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## Breakfast with union leaders

# Senator Smith makes his first attempt to court labor

Oregon U.S. Senator Gordon Smith told a labor audience Aug. 17 that he would work with them to reform national labor law so that it's not so stacked against workers.

Smith was making his first appearance before affiliates of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council since winning election in 1996. He has been invited several times in the past, but has always declined or not responded.

This year is different. Smith is up for re-election in 2008 and his seat is considered vulnerable by political insiders. Two promising Democrats have stepped up to challenge him. They are Oregon Speaker of the House Jeff Merkley of Portland and political activist Steve Novick of Portland.

"I hope you've found the door to my office always open to you," Smith campaigned, reminding the audience of 55 unionists that he operates a unionized frozen food business that he said "has always bargained in good faith and that has never experienced a strike."

"I've voted many times the way you've wanted me to," he said. "I'm



Oregon U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith smiles at a question by Jeff Smith, president of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 8, during a labor breakfast Aug. 17. Hosting the breakfast, Smith's first since being elected in 1996, were Judy O'Connor (right), financial secretary-treasurer; and Bob Petroff (seated left), president of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. The event took place at Kirkland Union Manor in Southeast Portland.

here to be honest to you ... a friend to you."

In 2006, Smith voted with the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education 13 percent of the time. Lifetime he is at 20 percent. (In 2003 he voted zero percent with COPE). He has a lifetime 86 percent voting record with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Smith's most recent vote against labor came June 26, and it was a doozy.

Senate Democrats were trying to vote up or down on the Employee Free Choice Act, labor's top priority bill this session, but Republicans were blocking it with a filibuster.

Among other things, the Employee Free Choice Act would help level the playing field between workers and employers in organizing and bargaining, by outlawing "captive audience" anti-union meetings, legalizing "card check" recognition of unions at work sites, increasing penalties for labor law-breaking and making it easier to get court orders against such lawlessness. Corporations and business lobbyists

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## Clinton, Edwards, Dodd, Huckabee get early support

# International unions weigh-in on presidential primary

WASHINGTON, D.C. — International unions are ramping up for next year's presidential election with early endorsements for the 2008 primaries.

The 125,000-member United Transportation Union was first out of the gate Aug. 28 with its endorsement of New York Sen. (and former first lady) Hilary Clinton in the Democratic primary. The UTU will merge on Jan. 1 into the larger Sheet Metal Workers International Association, but that union is staying neutral in the presidential race for now, President Michael Sullivan said.

The Fire Fighters Association came next Aug. 29, announcing support for Connecticut U.S. Sen. Chris Dodd, also a Democrat. The Fire Fighters Union has 281,000 members nationwide.

On Aug. 30, the 700,000-member International Association of Machinists issued a dual endorsement — backing Clinton in the Democratic primary and Mike Huckabee, a former governor of Arkansas in the Republican primary.

On the same day, the 530,000-member Carpenters Union threw its support behind former North Carolina U.S. senator John Edwards in the Democratic primary. The Carpenters Union is an affiliate of the Change to Win labor federation. The others are affiliates of the AFL-CIO, which did not make a primary endorsement because no candidate could get the required two-thirds majority vote of the Executive Board.

On Sept. 3, Labor Day, the 850,000-member United Steelwork-

ers, AFL-CIO, announced it is backing Edwards as well. So did the 86,000-member United Mine Workers, AFL-CIO.

The Steelworkers endorsement followed a nationwide poll of the union's membership as well as a survey of its core activists. The Steelworkers International Executive Board voted Sept. 2 for the endorsement, as required by the union's constitution. The vote was unanimous.

Edwards, the Steelworkers said in its announcement, "is committed to changing entrenched trade policies that export American jobs to low-wage counties where they exploit Third-World workers and the environment just to fatten multinationals' profits."

An Aug. 13-16 Gallup Poll found public support for the Democratic nomination at 48 percent for Clinton, 13 percent for Edwards and 2 percent for Dodd. Illinois Sen. Barack Obama was polling behind Clinton at 25 percent.

"Polls don't mean spit" and are more of a function of name recognition and fundraising, said Dodd, recalling how the Fire Fighters Union provided on-the-ground forces that helped Massachusetts Democratic Sen. John Kerry's win in the key leadoff Iowa caucuses almost four years ago. Kerry's win in Iowa came at a time when he — like Dodd now — trailed badly in national polls. It propelled the Massachusetts lawmaker to the 2004 nomination.

"Our country has been without experienced leadership for far too long. This time around, experience matters," said Fire Fighters

President Harold Schaitberger. "And without someone who can stand up for safety and security, the union chief noted, everything else is irrelevant."

Carpenters President Douglas McCarron said in a statement that the union believed Edwards would have broad appeal in the general election and that his strong stand on trade and his active work on picket lines "made him the obvious and, to our leadership, only choice in this election."

The Machinists Union only considered candidates who appeared before members during its conference in Orlando, Fla. the last week of August. Union President Thomas Buffenbarger said the union backed Clinton for several reasons, including her detailed plan to revive U.S. manufacturing, a key IAM cause.

"Clinton earned the IAM's endorsement by focusing on jobs, health care, education and trade — the bread-and-butter issues of the middle class. 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," Buffenbarger explained.

Huckabee was the lone Republican to address the Machinists conference. "He is entitled to serious consideration from our members voting in the upcoming Republican primaries," Buffenbarger said.