

Democratic hopefuls try hard to show differences

Working people's issues are front and center before national TV audience and more than 17,000 at Soldier Field

CHICAGO — The top seven Democratic candidates for President outlined their plans to create a more fair and equitable economy for all Americans Aug. 7 at the AFL-CIO Presidential Forum.

In a 90-minute forum attended by 17,000 union members at Soldier Field here and nationally broadcast on MSNBC and XM Radio, the candidates responded to questions posed by moderator Keith Olbermann and working families on core issues like health care, jobs and the freedom to form and join unions.

"Tonight thousands of working people at Soldier Field and millions across the country heard these candidates discuss how they would create fundamental economic change that would restore the hope and promise of the American Dream to working families," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "While political pundits are debating which candidate won or lost here tonight, it's clear the real winners are the working women and men of this country whose issues and priorities are central in this campaign."

One-by-one, the candidates — Senators Hillary Clinton of New York, Joseph Biden of Delaware, Barack Obama of Illinois and Chris Dodd of Connecticut, Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico, Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio and former Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina — outlined their plans to improve America for working families. The candidates responded to questions posed by audience members, submitted by working people online and Olbermann's own.

Asked by Olbermann about infra-

structure, in particular the nation's bridges, Biden said, "We don't need any more studies. We don't need any more operations. What we need is to put America back to work. Put them to work at a prevailing wage. Make us safer as a consequence of that."

Clinton invoked local workers' efforts to join a union at a local hospital. "When I am president, we'll have a Department of Labor that actually cares about labor," Clinton said. "And when it comes to organizing at Resurrection Hospital, I will be the president who signs the Employee Free Choice Act."

"Having the kind of first responders at home, like the firefighters and police and EMS services that have the tools and the ability to stand up and defend our country has not been funded ... I think we're vulnerable today, more so than we were right after 9/11," said Dodd in response to a question on the Homeland Security Department.

In a moving moment, Steve Skvara, a worker from Indiana who lost his pension and health care when his company, LTV Steel, filed bankruptcy, asked the candidates what's wrong with America and how they would fix it.

"My view is that we ought to treat the pensions and the retirement of the chairman and CEOs of companies exactly the way we treat every other worker in the country," Edwards said.

Edwards went on to tout unions as a key to improving the lives of millions of Americans. "I intend to be the President of the United States who walks onto the White House lawn and explains how important unions are to the economic security of the country," he said.

"Isn't it time to cover every American with a not-for-profit system," said Rep. Dennis Kucinich on health care. "Furthermore, 46 million Americans without any health care, 50 million Americans uninsured, you know and I know this is the issue at the bargaining table."

In response to a question on globalization, Obama said, "The question is: On whose behalf is the president negotiating ... on behalf of the people in this stadium or are you only negotiating on behalf of corporate profits? ... We've got provisions in our tax code that reward companies that are moving jobs overseas instead of companies that are investing right in the United States of America. And that is a reflection of the degree to which special interests have been shaping our trade policy."

In response to a question from Jim McGovern, an Iraq war veteran who returned to find that his Maytag plant had closed, Richardson said, "I would protect (workers') pensions from this restructuring. I would protect their health care. I would ensure that what you have in the future is job protec-

tion."

The forum was a key part of an intensive six-month program to engage union members and their families in the AFL-CIO's presidential endorsement decision-making process. Beginning in April, the AFL-CIO held town hall meetings in cities across the United States with presidential candi-

dates to discuss issues of importance to working families like health care, jobs, retirement security, trade policy and the freedom to form and join unions.

For more information on the AFL-CIO's "Working Families Vote '08" campaign, go to www.workingfamiliesvote08.org.

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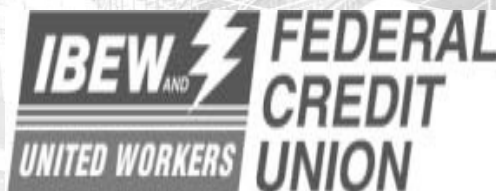
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on her recent completion of her Executive MBA program. We appreciate her devotion and hard work in achieving this monumental goal. Barbara has been dedicated to the credit union movement for many years and continues to strive to offer our union members and their families outstanding products and services. Great job, Barbara!