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LABOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Democrats Rely on Americans Coming Together, Funded by AFL-CIO

The Sacramento Bee reported that Democrats are "relying in great measure" on a \$100 million voter turnout program conducted by the "independent" 527 group "Americans Coming Together." That group is funded to the tune of \$45 million by the national AFL-CIO. [Story](#)

USA Today reports Americans Coming Together has hired 900 full time organizers and 2,000 canvassers in 15 states in an effort to mobilize voters to turn out for Kerry. [Story](#)

Missouri AFL-CIO Political Director Boasts "We'll hit 100,000 doors"

In reporting on the race to turn out voters in Missouri, a key battleground state, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that the AFL-CIO's political director Ken Nickell plans to "hit 100,000 doors in the last month," turning out voters for John Kerry. [Story](#)

While the effort for President Bush is funded by the Republican Party and the Bush campaign, Kerry's campaign benefits tremendously from "various labor groups" such as the AFL-CIO and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) conducting their own massive voter turnout programs.

Your Dues At Work: Sweeney Walks for Kerry

The Bangor Daily News and Augusta Morning Sentinel reported AFL-CIO President John Sweeney went precinct walking in Bangor and Augusta to bash President Bush and encourage union members to vote for John Kerry. Sweeney said the Bush administration is the first "since the Depression to have less jobs than when they came in." The press did not report whether Sweeney also said the economy was in a slowdown when President Bush took office, or the impact of 9-11 on the economy. [Story](#)

*Sweeney's seemingly around-the-clock campaign in support of Kerry is another example of how the rights of Republican AFL-CIO members are routinely swept aside. Whether they like it or not, their dues payments are being used to elect a candidate most will vote against in November. **Sweeney's \$247,500 salary is paid by the AFL-CIO's national headquarters.***

AFL-CIO Organizes "Parties" To Watch Debates, Cheer Kerry

If you were a union member in Pittsburgh watching the debate between President Bush and John Kerry last Thursday night, chances are you were in an AFL-CIO union hall at an event choreographed by the union. You might even have been sitting with an official from AFL-CIO headquarters.

The Post-Gazette reported: *Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, joined the group and was ... emphatic in his praise of the Democratic candidate. "Kerry looked more presidential," he said. "The president was on the defensive all night. He looked confused."...*

Whenever Bush spoke, or his face even appeared on screen, he was relentlessly heckled via the two televisions in the room. At one point, Bush paused during a rebuttal, and Faye George jumped. "He keeps falling asleep!" she shouted. Bush then stumbled over a few words. "You bombed!" she declared.

The union organized "hundreds" of parties across the country. [Story](#)

INSIDE LABOR

NEA Emphasizes "Teachers" Over "Union," With Good Reason

Are teachers who join their local affiliate of the National Education Association even aware they are joining a labor union? According to the Evergreen Freedom Foundation and School Reform News, the answer is, "many do not."

In 1997 the NEA hired the Kamber Group to provide advice to reform its image at a time when many Americans considered the union to be a major obstacle to education reform. One of those recommendations was to stress the role of "classroom teachers" over the fact that the NEA is a labor union.

A Harris Poll finds more than three times as many Americans consider a teacher to be in an occupation of "very great prestige" as compared to a union official. [Story](#)

Colorado Union Promises, Then Can't Deliver, Graduate School Credit for *Political Work*

According to Pam Benigno of Colorado's [Independence Institute](#), representatives of the Jefferson County Education Association (JCEA) told members that Adams State College in Alamosa would grant one semester hour of graduate course credit for attending a political rally for two Democrat state senators and distributing campaign literature.

Adams State College Trustee Peggy Lamm confirmed that while the union attempted to secure the credit for the work, the college never responded to the request. "Adams State College never approved credit for this event, nor did we intend to," she said.

"It's inappropriate, to say the least, that a teachers' union would offer academic credit as a way to entice teachers to promote the union's political agenda—and in the process cheapen the value of academic credit," Benigno said.

Labor's Declining Force?

David Rapp of The Manufacturer reports on organized labor's decline both in numbers and political effectiveness as demonstrated by the loss of their favorite candidate – Dick Gephardt – in the race for the Democratic Presidential nomination.

Rapp points to several factors. Chief among them: the rapid decline in private sector union membership. Outsourcing is moving many union jobs overseas while, presumably, those jobs are replaced with non-union jobs in other sectors. At the current rate of loss, many unions will be left with only a handful of members in a decade. [Story](#)

LABOR'S POLICY AGENDA

County Scraps Plans for Election Day Off for County Workers

With organized labor focused on turning out members for candidates like John Kerry, policy decisions that make more union members available for campaign activity on Election Day directly serve that objective.

Many union officials are already allowed "release time" by their employer to work on "union business," sometimes including campaigning for union-supported candidates. (*See last month's Labor Reform News for an excellent example involving Orlando firefighters*).

In Contra Costa County in California's San Francisco Bay Area, plans by Supervisor Mark DeSaulnier to allow all county workers to take Election Day off raised a red flag with many in the community who were concerned county workers were being used as political pawns. There is a hotly contested County Supervisor election that will be decided on November 2nd.

The Tri-Valley Herald reported: *Kevin Dayton of the Associated Builders and Contractors said his group has been closely following the Third District Supervisor race between incumbent Millie Greenberg of Danville and challenger Mary Nejedly Piepho, who serves on the Byron Union School District. Dayton urged the board to delay action on the voluntary time-off proposal until after the election, "to avoid any accusations of last-minute efforts to get people out precinct walking or phone banking."*

DeSaulnier dropped the plan – for now.

New Study Finds Outsourcing BENEFITS Michigan Economy

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy has just released a study demonstrating how "outsourcing" benefits the Michigan economy and provides lessons for U.S. policymakers. The study uses Michigan companies Delphi and Covansys as examples of companies that have used "outsourcing" to benefit its domestic U.S. workforce, and the Michigan economy. [Study](#)

LABOR CORRUPTION UPDATE

Corruption in the ranks of union leadership is an ongoing problem, providing constant ammunition for union reformers. Unfortunately, union members are usually the victims of this corruption, as it is their hard-earned dues money that is often embezzled, or their standing in the workplace that suffers from affiliation with an institution whose leaders are found corrupt.

A sample of headlines in union corruption in the last two weeks, from the [National Legal and Policy Center](#).

LABORERS (LIUNA) / ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS (IUEC) / OPERATING ENGINEERS

Gambino Soldier, Union Bus. Agent Indicted for Multi-Million\$ Fraud in NYC

LABORERS (LIUNA)

Trial of Upper NY Union Bosses Finally Set

TEAMSTERS (IBT)

IRB Bars Ex-Houston Chief from Union

FOOD & COMMERCIAL WORKERS (UFCW)

Two Ex-Union Employees Confess to Embezzlement in CO Fed. Court

HOTEL & RESTAURANT EMPLOYEES (HERE)

NJ Union President Indicted For Stealing from Health and Union Funds

ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS (IUEC)

NYC Member Sentenced for Threatening Witness

TANNING EMPLOYEES

Ex-Pres. Pleads Guilty to Embezzlement in Penn. Fed. Court

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (AFGE)

Ex-Secy.-Treas. Sentenced in Miss. Fed. Court

AUTO WORKERS (UAW)

Former Secy.-Treas. Pleads Guilty to Embezzlement in Ohio Fed. Court

BAKERY & TOBACCO WORKERS (BC&T)

Former Secy.-Treas. Sentenced in Okla. Fed. Court

SOLUTIONS CENTER

Washington State Public Employee Relations Commission Backs Unions In Denying Dues-Paying Non-Members Workplace Rights

Public employees in Washington State who pay hundreds of dollars each year to their workplace labor union, but decline formal membership, can be denied certain important workplace rights, in a recent decision from the state's Public Employee Relations Commission.

Workers who decline union membership – many do out of concern for the political use of their dues – pay fees to the union normally amounting to 80% of the dues paid by members. Ostensibly the fees are to cover the union's costs in providing collective bargaining services.

Evergreen reports: *Despite paying these forced dues, many non-union employees are barred from participating in employee decisions. Not only have employees been denied the right to vote, but some union officials have even withheld meeting minutes, vote results and relevant publications from non-union employees.*

Denying important workplace rights to non-members appears to be part of a deliberate strategy to punish those who refuse to pay for the costs of full union membership – including the union's activities completely unrelated to serving as a bargaining agent.

A solution would be to ensure every worker retains their workplace rights – including the right to vote on employment issues – regardless of whether they are a union member. [News advisory](#) [Read Evergreen's Petition to PERC](#)

CONTACTING US

Americans for Tax Reform
1920 L St., Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
Ph. 202 785 0266
Grover Norquist, President
[Ron Nehring](#), Senior Consultant
[Ryan Ellis](#), Federal Affairs Manager

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