

Why are unions supporting Barack Obama for re-election? It's been a rough four years for union members, and Obama has disappointed the labor movement in lots of ways.

During his first term he has continually pushed for passage of free trade agreements, which labor adamantly opposes. He has not followed through on proposed executive orders and reforms, including those that would require employers to report ergonomic injuries; mandate that companies with federal contracts disclose their electoral spending; and require greater disclosure from union-busting consultants.

He remained silent as Republican

Labor is sticking with Obama

governors in Wisconsin and other states maneuvered to strip union workers of their collective bargaining rights and their right to unionize, and when Republican members of Congress attacked the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) after it challenged Boeing's decision to punish union workers by locating in South Carolina.

The first two years of Obama's term were organized labor's best chance in decades to pass labor law reforms that could reverse the union movement's long decline. Labor went all out to pass

the long-blocked Employee Free Choice Act — a bill to crack down on employer abuses during union campaigns and make it easier for workers to unionize and get a first contract — but the Obama Administration did little to support it, and the bill faltered.

There have been bright spots for labor under Obama. He signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which lengthened the amount of time women have to sue for gender discrimination. Immediately on taking office he issued an executive order encouraging the General Services Administration to sign project labor agreements on big federal construction projects. The Obama-appointed National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has been much more pro-labor than the Bush-era Board. And Obama's appointee to the Transportation Safety Administration agreed to give limited union rights to airport screeners.

The Obama Administration put money into GM and Chrysler to help them recover from the brink of collapse. And though the aid was conditioned on contract concessions by union workers, the action ultimately saved tens of thousands of jobs. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, better known as the stimulus, also created jobs for construction workers and prevented layoffs of teachers and other public employees for a year. Nearly half of ARRA's price tag, however, was for tax breaks for corporations and individuals, and evidence suggests the recipients held onto the



funds or paid down debts, limiting its effects as "stimulus."

When the ARRA funds ran out and were not renewed, hundreds of thousands eventually were laid off.

Obama also focused on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act,

which ultimately became known as Obamacare. In his 2008 campaign, Obama had outlined plans for health insurance reform, a key part of which was to be a public insurance option that would compete with insurance companies to keep premiums in check. In office, Obama never advocated for the public option, and in the end, it was left out, while over strong union objections, Obamacare included a 40 percent excise tax on so-called "Cadillac" plans, high-cost employer-provided health insurance plans. But Obamacare does have a number of popular provisions, including expansion of Medicaid and insurance industry reforms — no charge for preventive care, kids staying on parents plans until age 26, and bans on annual or lifetime maximums, and prohibition of rescissions and denials of coverage for pre-existing conditions.

Given all this history, why is every national union in the country endorsing Obama for re-election? The answer is two words long: Mitt Romney. Unionists may look at Obama with disappointment, but when they look at Romney, they see everything that's wrong with corporate America.

The rap is that Romney — born to wealth and power as the son of a automobile executive and Michigan governor — made a career as a private equity manager, making millions with leveraged buyouts of companies, many of which were looted, outsourced overseas, sold, and in a number of cases bankrupted. Thousands of American workers lost their jobs at companies bought by Romney's firm Bain Capital, while Romney and his co-owners collected hundreds of millions of dollars in dividends and management fees. The proceeds from this, as evidenced by Romney's 2010 tax returns, are held in offshore accounts in Switzerland, Cayman Islands, Bermuda and other countries, and his net worth is estimated to be in the range of \$200 million.

On the campaign trail, Romney has repeatedly expressed hostility toward unions, support for union-busting state governors, and the desire to change federal law and federal policies to weaken or eliminate unions.

Romney supports a national right-to-work law and would like to see the federal Davis Bacon Act abolished. He supports privatizing Social Security and replacing Medicare with a private voucher system that would raise the eligibility age and force seniors to pay twice as much for their coverage.

"The fact is that the election in November poses two very different visions for America," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka says in a seven-minute video entitled, Meet Mr 1%. "One candidate embodies everything Wall Street and the 1 percent stand for, and wants to double down on the policies that broke our economy. The other candidate, Barack Obama, is a champion for the 99 percent."



Union-made Halloween candy

When those little ghosts and goblins come collecting on Halloween, make sure you have a full supply of union-made-in-America treats for them. Here's a brief list of choices of candy products made by members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union; snack foods by members of the United Food and Commercial Workers; or fruit and nuts from members of the United Farm Workers of America.

HERSHEY PRODUCTS: Hershey Kisses*, Hershey Milk Chocolate Bar*, Hershey Special Dark Bars, Hershey Milk with Almond Bars, Hershey Nuggets, Rolos, Hershey Kissables, Kit Kat Bars, Carmello Bar, Cadbury Fruit & Nut Bar, Cadbury Roast Almond Bar, Cadbury Dairy Milk Bar, Cadbury Royal Dark Bar, Hershey Symphony Bar with Toffee.

NECCO (New England Confectionery Co.): Mary Jane Peanut Butter Chews, NECCO Wafers, NeccoWafer Smoothies, NECCO Assorted Junior Wafers, Sky Bar, Clark Bar, Canada Mints, Candy Cupboard, Thin Mints, Clark Junior Laydown Bag, Mary Jane Laydown Bag, Haviland Mallow Cups, Necco Peanut Butter Kisses.

JUST BORN: Peeps, Mike & Ike, Hot Tamales, Peanut Chews, Jelly Beans.

JELLY BELLY'S CANDY CO.: Jelly Bellies (also made in nonunion plants in Chicago and Taiwan), Chocolate Dutch Mints, Chocolate Temptations, dimples, Goelitz Confections, Goelitz Gummi, Pet Rat, Pet Tarantula, Sweet Temptations, Candy Corn, Licorice, Malted Milk Balls Chocolate Coated Nuts, SoursSunkist Fruit Gel Slices.

AMERICAN LICORICE: Black & Red Vines, Strawberry Ropes.
SCONZA CANDIES: Jawbreakers, Chocolate Covered Cherries, Chocolates.

GHIRADELLI CHOCOLATES: All filled & non filled squares, non-pareils.

GIMBALS FINE CANDIES: JellyBeans, Cherry Hearts, Scotty Dogs

NESTLE: Nestlé Treasures, Laffy Taffy, Kathryn Beich specialty candy, Baby Ruth*, Butterfinger*, Pearson's Nips, Famous Old-Time Candies, Nestlé Crunch, Butterfinger, Crisp.

PEARSON'S CANDY CO.: Salted Nut Roll, Nut Goodie, Mint Patties, Bun Bars.

ANABELLES CANDY COMPANY: Boston Baked Beans, Jordan Almonds, Rocky Road, U-Nos, Look, Big Hunk, Abba-Zaba, Yogurt Nuts & Fruit

* Some products made in Mexico; check label for country of origin.

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ENDORSED BY: Northwest Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO
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Paid for by Friends of Charlotte Lehan