



A Union of Professionals

2008 U.S. Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Senator Chris Dodd

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Today, more than 46 million students attend our nation's public schools. The teachers, paraprofessionals and other school employees who work with these students each day care deeply about the quality of our public schools and the education their students receive.

1. What do you believe are the opportunities and challenges facing public education, and how would your administration deal with each?

Over fifty years ago, *Brown v Board of Education* struck down segregation in law. Over fifty years later, we know that just because there is no segregation in law does not mean that it does not persist. Today, our education system remains largely separate and unequal. All too often, whether an American child is taught by a high quality teacher, has access to the best courses and instructional materials, goes to school in a new, modern building, and otherwise benefits from educational resources that have been shown to be essential to a quality education, depends on where that child's family can afford to live. This is unacceptable. America's leadership, economic and national security rest on our commitment to educate and prepare all of our youth to succeed in the global economy. When we as a nation find the will to provide a high quality, world class education for every child, regardless of where they live or how wealthy their community is, the opportunities before us as a nation will be endless

2. What policies would you support to help close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students?

The greatest challenge our public schools face is the closing of the achievement gap. The way to do this is to ensure that every child in this country has access to the fundamentals of learning – high quality early care and preschool, challenging and engaging curriculum, safe and modern school buildings, access to an *affordable* college education and, of course, caring and competent teachers. My education plan will provide these things. It will provide students with the resources they need to achieve. Budgets in this country are about priorities and I can think of no greater priority than education. Under my plan, students will have access to a high quality education from early care to

preschool to college. Every child will graduate from high school -- college and workforce ready. And once graduated, every student who graduates from high school under a Dodd Administration and wants to go to college, will be able to afford to.

3. What is your view of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)? What changes, if any, would you make to the law and why? What provisions would you retain and why?

While I believe in the underlying principles of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), I also believe that it needs to be fundamentally reformed. Aside from full funding, my number one priority for reauthorization is inclusion of multiple measures in the accountability calculations. I am particularly interested in the inclusion of growth models. To date, I am one of the few members of Congress, and the only Democratic Senator on the HELP Committee, to offer a bill that makes real changes to the NCLB accountability system. In fact, three years ago when I first introduced the No Child Left Behind Reform Act with AFT's support, I was one of the only members talking about the need for real NCLB reform.

Under current law, schools are held accountable for student achievement based on how their students perform on annual tests. Unfortunately, test scores alone may not be an adequate or accurate measure of student achievement. Additional measures such as an individual student's rate of improvement may be better yardsticks to gauge whether students are making adequate yearly progress towards proficiency. While technically NCLB allows for measures other than test scores to be considered, it does not give schools "credit" for doing well on them. I believe this is fundamentally unfair. I believe schools should be allowed to use added academic measures in a way that gives them credit for performing well on them. We must provide states with the flexibility to use multiple measures to calculate student achievement and provide them with the resources needed to put systems in place that will give an accurate picture of academic progress.

Second, I believe it is essential for NCLB to shift from a system that penalizes schools that are identified as in need of improvement to one that *invests* in schools that are identified in need of improvement. If we truly believe in our public schools, we must stop at nothing to improve them. Currently, as many as 9,000 schools have been identified as needing improvement, corrective action or restructuring under NCLB. The law requires states to support school improvement efforts but has done very little in providing the resources or guidance as to how these improvements should be attained. Creating and funding a system that puts proven supports in place at the state and district levels is essential in the upcoming reauthorization. Schools in need of improvement should see increases in resources and technical assistance – not

decreases. Under no circumstances should public schools be made to feel that they are being left behind.

Other areas of improvement include: strengthening supplemental services provisions to ensure that highly qualified teachers are on-site to offer support and that providers are fully covered by federal civil rights laws; giving schools additional time to implement reforms before they move up the accountability timeline; allowing schools to target school choice and supplemental services to the students that actually demonstrate the need for them; codifying current flexibility as it relates to special education and English language learners and providing significant resources to improve assessments in these areas; and, increasing flexibility for meeting the highly qualified teacher requirements. I also believe it is essential for this reauthorization to make a special effort to attract and retain high quality teachers to all schools, but especially to those identified as in need of improvement.

I would also like to point out some of the things that I will oppose during reauthorization. I oppose the inclusion of private school vouchers at any point in the reauthorization process. I would oppose the addition of subject areas to the current school accountability calculation. I oppose a mandatory national test. I oppose additional requirements to the highly qualified teacher definition. And, I oppose any attempts to undermine collective bargaining.

As I have said on numerous occasions in the past, resources without reforms are a waste of money. By the same token, reforms without resources are a false promise – a false promise that has left students and their teachers grappling with new burdens and little help to bear them. Budgets are about priorities and I can think of no greater priority than education. As president, I will prioritize full funding of No Child Left Behind.

I believe that we have a responsibility to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act in a manner that will require it to not only be implemented in a fair and reasonable manner but in a way that preserves the basic tenets of the law – providing a high quality education for all students and closing the achievement gap across demographic and socioeconomic lines. I stand by the commitment to leave no child behind and have been on record for leading the fight for real reforms in a way that others have not.

4. What role do you think early-childhood education should play in the overall approach to children's education?

Research indicates that half of the achievement gap between low-income students and their more wealthy peers exists long before they even start school. Research also shows that high-quality early childhood education designed to foster young children's social, emotional, and cognitive development can help reduce this deficit. One study estimates that every dollar spent on high-quality

preschool saves the public seven dollars down the line. For these reasons, the federal government must begin to more heavily invest in the earliest years of life. I've spent my career strengthening Head Start and fighting to increase affordable and quality child care because prioritizing early childhood development is a must. As president, I will leverage public and private dollars to ensure the availability of high quality, affordable early education to all parents and guarantee universal preschool.

5. A growing number of students leave college with overwhelming debt from student loans. This burden, coupled with escalating tuition and fees, makes access to higher education increasingly difficult for many students and their families. What is the role of the federal government in ensuring that higher education is affordable and accessible?

Higher education is the key not only to the economic security of individuals, but to the global competitiveness of our nation as a whole. And yet, American families are increasingly worried about their children's prospects for college, specifically as it relates to the cost of tuition. As President, I would bolster the federal government's commitment to higher education by raising the Pell grant, ensuring students get competitive rates on student loans, expanding loan forgiveness for public sector employees so their career choices are not limited by unforgiving debt, and capping the percentage of income that one must pay towards one's student loans to ensure that individuals are not saddled with unmanageable payments.

Recognizing that fewer and fewer of today's college students are "traditional," I would also provide additional dollars to expand programs like the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS), a program I created, which provides affordable, high-quality child care to mothers and fathers going to school. Parents should be able to attend college without worrying about how and if they will be able to find and afford high quality daycare while they are at school.

Ensuring that every student has access to college, however, goes beyond college costs. Not only do we have to work to ensure that our students can afford college, the federal government must do all it can to ensure that students are college-ready upon high school graduation. This can be achieved by holding students to high expectations throughout their elementary and secondary schooling and ensuring that they and their teachers are given the resources they need to achieve this. The entire education system PreK-16 must be considered together.

As President, I would also take an active role in engaging leaders in higher education in a meaningful conversation about the cost of tuition. Again, no

college-ready student with dreams of a higher education should be denied those dreams because of the skyrocketing cost of tuition.

6. What actions do you think the federal government should take to support the renovation and modernization of our nation's public school buildings?

As I said earlier, America's leadership, economic and national security rest on our commitment to educate and prepare all of our youth to succeed in the global economy. This will require a world class education provided in world class schools – modern buildings with first-rate science labs, first-rate technology, space for student-led activities and buildings that are environmentally safe and sound. Safe and modern buildings are one of the fundamentals of learning. Just as I have supported school construction funds in Congress, I will support school construction and renovation funds as President. I will also ensure that all students, even those in our most rural communities, have access to broadband as a means to supplement their learning.

7. What are your views on the privatizing and contracting out of public services, including private school vouchers?

I am vehemently opposed to vouchers. As President, I will invest public dollars in public schools.

Healthcare is an issue that touches all of our lives. Today, *46 million Americans—including more than 8 million children—have no health insurance.* Increasingly, employers are less likely and less willing to provide healthcare coverage for their employees and retirees. Older Americans are paying a larger percentage of their income for healthcare than they did before Medicare was created. And healthcare workers are feeling increasingly overworked and insufficiently supported.

8. As president, what would you do to control skyrocketing healthcare costs while ensuring that all Americans—especially children and the elderly— have access to high-quality healthcare?

I believe that the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that every American receives affordable, quality medical care and that universal health coverage can be achieved through universal responsibility. We need a system where everybody is covered and where every person and every business contributes based on their ability to pay.

As President, I will call on the federal government to create a health insurance marketplace based on, and parallel to, the Federal Employees Health Benefit

Plan (FEHB). Every employer and individual will be given the chance to go to the marketplace to purchase high-quality, affordable health care or, if they wish, keep their existing insurance arrangements. No one will be forced into the marketplace, and individuals, as well as businesses, will contribute based on their ability to pay.

By putting special emphasis on prevention so we can treat illnesses like asthma and diabetes before they require a trip to the emergency room, and by investing in technology and data collection for better care and better efficiencies, we can better serve *all* populations of patients. Savings in better care and better efficiencies, will finance new coverage. The purchasing power of millions of Americans under one plan will drive costs down for consumers.

9. Many licensed healthcare professionals, particularly RNs, are leaving hospital service because of difficult working conditions, including excessive and unsafe workloads, understaffing and mandatory overtime. What would you do to address these problems and to improve recruitment and retention of nurses and other healthcare professionals?

Today, nurses and licensed health care professionals are more essential to the medical community and the nation than ever before – and will surely be a critical component of any solution to our current health care crisis. Given the stakes and the integral role nurses play in our health care system, the current administration ought to be doing everything in its power to empower and reward the nursing community for its remarkable work.

As President, I would protect healthcare funding and uphold patient care standards. I would also ensure that all health care professionals have the same protections as other workers. I believe that by improving working conditions for health care workers, the retention rate of these workers will improve and more people will be encouraged to enter this satisfying and important field.

10. We've recently seen several initiatives designed to move health insurance coverage away from an employer-based model. Do you agree with that direction? If so, what would you propose as an alternative to the current system for covering working adults?

Based on universal responsibility, the Dodd plan allows everyone - every business, every family, and every individual – to get the same health insurance as federal employees through an insurance marketplace. No one will be forced into the marketplace, and individuals, as well as businesses, will contribute based on their ability to pay. The Dodd plan is an American plan because individuals receive the same benefits and choices no matter where they live. Enrollment is automatic guaranteeing true universal coverage and individuals can keep their existing insurance arrangements if they choose.

An administration's economic policy has far-reaching implications for the United States and the world. It also says a great deal about a president's priorities and general philosophy regarding how the federal government should relate to its citizens.

11. What are your priorities for the economy? How would your economic plan help restore funding for education, healthcare, transportation, public safety and many other services provided to our citizens?

As President, I will prioritize a balanced budget that provides for the well-being of all Americans. The \$2 billion per week we are spending on the war in Iraq is resulting in unsustainable federal budget deficits that will only worsen as the baby boom generation begins to retire. With the money we are using to fund this ill-conceived war, we could be funding programs and services for our citizens – universal preschool for every American child, universal healthcare for every American regardless of age, additional mass transit, access to first-rate first-responders, and further investments in new economies to create new jobs. These are the types of services a Dodd budget will prioritize.

My Administration will also support tax cuts that benefit the middle class. Tax cuts for millionaires further an already growing trend of income inequity and take away valuable resources we have to fund education, health care and other services. I believe that everyone should pay their fair share for the roads we drive on, the police and firefighters we rely on to protect us, and the schools our children attend. I will provide tax relief for working Americans so that they do not disproportionately shoulder the burden of others.

12. As president, what would you do to: (a) prevent employers from intimidating and harassing workers who support union representation, (b) ensure that workers are free to organize and bargain in the workplace and (c) protect the rights of American workers?

If we are to have any hope of meeting the challenges of the 21st century, it will begin with a vibrant labor movement fighting for fair wages, worker protections and security in retirement. I believe that the freedom to form unions is one of our most fundamental rights. For this reason I am a proud co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act. In addition, I have authored the RESPECT Act, which would reverse a series of decisions from the National Labor Relations Board that unfairly expanded the definition of a “supervisor” so that many workers would be denied the right to join a union. I believe that there is a direct connection between the decline of union membership and the growing gap between the rich and poor in this country. The Employee Free Choice Act and the RESPECT Act will improve the workplace by creating an atmosphere where union representation and collective bargaining are secure. Collective

bargaining and union membership are, in my opinion, the best ways to preserve and maintain the wages necessary to sustain a vibrant middle class.

13. What would your administration do to extend pension coverage to all employees and to guarantee that both private and public employees' hard-earned pensions are protected?

Security in retirement is one of our most fundamental values as Americans. After a lifetime of hard work and paying taxes, seniors deserve the dignity of a secure retirement. That means secure pensions and a strong Social Security.

America needs a President who would never, under any circumstances, stand by as workers' retirement savings are used to pay for their employers' mistakes. Pension funds should be off-limits to anyone but those who earned them. Having helped author the Sarbanes-Oxley Act so that families could feel more confident that their investments are secure, I understand what it means to guarantee that every penny people put into their retirement comes back to them when they retire.

Workers should be able to rely on the retirement security they were promised when they faithfully contributed to their pension plans. As President, I will prevent employers from using workers' savings to pay for their mistakes and strengthen federal oversight of corporate behavior. America's retirees deserve a President with the experience to ensure a promise made is a promise kept.

14. What is your strategy for sustaining and strengthening Social Security and Medicare?

After a lifetime of hard work and paying taxes, seniors deserve secure pensions and a strong Social Security. For 70 years, America has led the way in providing a secure retirement for our citizens. For 26 years, I have been proud to be part of that fight – protecting Social Security and insisting on fiscal responsibility that ensures its long-term health. While we may need to make some reforms to Social Security, I will remain a vocal opponent of an effort to privatize the program. Americans have every right to rely on Social Security, and Medicare, in their retirement.

Labor unions have played and continue to play an important role in the social and economic health of our country. AFT members are interested in knowing your views on the role of labor unions.

15. As president, what would you do to remedy the National Labor Relations Board's October 2006 ruling in the *Kentucky River* cases that greatly expands the definition of "supervisor" and threatens to deny the right of workers to

union protection and impede their ability to advocate for quality services without fear of reprisal?

I am proud to be the author of the Re-empowerment of Skilled and Professional Employees and Construction Tradeworkers (RESPECT) Act, an act that would amend the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to modify the definition of supervisor in order to ensure that no employee is unjustly denied his or her right to join a labor union. At a time when the National Labor Relations Board is so clearly toothless and ineffectual when it comes to protecting workers' rights to organize, the RESPECT Act will ensure that more workers will be able to unionize and collectively bargain for the wages and working conditions that they rightly deserve. It is an idea whose time has come. As President, I will make passage of this legislation a priority.

16. What role do you think unions should play in shaping the economy? In government? In education? In healthcare?

I strongly believe unions play a critical role in American society. If we are to have any hope of meeting the challenges of the 21st century, it will start with a vibrant labor movement fighting for fair wages and worker protections. Unions can play important roles in shaping the economy, in the government, in education, and in health care. Representing the interests of working Americans means knowing what works for them and their families in all of these sectors capacities. Corporations have people that represent them at every level of the process. I believe families deserve the same representation, something the unions can and do provide.

17. More than 8 million public employees in 25 states currently have no OSHA protection or entitlement to a safe and healthful workplace. Do you support universal OSHA coverage for all public employees?

I strongly support OSHA coverage for all public employees. As President, I will promote efforts to enhance safety in the workplace and implement regulations that all businesses can understand and comply with. I will also protect workers who have been injured on the job from unfair retaliation or loss of benefits of any kind.

18. It is the public policy of the federal government to encourage and promote collective bargaining through the National Labor Relations Act, as set forth in the act's preamble. Thirty-two states have policies that apply similar principles to their public employees. What would your administration do to guarantee these same rights to public employees in the other states?

I will do all within my power as president to bring to the remaining 18 states that do not currently give their public employees the right to form

or join unions the protections guaranteed by the 32 states that have worked to give their workers union rights and protections.

In survey after survey, Americans identify the war in Iraq as one of the issues with which they are most concerned.

19. What is your proposal for dealing with the conflict in Iraq?

Our military involvement in Iraq's civil war has not made America more secure, it has made America less secure. We've gone from leading the world to being isolated *from* the world. This has not made us stronger – but weaker. Our men and women in uniform have performed heroically – it is the policy that has failed.

There's only one way to responsibly end this war. And that's to set a firm deadline tied to funding. Some have proposed deauthorizing the war – but we deauthorized the Vietnam War in 1971 and it continued for another 4 years. We can't wait until 2009. We need the conviction to stand up to this president – now. That is why I have been fighting in the U.S. Senate to end our involvement in Iraq. And that is why in the coming weeks, I will again be offering legislation to do 3 simple but critical things. First, immediately begin redeploying our troops. Second, provide full funding to complete the redeployment by March 2008 – but no longer than that. And third, place benchmarks on the Administration to ensure that they comply with the law.

In Conclusion

20. What do you think this nation's priorities should be during the next decade? How would your presidency advance those priorities?

Remaining competitive in the global economy must be this nation's number one priority for the next decade. Advancing that goal will require a President who understands, values, and promotes a superior education system. Today, and in the coming generations, our children will be competing with children from all over the globe. We owe it to them to ensure that they are prepared at every level and in every subject area. As President, I will prioritize my budget to devote the necessary resources to raising the quality of *all* of our schools. America's leadership, economic, and national security rest on our commitment to educate and prepare our youth to succeed in the global economy.