

AFL-CIO's Trumka says Obama strong on guns, conservation

BY SETH MICHAELS

At a union roundtable discussion in Johnstown, Pa., last month, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka met with a panel of 15 union sportsmen from 12 different western Pennsylvania unions to discuss Sen. Barack Obama's positions on issues ranging from trade to guns.

Trumka says Obama is offering the right solutions for what's wrong with the economy. He told the assembled union members that talking with their friends and neighbors about Obama and the important issues is the best way to make sure a pro-worker president is elected.

"This election is going to decide the direction of the economy, where we go," Trumka said. "Whether the economy is going to help you, or hurt you. Whether it's going to be changed or it isn't going to be changed. It's up to you, it's very, very important for you and for your future, the future of

our communities and our children, to know the facts, where the candidates stand on the issues and then vote what's best for the country."

Trumka, an avid hunter and fisher, says corporate interests are again trying to exploit the issue of gun ownership, hoping to distract gun-owning voters from real issues like jobs, health care and retirement security. "This election is too important to let distortions and falsehood affect it," Trumka said.

"Obama gets it. Not only is he crystal clear in his support of the Second Amendment, he is light years ahead of John McCain on habitat conservation and hunting and fishing ac-

cess issues important to sportsmen," Trumka explained. "Attacks on Sen. Obama's position on guns are nothing more than right-wing rhetoric meant to distract working people from the critical pocketbook issues that affect our daily lives."

Participants at the roundtable said that while protecting the traditions of sportsmen is important, the focus of this

election is squarely on the economy.

Kenneth Peterson, president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 459 in Johnstown, said trade tops the issues leading him to vote for Obama this fall.

"There is a lot of nonsense out there about Barack Obama taking our guns. Workers from our area are more worried about John McCain exporting our jobs," he said.

Lisa Stark, a National Rifle Association member and organizer for the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, says the real threat to responsible gun ownership comes from the stagnation of workers' paychecks.

"The truth of the matter is that George W. Bush and his failed economic policies have taken away more guns from average Americans than any gun control law ever passed in the history of the United States," she said. "The economic policies of George Bush — which McCain supported 90

percent of the time — have turned pawn shops into gun shops because struggling workers have to hock their guns to pay their mortgages."

Michael Fedore, a member of the Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers who grew up in New Castle, Pa., says he's voting for Obama because all workers' rights deserve respect.

"We come from an area where schools close on the opening day of deer season," he said. "Hunting is a way of life for us and Barack Obama

respects that. Sen. Obama also respects our rights to decent jobs that pay fair wages, health care and pension protection."

Pennsylvania will be a decisive state in this fall's election, and union volunteers will be working to make sure every union member knows what issues are really at stake this year.

(Editor's Note: Seth Michaels coordinates the AFL-CIO's presidential candidate Website, Working Families Vote 2008.)

Building trades council backs candidates with union ties

Several candidates endorsed by the Columbia-Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council (CPBCTC) have union ties — and one candidate is a union member.

Gary Moore, a business representative of Laborers Local 296, is running for Wood Village City Council with support from the CPBCTC. Wood Village is located north of Gresham in east Multnomah County.

In neighboring Fairview, the building trades council is backing Theresa Davis for city council. Davis is the wife of Clif Davis, business manager of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48.

In Multnomah County, CPBCTC has endorsed Judy Shiprack and Carla Piluso for two open commissioner seats. Shiprack is the wife of Bob Shiprack, executive director of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council.

In other races, the building trades council has endorsed newcomer Charles Lewis for Portland City Council, Position 1; in Clatsop County, the nod went to incumbent

County Commissioner Patricia Roberts; and in Columbia County construction unions are backing the re-election of Commissioner Tony Hyde.

CPBCTC also endorsed the Centennial School District Bond Measure 26-97.

In Washington State, CPBCTC has endorsed Pam Brokaw and Jeanne Harris for the Clark County Commission. In Skamania County, Bruce Scherling is their recommendation for commissioner.



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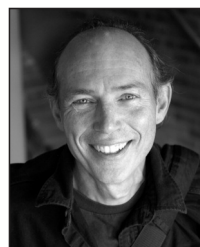
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