



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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The Skanner Newspaper, established in October 1975, is a weekly publication, published each Wednesday by IMM Publications Inc.,

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The Skanner is a member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association.

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Romney and Ryan: Anti-Union

Let's be clear: The Republican ticket for the presidency – Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan – have their eyes set on eliminating labor unions from the U.S. scene. No, they will not pass a law eliminating unions; they don't need to. The existing labor laws are so weak that they make it difficult for workers to join and form unions. Additionally, Romney and Ryan would make sure to appoint individuals to the National Labor Relations Board and the Federal Labor Relations Authority who are eager to undermine unions. Further, they could just turn a blind eye to employer attacks on unions.

Why? The answer is quite simple. As opposed to the Republican Party of the early 1970s that contained notables who accepted the right of workers to join and form unions, the situation has changed dramatically. The Republican Party has become deeply hostile to workers having any organizations. They like to portray unions as being contrary to productivity and growth. Actually, the facts are a bit more complicated. If you look at the construction industry, for instance, unionized construction is both more productive and of higher quality than non-union construction. Repeated studies have demonstrated this. Nevertheless,



TRANS AFRICA

Bill Fletcher Jr.

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people such as Romney and Ryan do not wish to let the facts stand in the way of their opinions.

Fundamentally, Romney and Ryan see in unions an obstacle to their objectives of increasing wealth for those at the top. Unions demand that workers receive fair compensation for the work that they provide. Unions demand that

working conditions be safe in order to protect the lives of the workforce, even if such protections cost the employer a little bit. Unions demand that workers have retirement income so that the latter years of workers' lives are not ones found in poverty, malnutrition and poor health. Most of the world recognizes that these demands are basic human rights. Unfortunately, the Romney/Ryan ticket looks at them as obstacles to profits.

suggestions that unions somehow get in the way of growth, it is fair to ask: "Whose growth?" When you hear attacks on unions for being greedy, it is fair to ask: "Are unions responsible for all of the wealth going to the upper 1 percent of the population?"

Blaming unions, as popular as this is in many Republican circles these days, has a very simple objective: to keep your eyes off of the prize, i.e., to keep you from focusing on who has the wealth and power.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a Senior Scholar with the Institute for Policy Studies, the immediate past president of TransAfrica Forum, the co-author of Solidarity Divided and the author of the new book introducing readers to unions entitled "They're Bankrupting Us" – And Twenty other myths about unions.

So, when you hear attacks on unions by Romney and Ryan, and

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Communities and Political Conventions

Far too often in modern elections, sound bites trump substance and voters are left wondering what the candidates really stand for. This is even more acute for issues important to the African American and civil rights communities. That is why, as we have done every presidential cycle for decades, the NAACP is traveling to the Republican National Convention and Democratic National Convention – to ensure that these issues are addressed by both major political parties.

This year the Republican Party meets in Tampa, Florida August 27-30, and the Democratic Party meets in Charlotte, North Carolina September 4-6. These days, voting on who will lead each party's ticket is largely a formality. But the delegates do have another important objective: choosing their party's policy platform for the next four years.

The NAACP will promote our policy objectives in Charlotte and Tampa at briefings, meetings and speeches. Each year we submit our policy recommendations to the respective policy bodies for each convention. We also meet with delegates and leaders from both parties and seek to find common ground on the challenges, needs and concerns of the communities we serve.

This year, for the first time, we will be guided by the five NAACP Game Changers. In the fall of 2011, the NAACP created a vision for the second century of the association. We chose five game changers, or issue advocacy constructs: Economic Sustainability; Education; Health; Public Safety and Criminal justice; and Voting

NAACP PRESIDENT CEO

Benjamin Todd Jealous

Rights and Political Participation.

All of our policy goals fall under one of these constructs. For Economic Sustainability, we will implore both parties to eliminate predatory lending and assist struggling homeowners. On Education, we will call for increased funding for HBCU's as well as financial aid for college students. One of our focus areas for Health is full funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and education. And in order to achieve a fairer criminal justice system, we are calling for a national commission to review the

That is why in Charlotte we will unveil our latest counterattack to voter suppression: rolling billboards that raise awareness about felony disenfranchisement.

Felony disenfranchisement –

In the past year, more states have passed more laws pushing more voters out of the ballot box than at any time since the rise of Jim Crow.

denying formerly incarcerated citizens the right to vote – is a method of voter suppression that dates back before the Jim Crow Era. It was one of many tools used

by state legislators to prevent full political participation by African Americans. Today, nearly six million voters are disenfranchised from felony disenfranchisement across 48 states and the District of Columbia, and more than one third of them are African American.

In Charlotte, the NAACP Voting Rights Initiative will launch a billboard campaign featuring faces of disenfranchised voters. The launch of the billboard will coincide with the launch of

RestoreTheirVotes.org, a page dedicated to felony disenfranchisement data, policy briefs, and information on former offenders who have lost their vote and their voice. The billboard also marks the beginning of a felony disenfranchisement billboard and awareness campaign that will continue through 2013 in key states and the District of Columbia.

As we approach November 6, our democracy is under attack from within. The NAACP is on the front line in every state of our union, and we will be visible during the convention as well. We will turn back the massive tide of voter suppression with an even greater tide of voter education, registration, activation and protection. And we will promote our vision of a more just and equal America.

Benjamin Todd Jealous is President and CEO of the NAACP

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nation's criminal justice laws – including the racial disparities in sentencing and racial profiling.

The final piece of our policy agenda, Voting Rights and Political Representation, is particularly relevant this year. We are living through the greatest wave of legislative assaults on voting rights in more than a century. In the past year, more states have passed more laws pushing more voters out of the ballot box than at any time since the rise of Jim Crow.

What do you think?

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