



A Union of Professionals

2008 U.S. Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton

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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?

I have been working to improve our schools for thirty-five years. Too many children, particularly poor children, start off and fall farther behind as they grow up. Only half of students in low-income communities graduate from high school and of those students living in poverty who do graduate from high school, on average they read at an 8th grade level. At the same time, we are facing an increasingly economically competitive world and we have to do a better job of preparing our young people to succeed in the global economy.

Throughout my career I have worked to ensure that every child reaches his or her potential, and I know a quality education is essential to reach that goal. When I was First Lady of Arkansas, I chaired the Arkansas Educational Standards Commission where I worked to raise standards for Arkansas' schools, increase teacher salaries, and lower class size. I have continued in this effort as First Lady of the United States and as a Senator, working throughout my career to provide dedicated resources and support to teachers and to recruit, support, and retain more outstanding teachers. We need to attract a whole new generation to teaching because there is nothing more critical to improving our schools than quality teachers.

As President, I will reform and fully fund No Child Left Behind in order to provide schools and teachers with the resources necessary to make improvements. I will work to reduce the teaching to the test and bring back a well rounded curriculum, and change the one size fits all approach to addressing the challenges facing struggling schools. I will also continue to focus on aggressively supporting efforts to recruit and retain more thousands of more outstanding teachers and school leaders, especially in schools with the greatest needs. And I will provide pre-kindergarten for all four year olds. We need to invest in children when they are very young in order to give them the best chance to

succeed.

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

I will start by investing in young children and ensuring that every child starts school ready to learn. That is why I have proposed to spend \$10 billion providing pre-kindergarten for all children from low income and non-English speaking households. Research shows that one half of the achievement gap evident at the end of high school is evident before children start school. By investing early, I believe we can help get every child off on equal footing. I will also increase funding for Head Start and Early Head Start, which I helped to create when I was First Lady.

I will also ensure that No Child Left Behind finally lives up to its promise of helping every child obtain a high quality education that allows them to fulfill their potential. As President, I will provide the funding that was promised in the law. And I will invest in our teachers—the most important people in our schools—by providing more support, professional growth opportunities, and pay. Schools in low-income urban and rural communities have the most difficult time attracting and retaining teachers yet they have the greatest need for talented staff. I will work to create stronger incentives for the best teachers to work in the areas where they are needed the most. I'll also invest in proven practices for turning around struggling schools, such as efforts to increase parental involvement, instilling a culture of discipline and extended learning time. Parents are their children's first teacher and we need more parental involvement in schools.

I will also continue to work to send a strong message to all young children that college is attainable. I was proud to help create GEAR Up, which helps foster a college-going culture in low-income communities. I am also a strong supporter of the TRIO program, which also gives children the information and guidance they need to succeed in college. I believe we have to continue to expand access to information, support, and encouragement so that more students, particularly those from low-income communities, see college in their future.

In addition, I will increase financial aid and reform the student loan system to increase access to help everyone who wants to go to college to get there. I have proposed to increase the maximum Pell Grant to \$11,500, worked to decrease the student loan interest rate, proposed a Student Borrower's Bill of Rights to protect students from predatory lending practices, and introduced legislation to provide greater support for non-traditional students those who are the first in their family to attend college, are working full time or raising children.

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?

When the No Child Left Behind Act was enacted, I viewed it as a historic promise between the federal government and educators. Schools would be held to higher standards than ever before and the government would make a record investment in those schools so they could meet the new expectations.

Unfortunately, that promise has largely been broken because NCLB has been under funded by \$57 billion and schools have struggled to meet the mandates imposed by the law without the resources that were promised.

First, I want to create a system that rewards schools that make progress towards the proficiency goals. I support growth models, which measure the progress of every child. I would also like to find ways to invest in better testing methods—tests that assess higher level skills like critical thinking. Improving state assessments, particularly for students with disabilities and English language learners, will take a significant investment, and I will make this a priority.

Second, I believe the one-size fits all approach to fixing troubled schools is problematic. We are spending \$500 million on supplemental services even though the instruction is not necessarily aligned to a school's curriculum and the providers are not necessarily held accountable for demonstrating that they are impacting measurable results. I strongly believe educators and school leaders need to have substantial input into efforts to turn around struggling schools and that schools should have more flexibility in determining the right solutions for addressing the problems they face.

I am also concerned about the narrowing of the curricula that I am hearing about in local communities. Some schools have eliminated physical education others are cutting back on social studies, science, art, and music. I think we have to do more in NCLB to ensure that children receive a well-rounded education.

Finally, I believe we need to start educating children earlier. I have proposed universal access to pre-kindergarten because every child, regardless of parental income, deserves access to high-quality pre-K.

A large and growing body of research has clearly demonstrated that pre-K yields substantial long-term effects, including better academic outcomes, lower dropout rates, and higher rates of self-sufficiency in the adult years. I think any discussion of school reform must include pre-kindergarten.

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

According to Nobel Laureate James Heckman of the University of Chicago, one half of the black-white achievement gap present at the end of high school is

evident before children start school. I believe we can start to close the achievement gap by investing in programs that increase children's school readiness and academic preparation while making it easier for parents to balance their responsibilities at work with their responsibilities to their children. We know children's brains develop more rapidly at this time in their lives than at any other and that high quality interventions make a real difference in the outcomes of children from low-income families. High quality preschool has been shown to improve academic and behavioral outcomes, and reduce the rate of enrollment in special education and the number of children who drop out of school. Yet, Head Start serves less than half of all eligible children and state-funded preschools serve less than 20 percent of four year olds.

I have been highlighting the importance of early childhood education for about thirty-five years. More than twenty years ago, I helped bring the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters Program (HIPPY) to Arkansas. As First Lady, I hosted the first White House conference on early learning and the brain, championed the program "Prescription for Reading," in which pediatricians provided free books for new mothers to read to their infants as their brains were rapidly developing, and spearheaded the Administration's work to create Early Head Start, which reaches children from birth to age three throughout country. As Senator, I have sponsored the *Education Begins at Home Act*, which expands the Parents as Teachers program and other quality programs of early childhood home visitation. I recently helped write the Senate version of the Head Start reauthorization bill, which increases funding for the program, doubles Early Head Start, and strengthens teachers' skills and training. The Senate passage of this bill is a victory for our neediest children and the Head Start community that serves them.

As President, I will continue the work I have begun as First Lady and in the Senate to expand early childhood and parent education programs. I have proposed a \$10 billion plan to expand access to the more than 3 million 4-year-olds who are not enrolled in state pre-kindergarten programs by providing states with matching funds to devise their own programs and requiring that qualified teachers are in each classroom. Studies show that universal pre-kindergarten programs pay for themselves after nine years and produce a growing annual return in the years beyond. I will also increase funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant, Head Start, and Early Head Start; and continue to work to raise the quality of child care, especially in low income communities.

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 to opportunity, and I believe we need to ensure college is affordable for all Americans, not just a few. A college degree provides a return

of more than \$1 million over the course of one's lifetime and provides a gateway to the middle class. Yet the cost of college has more than tripled over the last twenty years, and today, only one in five students from a low income community makes it to college. Many students who do graduate from college have the equivalent of a mortgage in student debt, which limits their career choices. When talented students choose not to attend college because they can't afford it or are scared off by the cost, our country loses out. I believe we can do better, and that the federal government has an important role to play in opening the door to college wider.

Throughout my career, I have worked to make college affordable and accessible for anyone who wants to go. I have proposed increasing the maximum Pell Grant to \$11,500, lowering interest rates on student loans, expanding work-study and other forms of campus-based aid, and reining in the growing cost of college. I also proposed the Student Borrower's Bill of Rights, which ensures that student borrowers will have reasonable monthly payments and protects them against unscrupulous lenders. And I sponsored the *Non-Traditional Student Success Act* to increase the availability of financial aid, reward schools that create class schedules accommodating these students, provide further incentives to schools that offer students child-care services, and provide programs for students who face social and cultural challenges in their quest for higher education. Our economic competitiveness depends upon us making college affordable and accessible, and that means bringing down the cost. And I was proud to recently help push through a new program to forgive direct loans for teachers and other people working in public service who are earning \$65,000 or less.

During my husband's Administration I was proud to support the creation of the Direct Loan program, which costs taxpayers significantly less than the private loan program. I also worked to help create GEAR Up, which helps foster a college-going culture in low-income communities. As President, I am committed to make college more affordable and accessible for everyone who wants to attend.

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

The fact that some children sit in crumbling schools today is tragic. Many older school buildings are in a dangerous state of disrepair and have seriously outdated facilities. Many do not even have the proper wiring for computer networks. While we work to give students the academic tools they need to compete in the 21st century, we must also upgrade school facilities to give students a learning environment conducive to success. According to a study by the National Center for Education Statistics, our nation's schools need more than \$127 billion to meet their renovation and construction needs.

I introduced the *Investing for Tomorrow's Schools Act* to create an innovative funding source for constructing and renovating our schools. This legislation would establish the State Infrastructure Banks (SIBs) —revolving loan funds that provide a continuous source of funding for school construction and renovation projects—and provide them with seed money. States would use these banks to make loans that can be used to build schools and as they repay the loans, the money will be lent out to additional schools needing the funds. This construct has worked effectively with water and other public infrastructure projects. I was also an original co-sponsor of the *America's Better Classrooms Act*, a bill that would provide \$2.5 billion in bonding authority to New York State and more to other states around the country.

I am also committed to eliminating environmental hazards in schools. As Senator, I created the Healthy, High Performance Schools program to provide resources to make our schools more energy efficient and remove lead, mold, and other environmental hazards that impair children's cognitive growth and development. I also successfully fought for a provision to require the Department of Education to do a study on the impact of environmental factors on children's growth and development. The Department of Education did that study and it concluded that exposure to lead, mold, and other environmental toxins can be really damaging to growing children.

As President, I will continue to fight to provide our students with an academic environment that will prepare them for the 21st century.

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

I strongly oppose voucher schemes because they divert precious resources away from financially strapped public schools to private schools that are not subject to the same accountability standards or teacher quality standards. It would be harmful to our democracy if we dismantled our public school system through vouchers, and there is no evidence that doing so would improve outcomes for children. We recently learned from a Department of Education study that the students using vouchers in D.C. to attend private schools did no better on math and reading tests than their counterparts in public schools. And there are many examples of public schools in low income communities that are doing great work against all odds. I believe we should support these schools not undermine them with vouchers.

I also have broader concerns about the significant increase in privatizing public services that has occurred over the past six years. The Bush Administration has steadily outsourced critical government functions to private companies, adding more than 2.4 million private contractors to the federal payroll. Now we are paying the price through out of control deficits and diminished confidence in the federal government. Today, government contractors have essentially become yet another special interest, with the top 20 contracting firms spending nearly \$300

million since 2000 to lobby the government for more business to leave the government and come to them.

When I am President, I will clean up our contracting system by significantly reducing the number of contractors and providing transparency in the process. I have proposed cutting at least 500,000 federal contractors and save approximately \$10-\$18 billion a year in the process. I will put an end to no-bid contracts. I will also ensure that every government agency publishes its budgets online to ensure that the public knows of any public service that is contracted out to private companies opening these contracts to scrutiny.

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?

Since day one of my campaign I've spoken about guaranteeing every American affordable health care, and I will achieve that goal as President. I've offered three principles that will guide my work: cost, quality, and coverage.

Affordable health coverage for all is a moral issue, not just an economic one. And I believe it is an urgent national priority that will be a priority of my Presidency. As President, I will ensure that the 45 million Americans, including nine million children, who currently don't have health care coverage, are able to obtain it. I believe that in order to achieve universal health care coverage, we first need to fix our broken system by changing the way we spend money. That means modernizing our health care technology infrastructure, creating a system for wellness instead of one for sickness, transforming the care of the chronically ill, constraining the cost of prescription drugs and managed care, implementing common sense malpractice reforms, and more.

I also believe we could spend the money in the system much more wisely. We currently spend \$2 trillion annually on health care, more than any other country in the world, without seeing good results. I have proposed a 7-point plan that would reduce health care costs by \$120 billion a year. My plan would create a groundbreaking national prevention initiative to reduce the incidence of such diseases as diabetes and cancer; institute a "paperless" health information technology system; transform care of today's chronically ill population to improve outcomes; constrain excess prescription drug and managed care

expenditures; and put in place common-sense medical malpractice reforms. The plan would also focus on using more computer technology; coordinating and streamlining the care of chronically ill patients; offering individuals and small businesses market access to larger insurance pools; improving the quality of care through a best practices institute; getting prescription drugs costs under control; and reforming medical malpractice.

I've spent a long time on the problem of coverage, and no one has more scars than me from this fight. I know from these battles that we have to build consensus to get universal coverage. This is not just a question of ideas, but of political will. I'm going to reach out, talk to the American people, and work with Congress to get the job done. As President, I'll fight for universal coverage so that every American is secure in knowing that they won't lose coverage because they lose a job.

As First Lady, I am proud to have initiated the State Children's Health Insurance Plan, which provides coverage for six million children. This was the single largest expansion of health insurance in a generation. As a Senator, I am fighting to provide guaranteed, affordable, quality health care for all children, and leading the charge to modernize our healthcare technology in order to reduce medical errors and lower the cost of care. As President, I will enact a comprehensive plan for health care coverage for all Americans. I understand the challenges facing our health care system and am ready to lead our country to universal coverage.

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?

Nurses are the backbone of our health care system. They and other health care professionals perform one of the most important functions in our society. The best medical facility in the world won't help someone heal without competent, caring practitioners. Yet they often face difficult work conditions—long, demanding hours, and mandatory overtime. As a result, our country is facing a nurse shortage, especially in low income and rural areas where the pay tends to be lower, the demands even greater, and the working conditions more onerous.

As Senator, I introduced the *Nursing Retention and Quality of Care Act*, which increases federal funding for nurse training programs, establishes a National Nurse Service Corps to pay for nursing education for those students who agree to work in facilities with staff shortages, and sponsors advertisements to promote nursing careers. I also recently proposed the *Nursing Education and Quality of Healthcare Act*, which increases the nurse workforce in rural areas,

expands the number of nurse faculty, and integrates patient safety and quality practices into nursing education. I have supported and will continue to support loan forgiveness and other initiatives that better equip hard to serve communities in recruiting and retaining a high quality workforce. As President, I will work to enact both of these bills into law and to seek out additional innovative strategy to address this challenge, which affects each of us when we or our loved ones are most vulnerable. I will also continue to work to improve workplace conditions by eliminating mandatory overtime and increasing the number of nurses on duty so that their jobs can be more manageable.

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?

In our globalized economy, American companies are facing a harder road to hoe because we have skyrocketing health care costs that they primarily finance. In other industrialized countries, costs are dispersed. For every car GM sells, \$1500 goes toward the cost of providing health coverage to its employees. Toyota, on the other hand, spends only \$300 per car on health insurance. So, I believe the employer based system has some real problems. But some of these problems stem from skyrocketing increases in health care costs. We currently spend \$2 trillion annually on health care, more than any other country in the world, without seeing the results we need. I have proposed a seven point plan that would reduce health care costs by \$120 billion a year. My plan would: create a groundbreaking national prevention initiative to reduce the incidence of such diseases as diabetes and cancer; institute a "paperless" health information technology system; transform care of today's chronically ill population to improve outcomes; constrain excess prescription drug and managed care expenditures; and put in place common-sense medical malpractice reforms. The plan would also focus on using more computer technology; coordinating and streamlining the care of chronically ill patients; offering individuals and small businesses market access to larger insurance pools; improving the quality of care through a best practices institute; getting prescription drugs costs under control; and reforming medical malpractice.

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?

I believe that one of the most crucial jobs of the next President is to define a new

vision of economic fairness and prosperity for the 21st century, a vision for how we ensure greater opportunity for our next generation, and then to outline and implement a strategy. I want to focus on shared prosperity. Therefore, I've proposed a new progressive plan to restore that American dream and to give all Americans the chance to compete and prosper in the global economy. I will roll back the tax cuts on the wealthiest Americans and redirect those funds to strengthening our middle class. I will realign our tax and budgetary priorities to provide relief for middle-class families and tax incentives to encourage the creation of good jobs. And I will end the tax loopholes and incentives that encourage the movement of production and jobs overseas. I will tie the minimum wage to Congressional pay increases because I believe that if Members of Congress deserve an increase in their salary, the hard working men and women at the lower end of the income distribution do as well.

I will make guaranteed, high quality health care coverage a top priority, which will benefit workers as well as businesses that compete in the global marketplace. I will fully fund the No Child Left Behind Act, and invest in recruiting and supporting teachers—the backbone of our educational system. I will dedicate the necessary resources to protecting Social Security and Medicare.

And finally, I will also create a domestic alternative energy industry in order to address global warming and create hundreds of thousands of good jobs here at home. Unions are vital to each and every one of these efforts, and I look forward to working with organized labor to advocate for and implement an agenda that places working people front and center.

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?

One of my top priorities will be to ensure that we have a strong National Labor Relations Board. President Bush has undermined this important board by stacking it with anti-union members who have denied coverage to large groups of workers and undermined workers' basic human rights. I will reverse course and appoint pro-worker members who will use their authority to strengthen worker protections.

In addition, I am an original co-sponsor of the *Employee Free Choice Act*, which will level the playing field between workers and employers and ensure that employees will not be unfairly punished by their employers for attempting to unionize. EFCA would create an atmosphere where workers would be able to choose a union free from employer coercion by strengthening penalties for employer coercion when employees are attempting to organize, encouraging mediation and arbitration for first-contract disputes and allowing employees to form unions by signing cards authorizing union representation. I am committed to ensuring that workers are able to organize a union without

coercion or intimidation, and also that federal contractors that benefit from taxpayer dollars demonstrate fairness towards their employees. The card check process, which requires majority sign-up, is the most effective way to protect employees' freedom to choose to form a union.

The right to organize is one of our most fundamental human rights. I believe that unions are critical to a strong American middle class. We need to restore a basic bargain in our country—that if you work hard, you can have a chance at the American dream, and unions are critical to that. As President, my agenda will be to make collective bargaining fair and free workers to organize without undue corporate interference.

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?

We owe it to our seniors and our aging workers to ensure that they can live and retire in dignity. That's why I have fought in the Senate to safeguard the retirement plans of hard-working Americans.

I believe it is critical that we continue to protect the defined benefit plans that provide secure retirement benefits for tens of millions of workers. I have supported legislation to require that companies fund 100% of their defined benefit pension obligations. This legislation, which is now law, is called the *Pension Protection Act*. It established new minimum funding standards for employers with defined benefit pension plans. Before the bill, companies were only required to fund 90% of their anticipated future pension obligations, and in practice, companies funded far less because of a number of loopholes. Now companies with defined benefit plans are required to fund 100% of their future obligations.

We should also take a close look at the growing practice of companies entering into bankruptcy as a tactical maneuver simply so that they can shed their pension and other obligations to workers. I led an effort in the Senate to help save the pensions of the 60,000 autoworkers and retirees affected by the Delphi Corporation's bankruptcy last year. I also pushed the Labor Department to investigate the Dresser-Rand employees who lost their pensions when Halliburton sold their stake in the company.

Moving forward, I think we need to take a new, more expansive approach to retirement savings in America. I believe we should require every employer to open a retirement account for every worker and allow for full portability, so workers can take their pensions with them when they change jobs. I also think employees deserve advice and guidance to allow them to invest wisely.

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

Social Security is a solemn promise to our seniors, and I was proud to fight Bush's plan to put it at risk through privatization. I opposed the President's scheme because it would have diverted trillions of dollars from the Social Security system, and put seniors' retirement security at risk by subjecting Social Security funds to the whim of the market.

Social Security is a challenge we must solve over time, not a crisis that calls for drastic measures now. Social Security will be able to pay full benefits until 2041. The first step to solving this challenge is to get our fiscal house in order. In 1998, the Clinton Administration balanced the budget. By 2000, the country had record surpluses and a plan to store billions of dollars for Social Security. Under the Clinton plan, Social Security would have been solvent until 2055 or later. We've lost fourteen years off the life of the Fund. First, we have to take steps to undo what this President has done and re-stock the Fund.

We also need to address the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs. One answer is to allow the Department of Health and Human Services to negotiate for lower drug prices and pass those savings onto Medicare beneficiaries. We could save billions of dollars per year for seniors and taxpayers. We are taking up this issue in the Senate this month. In addition, seniors should have access to much less expensive and safe prescription drugs from Canada. I co-sponsored bipartisan legislation that would allow re-importation and ensure that the drugs are safe. It is critical that we pass this legislation and bring down drug costs for our seniors.

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?

Throughout my career I have stood with all workers as they exercise their right to organize and bargain collectively. The NLRB's ruling in the *Kentucky River* case opens the door to employers classifying more workers as supervisors, thereby limiting their ability to organize and I oppose it. Realizing the potential loophole this represents, I co-sponsored the *Re-empowerment of Skilled and Professional Employees and Construction Tradesworkers Act (RESPECT Act)*, which modifies the definition of supervisor and reverses the decision by the National Labor Relations Board to expand the definition of "supervisor." As President, I would work to enact the RESPECT Act.

I have also actively opposed anti-collective bargaining provisions contained in the Department of Defense's proposed National Security Personnel System and have also voted in favor of collective bargaining rights for TSA screeners. I am committed to ensuring that workers are able to organize a union without coercion or intimidation and am therefore against any measure that denies the right of workers to union protections. When I am President I will protect worker's rights to create a union without fear of reprisal.

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

I believe unions have a strong role to play in shaping our economic and domestic policies. Unionized workers make 30% more than workers who aren't in unions. But today, just 7% of our private sector workplace is unionized. And we still hear of accounts of intimidation by employers of workers who want to unionize.

I believe we must have legislation to bring unionizing up to the 21st century and protect the right to unionize. I want to enact the *Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)* to make sure our unions can organize for fair wages and safe working conditions and appoint people to the Department of Labor who are truly pro-labor. The EFCA will increase the number of people in unions and thereby increase the number of good jobs and the leverage of working people in all realms of society. I believe unions bring a critical perspective to policy discussions about all of the most important issues of our day—education, health care, the economy, trade, the environment and energy, and so much more. When I am President, unions will have a friend and ally in the White House. I believe in the basic bargain for American workers—that if you work you shouldn't be poor—and unions help keep that bargain for America's working people. Unions provide the only counterweight to unfiltered corporate power, which has been growing more out of control over the past six years.

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?

It has been nearly four decades since OSHA was enacted, and while we've made great strides in strengthening the safety of working environment for this nation's workers, there is still a great deal of improvement to be made. Too many workers are injured on the job and too few workers are protected by OSHA. The most recent data shows that more than 8.4 million federal, state and local public employees, in addition to millions of transportation-industry employees, are not covered. That's why I am an original cosponsor of the *Protecting Americas Workers Act*, which would expand OSHA protection,

clarify the safety protections that employers must provide, expand civil and criminal penalties for OSHA violators, increase transparency in the OSHA citation process, and strengthen protections for OSHA whistleblowers.

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?

The rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively is a fundamental right in this country, and I will use all the resources at my disposal as President to ensure all workers are allowed to exercise that right freely. As codified in the NLRA, the federal government serves to encourage and promote the right to organize and collectively bargain but for too long we have seen the balance of power eroded by a dysfunctional, anti-worker NLRB and culture of harassing and bureaucratizing unions through a variety of measures. As I intend to sign the *Employee Free Choice Act* into law as President in order to remove the barriers that have prevented workers from freely exercising that right, so too will I explore all opportunities to promote the rights of all workers to organize and bargain collectively whether in the public or private sector. An encouraging step in this direction is legislation that I will co-sponsor in the 110th Congress, the *Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act*, which will establish collective bargaining rights for first responders including our fire fighters. As we work to restore our image around the world our nation should also set the standard for workers rights regardless or where they work. It's time for government to once again stand up for workers and promote the dialogue that occurs through the collective bargaining process, not actively discourage it.

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?

I have outlined a three step plan I would pursue as President to end the war while preserving our security. First, I would take our troops out of combat and start bringing them home now. Second, as we redeploy our troops, I would focus on stabilizing Iraq, not propping up the Iraqi government. Third, I would begin intensive regional and international diplomacy. Since 2005, I have called for the strategic redeployment of U.S. forces out of Iraq. My paramount goal is to end the war.

We need to force this Administration to confront its failed policies in Iraq. I'm currently working with my fellow Democrats to pass provisions in the Department of Defense authorization bill that would force the President to change course. Senator Robert Byrd and I are working hard this week to de-

authorize the war by October 11, 2007, which would be the five year anniversary of the original use of force resolution.

In Conclusion

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

I'm running for President because I believe if we set big goals and we work together to achieve them, we can restore the American dream today and for the next generation. The core ideals of a 21st-century progressivism are simple. The foundation of a strong economy is the investments we make in each other: in education, health care, clean energy and new technologies. These are the pillars to strengthening our middle class and should be our nation's top priorities.

Education has been one of my top priorities for the past thirty-five years. I fundamentally believe that every child should have access to a high quality public education that prepares him to compete in the 21st century. As President, I will make sure we provide high quality educational opportunities for all children from pre-K to college.

I will provide guaranteed affordable, high quality health care to all Americans, including the 45 million Americans, who currently don't have health care coverage.

I will find smart solutions to addressing global warming and creating a secure energy future while creating millions of jobs throughout the United States and lowering energy costs. I have proposed a Strategic Energy Fund to provide \$50 billion to fund energy technologies that will reduce America's oil dependence and greenhouse gas emissions while promoting new jobs and a cleaner environment.

Achieving these ambitious goals will not be easy. We face big challenges as a nation. But I believe I have the strength and experience to address these challenges starting on day one.