Senate and U.S. Senate, he has consistently supported our issues, living up to his words. He supported strong wages by voting to raise the minimum wage, enforce prevailing wages and guarantee equal pay. Obama has fought to close corporate tax loopholes so we don’t reward corporations for sending our jobs overseas. He believes in a fair trade policy that protects workers’ rights and will only enter into trade agreements with strong labor protections. Obama will protect our retirement by ensuring Social Security stays strong.

Barack Obama was an original co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act and has pledged to sign it into law when elected to protect the middle class and give every worker the right to decide if they want to join a union and bargain collectively. He has a good health plan that will cover all workers and ensure high-quality coverage. Obama will work on behalf of *all* economically disadvantaged workers, *regardless* of their race. He will get us out of Iraq so our

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family members can come home safe and proud of all that they accomplished.

His candidacy stands in stark opposition to that of his opponent John McCain, whose recent voting record has been in lock-step with the Bush administration and who is determined to fight the changes we desperately need in favor of keeping things just as they are, which would be a disaster for working families. McCain strongly opposes the Employee Free Choice Act and has long worked to take away our unions through "right to work" for less laws and by blocking our collective bargaining rights. He voted to allow companies to hire permanent replacements for striking workers and in an address to the Oklahoma State Legislature in May of this year, he said that he believes workers are "crippled" by union contracts that protect their rights. **McCain supports Big Oil over working families.** He wants to give the largest U.S. oil companies \$3.8 billion in tax breaks but tax workers' health care benefits. One of his top advisers created loopholes for speculators that allowed them to drive gas prices up even higher than market forces would take them. McCain has never met a trade agreement he didn't like and wants to privatize Social Security.

We need a president who will help us turn around America, not one who will fight us every step of the way. That's

Let The Right-Wing Smear Games Begin!



The corporate right-wing smear machine who have perfected their tactics under the watchful eyes of dishonest spin merchants like Karl Rove and who are desperate to keep their grip on our country are already working in overdrive to create a false reality about Obama. In an unprecedented email campaign, these smear merchants are spreading outright lies about Barack Obama. These emails, often with the pledge that "this is true, you can see it on snopes.com," (an internet site that has become famous for debunking internet rumors and urban myths) are completely false and are not verified on snopes.com. They simply hope you don't have the time to check it out for yourself! **Here are some answers to a few of the lies currently finding their way to your email boxes.**

- ◆ Sen. Obama is **NOT**, nor has he ever been, a Muslim (though that shouldn't matter) and he was **NOT** educated in a Madrassa, which is a type of Muslim school often associated with extremist groups. When living in Indonesia as child while his father was working as a diplomat, he attended both a mainstream Catholic school and a Muslim school, the only real options for schools in that country.
- ◆ Sen. Obama was **NOT** sworn into his office as a U.S. Senator on the Koran.
- ◆ Sen. Obama **DOES** say the Pledge of Allegiance to our nation's flag.
- ◆ His wife has **NEVER** been a "black militant"; only an accomplished student in African-American studies who wrote about the responsibilities of highly educated African Americans to give back to their communities.
- ◆ He is **NOT** a member of an "extremist church" or cult. **He IS a member of the United Church of Christ**, a mainstream Christian denomination that has placed the Christian call for social justice as one of its central missions. **The UCC has stood with the AFL-CIO on many issues for years including the Employee Free Choice Act.**
- ◆ His former pastor is **NOT** anti-American but does have a long and respected history of speaking out and fighting for civil rights and justice from the pulpit. Just imagine if some of Rev. Martin Luther King's sermons were deliberately taken out of context and played over and over by the corporate media.

To find out more about the dishonest campaign against Obama and how the media has often parroted it, check out Media Matters for America at www.mediamatters.org.



Compare the Candidates for Yourself

To get a detailed look of where the candidates stand on the issues important to working families, check out the fully interactive web presentation at:

<http://www.aflcio.org/issues/politics/>



The Great Constitutional Heist of 2008: PUBLIC EDUCATION IN PERIL!

While the Florida Legislature was in session, the 25 most powerful people you've probably never heard of were also meeting. The Taxation and Budget Reform Commission (TBRC) is established in Article XI, Section 6 of Florida's Constitution and meets every 20-years and is empowered to both make recommendations to the Florida Legislature and to place proposed constitutional amendments directly on the ballot for a vote of the electorate. Unfortunately, this commission, heavily represented by former members of the Bush administration, including the current Executive Director of his own right-wing think tank "Foundation for Florida's Future," hijacked the process

and greatly expanded its reach to include a whole laundry list of issues that Jeb did not complete before leaving office or on which he was rebuffed by the Florida Legislature. Debate was dominated by ideologically driven issues rather than a thorough examination of Florida's crumbling tax base. The whole affair became a circus. Proposals were introduced, debated, voted down, and then brought up again weeks later. Strike-all amendments were filed, withdrawn and filed again. Many times, it became clear to those following the commission that some of the commissioners had no idea about the real specifics of the *constitutional amendments* they were proposing! As Howard Troxler wrote in the St. Pete Times, "...anybody looking for the Thoughtful Big Picture out of this current crop is going to be disappointed" and that "the commission has done little more than churn out a puny menu of new tax breaks and push ideological agendas" and "we are giving away a once-in-20-years opportunity" to really resolve Florida's growing tax and budget problems.

The commission did muddle through and complete their business on April 28th. Over 40 proposals for constitutional amendments were offered, 7 of which received the necessary 2/3 vote of the commission to be placed on the ballot. Two proposals, one imposing TABOR revenue caps for local governments and another weakening the class amendment failed but some of those that made it are disasters waiting to happen! Since the commission was dominated by the minions of our former Governor who deemed himself the "Education Governor", he did a great job educating the public about how to destroy their schools, three of the amendments deal with accomplishing just that. Here is a quick run down.

Amendment 5: ARTICLE VII, SECTIONS 4, 9, AND 19 ARTICLE XII, SECTION 28

ELIMINATING STATE REQUIRED SCHOOL PROPERTY TAX AND REPLACING WITH EQUIVALENT STATE REVENUES TO FUND EDUCATION

This is the infamous "tax swap" amendment. Simply stated, the amendment eliminates the Required Local Effort (RLE) which is the portion of property taxes that is used to pay for schools. The amendment spells out one way to replace that lost revenue; a one cent increase in the state sales tax, but requires the legislature to find the rest of the lost revenue. Some estimates predict that the legislature will have to find a whopping \$9 billion more dollars from a budget that is already running on empty. Business groups, the conservative Florida Tax Watch and education advocates have all lined up against this and the Florida AFL-CIO will be working to ensure its defeat. Supporters, mainly the Florida Association of Realtors, will say that this is a much needed tax cut for property owners. Budget and policy groups like Florida Tax Watch and the Florida Center for Fiscal and Economic Policy are saying that this tax scheme will further bankrupt the state, diminish our schools even more and have the unintended consequence of actually raising taxes. **The Florida AFL-CIO urges all working families to VOTE NO on Amendment 5.**

Amendment 7: ARTICLE I, SECTION 3

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (Vouchers)

The folks behind the Great Constitutional Heist of 2008 are nothing if not very crafty and have worded the titles of these amendments in such a way as to deceive the voters of their true purpose. Who is against "religious freedom?" This amendment should really be called "Freedom to Privatize Anything and Everything if a Church Wants the Tax Dollars" amendment. This amendment removes Florida's long standing separation of church and state for public funding purposes. This amendment was proposed by supporters of Jeb's voucher programs who predicted that the Supreme Court may eventually rule vouchers unconstitutional if they go to church schools. This will not only apply to schools but to any areas of state services. This amendment destroys the separation of church and state ideal that is one of the cornerstones of our Democracy. **The Florida AFL-CIO will be working to educate our members on this critical issue and urges everyone to VOTE NO on Amendment 7.**



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