



2008 Democratic Presidential Primary Endorsement Guide



Economic Security

QUESTION

What steps will you take to protect working and middle class Americans from economic insecurity caused by globalization and catastrophic debt? What role should organized labor play in a global economy?

BACKGROUND

"He's faceless, forlorn, the personification of despair in portrayals from Kafka to "Dilbert." But the middle-class office worker has some very real problems these days. His company froze contributions to its pension plan and cut back on health care benefits because of rising costs. His recent raise isn't covering the higher payments on his adjustable-rate mortgage. The annual child care bill for his two kids now tops \$15,000. And though he and his spouse earn more than they did five years ago, they're working more hours than ever." Bettleheim, "Courting the Anxious Cubicle Man", Congressional Quarterly, Sept. 24, 2007(1)

Consider a few facts that confirm that the rich are getting richer, while middle class Americans face economic insecurity arising from stagnant income, increasing debt, and job displacement:

- The top one percent of households received 21.8 percent of all pre-tax income in 2005, more than double what that figure was in the 1970s. (The top one percent's share of total income bottomed out at 8.9 percent in 1976.) This is the greatest concentration of income since 1928, when 23.9 percent of all income went to the richest one percent. (2)
- Median household income declined by 2% from 2000 to 2006 (3)
- The total amount of consumer credit was \$2.5 trillion as of July 2007. The amount of revolving credit increased at an annual rate of 4.5% (4)
- Since President Bush took office in January 2001, more than 2.7 million manufacturing jobs and 900,000 service jobs have been displaced. (5)

At the same time, the right of workers to organize and collectively bargain for wages, benefits and job conditions is eroding, and the ability to obtain relief from catastrophic debt is sharply restricted. Union membership rate has declined from 20.1% in 1983 to 12% in 2006 (6), and the number of personal bankruptcy filings increased by 68.4% from 2000 to 2005. (8)

Representative Rahm Emanuel of Illinois: "The party that deals with globalization and economic security will win." (9)

Voting Record

Employee Free Choice Act (HR 800): amends the National Labor Relations Act to eliminate a requirement for a vote to organize a labor union, outline a time frame for the bargaining process, and provide certain penalties for employers who attempt to influence the formation of a union. (10)

BIDEN

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Co-sponsor of HR 800, and voted Yes to Cloture Vote.</p> <p>Supported raising minimum wage to \$7.25. Voted to extend OSHA regulations and vigorously opposed efforts to restrict the application of OSHA coverage.</p> <p>Fought attempts to undermine overtime rights.</p> <p>Claimed to have the best labor record of all the candidates at the AFL-CIO Democratic Primary forum: "Look at our records. There's no one on this stage, mainly because of my longevity, that has a better labor record than me."</p> <p>In fact, the opposite is true. All the candidates on the stage had a better "lifetime" labor record than Biden, as measured by the AFL-CIO's ratings of Senate and House votes. The AFL-CIO's latest listings show Biden voting its way 85% of the time over his entire Senate career--the lowest lifetime rating of all the candidates on the stage that night.</p> <p>Despite this, a Biden spokeswoman said, "Sen. Biden enjoys comparable ratings to his opponents during comparable periods of time." And in any case, the AFL-CIO's "ratings do not equal a track record of getting legislative and practical results for labor."</p> <p>In 2005 Biden's record was 93%, Clinton's 86%, and Obama's 100%. In 2006 Biden tied Clinton & Obama, with all of them voting with the AFL CIO 93% of the time.</p> <p>Source: FactCheck.org on 2007 AFL-CIO Democratic primary forum Aug 7, 2007</p>	<p>Labor Rights</p> <p>Supports increase in minimum wage. Supports worker training program for "green collar" jobs.</p> <p>Pledges to ensure that all workers who are displaced by technological and economic change have access to resources and opportunities.</p> <p>Co-Sponsor of the Healthy Families Act, which would make it mandatory for employers of 15 or more workers to provide seven days paid leave for their own or their families' health care.</p> <p>Source Biden Campaign Website unless otherwise noted</p>

CLINTON

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Voted Yes to Cloture Vote on HR 800.</p> <p>Opposed anti-collective bargaining provisions contained in the Department of Defense's proposed National Security Personnel System and has voted in favor of collective bargaining rights for TSA screeners.</p> <p>Opposed Bush Administration efforts to undermine overtime protections</p> <p>Urged a "no" vote on California Proposition 75, which would severely limit public employees' unions from engaging in the political process.</p> <p>Original co-sponsor of the Healthy Families Act, which would provide workers with seven paid days of sick-leave, giving parents time off from work to go to the doctors' office with their child or aging relative.</p> <p>"Hillary Clinton earned the IAM's endorsement by focusing on jobs, health care, education and trade – the bread and butter issues of the American middle class," said International Association of Machinists (IAM) International President Tom Buffenbarger. "She is the only candidate of either party to come forward with a comprehensive manufacturing policy and the only candidate to connect with millions of Americans who feel invisible to the current administration."</p>	<p>"Let's make sure the people who work hard every day can actually support their families and save for the future. That means standing up for our unions again--understanding that there's a connection between unions and the middle class. When I'm president, we're going to stand up for unions. We're going to make sure they can organize for fair wages and good working conditions. And we're going to appoint people to the Department of Labor who are actually pro-labor for a change. "</p> <p>Source: Take Back America 2007 Conference June 20, 2007</p> <p>Labor Rights Pledges to sign the Employee Free Choice Act into law.</p> <p>Minimum Wage: the buying power of the minimum wage is at a 51 year low. Would raise the minimum wage and peg Congressional pay raises to increases in the minimum wage.</p> <p>Davis-Bacon/Project Labor Agreements (PLAs): would continue to support prevailing wage protections on all federally funded infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Would eliminate tax incentives for offshoring jobs.</p> <p>Debt Relief Would establish \$1 billion fund to assist state run programs that help at-risk borrowers. Would expand Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac foreclosure prevention efforts.</p> <p>Taxes Would simplify and expand Earned Income Tax credit, and overhaul unemployment insurance.</p> <p>Source Hillary Clinton Campaign Website unless otherwise noted</p>

DODD

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Voted Yes to Cloture Vote on HR 800.</p> <p>Authored the Family and Medical Leave Act.</p> <p>Authored the RESPECT Act, which would reverse a series of decisions from the National Labor Relations Board that unfairly expanded the definition of a “supervisor” so that many workers would be denied the right to join a union.</p> <p>Cosponsored the Employee Free Choice Act, also known as the “Card Check” bill, which will remove obstacles to joining a union, such as the cumbersome election process that can be delayed by employers to intimidate or discourage workers.</p> <p>Authored the U.S. Worker Protection Act, which sought to prevent most federal agencies from outsourcing jobs to overseas contractors.</p> <p>Endorsed by International Association of Fire Fighters.</p> <p>http://www.firefightersfordodd.com/doddonissues.html</p>	<p>Q: If you're elected to serve as president, would you be willing to do this service for the next four years and be paid the national minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour?</p> <p>A: I have two young daughters who I'm trying to educate. I don't think I could live on the minimum wage, but I'm a strong advocate to seeing to it that we increase it at least to \$9 or \$10 to give people a chance out there to be able to provide for their families. That's leadership in the country. (Source: 2007 YouTube Democratic Primary debate, Charleston SC Jul 23, 2007)</p> <p>Would pass the Employee Free Choice Act.</p> <p>Would guarantee at least six weeks of paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child, an elderly parent or sick family member, or one's own serious illness.</p> <p>Would create a technical education curriculum to train a new generation of automobile mechanics, electricians and construction workers on energy-efficiency measures.</p> <p>Source: http://www.chrisdodd.com/issues/labor</p>

EDWARDS

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Edwards has been endorsed by several unions.</p> <p>"Our endorsement is based on the Senator's outspoken support for all of organized labor and his focus on America's working families," Carpenters President Douglas J. McCarron said in a statement provided by the Edwards campaign. "In addition to his support for labor, our leadership was particularly impressed with the Senator's strong stand on trade."</p> <p>The United Steelworkers and the United Mine Workers of America announced their support of Edwards at a rally in downtown Pittsburgh this Labor Day. In a statement, Steelworkers president Leo Gerard said, "All of the Democratic candidates in the field share our values, and any one of them would be a major improvement over the current administration. But none of them is a more forceful advocate for those values than John Edwards. Senator Edwards is committed, as he has been throughout his life, to going to bat for everyday Americans and to changing a broken political system that leaves millions of Americans without a voice in their government."</p> <p>Source: http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2007/09/03/edwards-picks-up-two-more-union-endorsements-356/</p>	<p>"We ought to treat the pensions and the retirement of the chairmen and CEOs of companies exactly the way we treat every other worker in the company. I intend to explain to America how important unions and organized labor is to the future and the economic security of this country. Who's been with you in the crunch? In the last few years, 200 times I have walked picket lines. I have helped organize thousands of workers with 23 national unions. I have worked with employers."</p> <p>Source: 2007 AFL-CIO Democratic primary forum Aug 8, 2007</p> <p>Labor Rights</p> <p>Supports the Employee Free Choice Act. Also supports banning the permanent replacement of strikers so unions can negotiate fairly.</p> <p>Would raise the minimum wage to \$9.50 by 2012.</p> <p>Pledges to protect the Davis Bacon Act, which ensures that workers on federal construction projects receive the local prevailing wage.</p> <p>Would create a Get Ahead Credit, which will expand the Savers Credit to match savings up to \$500 a year, providing as much as an additional dollar for every dollar of savings.</p> <p>Would boost low-income families' savings with work bonds, which will supplement the Earned Income Tax Credit to match the savings of low-income workers up to \$500 per year.</p> <p>Would exempt from taxes each family's first \$250 in interest, capital gains, and dividends, and would allow families to deposit part or all of their child tax credit into a tax-free savings account.</p> <p>Plans to expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit to pay up to 50 percent of child care expenses up to \$5,000 and make it partially refundable to benefit low-income working families.</p> <p>Would triple the EITC for 4 million adults without children and cut the marriage penalty for 3 million families.</p> <p>Source: http://johnedwards.com/issues/working-families/</p>

GRAVEL

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Supports abolishing the income tax and replacing it with a progressive sales tax. Source: http://www.gravel2008.us/?q=fair_tax</p> <p>The only Democratic presidential candidate who didn't appear at the AFL-CIO Democratic primary forum, because he failed to return its questionnaire on time, which was distributed to all Democratic and Republican candidates. [Note: Gravel did return his response to DC for Democracy's Questionnaire.]</p> <p>According to CNN.com, Gravel said, "It's our mistake, but they are using our mistake to deny me an appearance before the AFL CIO group and I had a 100 percent voting record for twelve years as senator and four years in the state legislature."</p> <p>Source: FactCheck.org on 2007 AFL-CIO Democratic primary forum Aug 7, 2007</p>	<p>Q: If you're elected to serve as president, would you be willing to do this service for the next four years and be paid the national minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour? GRAVEL: Oh, yes, I would, but I would say that we don't need a minimum wage; we need a living wage. We don't have that in this country because of what they passed. Source You Tube Democratic Candidate Debate</p> <p>"The question a people's platform must address is <i>how</i> every American can participate in the economy and obtain from it the basic financial security which is their share of this material affluence. I believe it should be done through a Citizen's Wage, to which everyone is entitled at birth and which is available to the worker and the poor alike. The Citizen's Wage should be seen as a dividend from the nation's total affluence and as a reflection of each person's right to economic security. The amount paid to the individual should be geared realistically to the level of income needed to maintain a minimum, decent standard of living. The Citizen's Wage should also become an effective tool for the long-run economic improvement of our entire society."</p> <p>Source: Citizen Power, by Sen. Mike Gravel, p. 91-93 Jan 1, 1972</p>

KUCINICH

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Voted Yes on HR 800. Voted Yes on Minimum Wage Increase.</p> <p>Voted Yes to HR 1852: To modernize and update the National Housing Act and enable the Federal Housing Administration to use risk-based pricing to more effectively reach underserved borrowers, and for other purposes.</p> <p>Voted Yes to H Res 6 (Pay as You Go bill), to require that any tax cuts must be offset by either a different tax increase or spending cut, and to require certain listings of congressional earmarks and limited tax and tariff benefits.</p>	<p>"If in 2004 Labor goes up to the mountaintop of our nation's capital, it must bring back, engraved in stone, the rights of working people: People have a right to a job. A right to a safe workplace. A right to decent wages and benefits. A right to organize and be represented. A right to grieve about working conditions. A right to strike. A right to fair compensation for injuries on the job. A right to sue if injured by negligent employers. A right to security of pension and retirement benefits. A right to participate in the political process. "</p> <p>Source: Speech to Iowa AFL-CIO, in Prayer for America, p.102-3 Aug 14, 2002</p> <p>http://www2.kucinich.us/issues/economic</p>

OBAMA

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Co-sponsored and strong advocate for HR 800, and Voted Yes to Cloture Vote.</p> <p>Introduced legislation to devote \$50 million for transitional and bridge employment programs for hard-to-employ groups like homeless veterans, children aging out of foster care, and people returning to communities after a time in prison.</p> <p>Introduced legislation to expand eligibility for Child Tax Credit.</p> <p>Introduced the first federal bill to combat mortgage fraud. The STOP FRAUD Act criminalizes mortgage fraud, authorizes \$10 million more for anti-mortgage fraud programs and requires the FBI to update bankers on fraudulent activity in a formal, systematic way.</p>	<p>Would raise the minimum wage, index it to inflation and increase the Earned Income Tax Credit to make sure that full-time workers can earn a living wage.</p> <p>"I'd reward work by providing an income tax cut of up to \$500 per person - or \$1,000 for each working family - to offset the payroll tax that they're already paying."</p> <p>"I'll create a mortgage interest credit so that both itemizers and non-itemizers get a break. This will immediately benefit 10 million homeowners in America. The vast majority of these are folks who make under \$50,000 per year, who will get a break of 10 percent of their mortgage interest rate. For most middle class families, this will add up to about \$500 each year."</p> <p>"When I'm President, we'll work to see that no retiree making less than \$50,000 each year has to pay income tax. This will eliminate income taxes for about 7 million Americans, at a savings rate of roughly \$1,400 each year. And 22 million seniors won't even have to file a return and hire an expensive tax preparer."</p> <p>"When I'm President, we'll put in place a system where 40 million Americans with a job and a bank account who take the standard deduction can do their taxes in less than five minutes. The government already collects wage and bank account information, so there's no reason the IRS can't send Americans pre-filled tax forms to verify."</p> <p>Speech on Tax Fairness for Middle Class http://www.barackobama.com/2007/09/18/remarks_of_senator_barack_obama_25.php</p> <p>Source Obama Campaign website unless otherwise noted</p>

RICHARDSON

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>"I'm with [the unions] on all the issues. We passed collective bargaining with mandatory arbitration. Real penalties for violations when employees are trying to form a union--I'll sign the Employee Free Choice Act.</p> <p>We passed in New Mexico a tax credit for creating good-paying jobs. We passed a law saying that if you're a company and you create a job paying over the prevailing wage, you get a 10% tax credit. Rather than tax cuts to reward the wealthy, I use them to reward people to go to work."</p> <p>"The middle class is straining with wages that are not moving up. When I return to New Mexico tonight, I hope on my desk will be legislation that increases the minimum wage to \$7.50. The minimum wage has not gone up in 9 years, while the Congress has given itself a pay raise 11 times. Most of the action that helps our union families happens in the states. "</p> <p>Source: 2007 IAFF Presidential Forum in Washington DC Mar 14, 2007</p>	<p>Would protect the right to collective bargaining and increase the minimum wage.</p> <p>Would provide a payroll tax rebate for businesses that add jobs during the year.</p> <p>Would provide tax credits for new business in emerging technologies and in low-income areas.</p> <p>Would invest in a Clean Energy Workforce Development Program.</p> <p>Would close tax loopholes and end corporate welfare.</p> <p>Would end all government subsidies and tax credits for businesses that choose to send jobs overseas.</p> <p>Source: http://www.richardsonforpresident.com/issues/page?id=0008</p>

FURTHER READING

<http://www.dkosopedia.com/wiki/Economy>

NOTES

- (1) http://www.cqpolitics.com/2007/09/courting_the_anxious_cubicle_m.html
- (2) <http://www.inequality.org>, citing Piketty & Saez, "Income Inequality in the United States: 1913-1998", Oxford Univ. Press update 2007
- (3) <http://www.aflcio.org/issues/factsstats>
- (4) <http://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/g19/current/>
- (5) AFL-CIO Issue Brief, "The Bush Record on Shipping Jobs Overseas"
- (6) <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm>; Richtel, "Unions Struggle as Communications Industry Shifts", NY Times, June 1, 2005.
- (7) Block, Richard, "Justice on the Job: Perspective on the Erosion of Collective Bargaining in the United States" (Upjohn Institute, 2006)
- (8) <http://www.aflcio.org/issues/factsstats/factsstats.cfm>. See Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention & Consumer Protection Act of 2005 Research Guide. http://www.ll.georgetown.edu/guides/bankruptcy_act_2005.cfm ; Steffy, "Bankruptcy Reform a Joke, But Nobody Is Laughing", Houston Chronicle, Aug. 19, 2006
- (9) New York Times, "A New Populism Spurs Democrats on the Economy", July 16, 2007
- (10) Project Vote Smart (http://www.vote-smart.org/issue_keyvote_detail.php?cs_id=14137&can_id=53279)