

As president, Kucinich says he'd pull out of NAFTA

SEASIDE — Presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich — a card-carrying member of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 600 — vowed to bring the principles of the labor movement to the Oval Office if he is elected president.

Speaking to more than 200 delegates and guests attending the opening "Hello Party" at the Oregon AFL-CIO's 50th convention, Kucinich, a six-term Democratic congressman from Ohio, said he would instill the principles that founded the labor movement back into the White House.

"The union movement was founded on the same principles as the founding fathers of America: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," he said.

"It's time to reawaken the beauty of the labor movement ... it takes only courage to reclaim this country."

The national AFL-CIO tracks congressional voting records through its Committee On Political Education. Kucinich has a lifetime COPE voting record of 97 percent.

Kucinich said that on his very first day in office he would withdraw from the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization.

"NAFTA is a powerful reason for



Ohio congressman and presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich meets with members of Oregon labor movement during Hello Party at Oregon AFL-CIO convention in Seaside.

the decline in America's living standards," he said. "NAFTA was about cheap labor. I know that."

NAFTA changed the dynamic for labor at the bargaining table, he continued, with threats by corporations to move to Mexico. "Once that happened, unions lost the clout needed to get a good deal for workers."

Kucinich reminded the audience

that it was a Democratic president who established NAFTA. "And in that next election, Democrats lost."

Kucinich said he is the only candidate running for president willing to take on the health insurance industry. "If ever there is a time to end the for-profit health care system, it is now," he said.

Kucinich co-authored HR 676, a

national health care bill that would institute a single-payer health care system in the U.S. by expanding the Medicare system to every resident. Convention delegates later passed a resolution endorsing the legislation.

"I know that politicians are taking money from the insurance industry to make sure there is no national health insurance," he said.

As president, Kucinich said he also would prosecute President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld "and all those responsible for going to war based on lies. To me, it's a matter of simple justice."

Kucinich then blasted fellow Democrats in Congress for not having the guts to start an impeachment process on Bush and Cheney. "What would it take if not this?" he asked.

Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain said every presidential candidate — both Democrat and Republican — was invited to speak at the convention. Democratic hopeful John Edwards addressed delegates Oct. 9. (See article on Page 1.)

The Oregon AFL-CIO holds a convention every two years. The last time the group met in Seaside the convention ended on Sept. 11, 2001.

AFL-CIO offers to train members who run for public office

SPRINGFIELD — The AFL-CIO has for years appealed to rank-and-file union activists and union leaders to run for public office. Now it's offering to train those ready to answer the call.

A two-day "Labor Campaign School" is planned for Dec. 14-15 at the Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 290 Training Center in Springfield. Candidates, campaign managers and campaign treasurers will learn the nuts and bolts of running for office, including budgeting and expenditure reporting, volunteer recruitment, and how to communicate with voters and the media.

Class materials and meals will be provided at no charge to candidates who are accepted to participate.

The training is sponsored by the Lane County Labor Council and the Oregon AFL-CIO.

"We welcome candidates from any political party who will fight for affordable health care, secure retirement, decent wages, good schools and strong communities — basically, the same things our unions fight for every day," said Pat Riggs-Henson, executive secretary-treasurer of the Lane County Central Labor Council.

For more information, call Riggs-Henson at 541-915-3100.

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