

# Obama reverses Bush order that banned project labor agreements

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Barack Obama has signed an executive order overturning the Bush Administration's ban on project labor agreements (PLAs) on federal and federally funded construction projects.

The ban was one of the first orders signed by Bush when he took office.

"The Bush anti-PLA executive order was exactly the type of special interest-driven politics and policy that American voters rejected overwhelmingly last November," said Mark Ayers, president of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department. "We acknowledge and praise this executive order as being one of the first steps in ushering in a new, more pragmatic and value-conscious approach to governing."

Project labor agreements generally set wages and establish work rules and methods of settling grievances on large multi-contractor construction projects.

For more than 70 years before the Bush order, project labor agreements benefited communities, employers and workers by ensuring fair wages and benefits and on-time completion of projects.

Ayers says project labor agreements provide maximum benefit to construction users; union and nonunion workers; union and nonunion contractors; lenders and insurance companies; and taxpayers. They are frequently negotiated to address a wide range of local and social needs, including the assurance of hiring of local residents, and outreach programs designed to offer local residents the opportunity for a career in the skilled trades.

This action follows Obama's three previous executive orders that reversed a trio of Bush-era orders governing the way federal contractors deal with union workers. The new orders:

- Require federal service contractors to offer jobs to current workers when contracts change.

- Reverse a Bush order requiring federal contractors to post notice that workers can limit financial support of unions serving as their exclusive bargaining representatives.

- Prevent federal contractors from being reimbursed for expenses meant to influence workers deciding whether to form a union and engage in collective bargaining.

"We have to reverse many of the policies towards organized labor that we've seen these last eight years, policies with which I've sharply disagreed," Obama said. "I do not view the labor movement as part of the problem. To me it's part of the solution."

"We need to level the playing field for workers and the unions that represent their interests, because we know that you cannot have a strong middle class without a strong labor movement," Obama continued. "Strong, vibrant, growing unions can exist side by side with strong, vibrant and growing businesses. This isn't an either/or proposition between the interests of workers and the interests of shareholders. That's the old argument. The new argument is that the American economy is not and has never been a zero-sum game."

"When workers are prospering, they buy products that make businesses prosper. We can be competitive and lean and mean and still create a situation where workers are thriving in this country," Obama stated.

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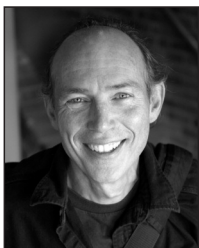
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