

## Unions Fear the Trump Threat

*A billionaire businessman shows how working-class voters might be pulled away from the Left*

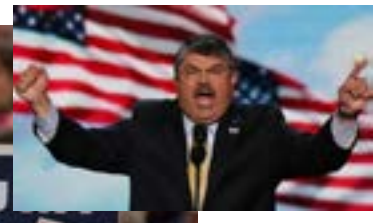
By Steven J. Allen

**Summary:** *Whether or not Donald Trump wins the Republican presidential nomination, the reaction to his candidacy among working-class Americans shows that voters in union households are no longer a “safe” constituency for Democrats. A Republican presidential nominee who makes a sincere, savvy appeal to workers—whether that nominee is Trump or someone else—may be able to create a profound shift in the American political landscape.*

For decades, Republicans have failed to make significant cracks in the united Democratic front presented by the nation’s unions. At least 30 percent of union members usually vote for GOP candidates, and Mitt Romney in 2012 received 40 percent of the vote cast by union households, but the unions themselves—with their wealthy and otherwise formidable political machines—support Democrats almost exclusively.

If Donald Trump is the Republican nominee for president this year—or if the nominee is someone who, like Trump, is seen by many voters as a champion of the working class—there may be a major change in voting patterns of union members and their families. Could such a shift be so profound that it would threaten unions’ alliance with the Left? This is a prospect that puts fear into the hearts of union leaders who, since the 1990s, have moved their focus away from improving their members’ wages, benefits, and working conditions, in order to promote instead an agenda rooted in left-wing Political Correctness.

Republicans face danger mixed with political opportunity: the possibility that,



**AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka (upper right) and Karen Nussbaum of Working America are taking steps to counter Donald Trump’s appeal to blue-collar workers.**

even as blue-collar workers and “Trump Democrats” gravitate toward the GOP—perhaps putting states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Minnesota into play in the Electoral College—other voters will be repelled by Trump himself or by a Trump-type message.

Unions aren’t taking any chances. They’re already moving to counter the Trump threat.

### Worry in San Diego

On the last weekend in February, union leaders gathered in San Diego to discuss a report analyzing the reasons that “white” members of the working class were turning to Trump. The report, *Fighting Right-Wing Populism*, was prepared by Working America, the AFL-CIO’s affiliate that reaches out to politically likeminded people who can’t or won’t join unions.

Founded in 2003, Working America is headed by Karen Nussbaum. According to the watchdog website *Discover the Networks*, Nussbaum in the late 1960s was a member of a support group for the violent, racist Black Panther Party. In 1970, she participated in a “Venceremos Brigade,” a group of young people who traveled to Cuba in support of the government of that country’s murderous dictator, Fidel Castro. She described

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communist Cuba as “a society that was combating racism, that had provided free health and educational care to every person in society, that had reduced income inequality more dramatically than any place else on earth.”

Nussbaum co-founded the National Association of Working Women, known as 9to5, a leftist group targeting female officeworkers. That group was supported by Jane Fonda, the actress famous for her support of the invasion of a U.S. ally, South Vietnam, by Soviet-backed North Vietnam. In fact, the hit movie “9 to 5” starring Fonda was conceived as a way of promoting the 9to5 group’s agenda. From 1975 to 1993, Nussbaum was president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), District 925. Nussbaum later served as head of the Women’s Bureau at the Labor Department during the Clinton administration, and was head of the Working Women’s Department at the AFL-CIO after it was taken over by the Far Left.

The new report on Trump and populism focuses on voters in such places as the suburbs of western Pennsylvania and Ohio, who are seen as susceptible to the Trump message. To collect data for the report, 1,689 “white” voters with household incomes of \$75,000 or less were surveyed between December 18 and January 22 in suburbs between Cleveland and Pittsburgh. Each voter was interviewed for five to 15 minutes; the interviews were referred to as “front porch focus groups.”

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Some 53 percent of respondents had yet to pick a presidential candidate. Trump had a lead among those who had already made up their minds; he received support from 18 percent, followed by 16 percent for the Democrats (Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders combined), and 13 percent for all other GOP presidential hopefuls. This was troubling to the union activists, since the same voters had cast some 48.4 percent of their votes for President Obama in 2012

Many of the voters believed that President Obama had failed them: “The working class constituents with whom we talk every night are fearful about their economic circumstances and prospects, angry about politicians who fail to address their concerns and skeptical about the role of government.”

“Candidates and organizations are exploiting these anxieties with their right-wing rhetoric that combines populism and bigotry. This targeted strategy has our core constituency directly in its cross-hairs.” One-third of Trump supporters are ideologically committed and cannot be persuaded to abandon their support, but two-thirds may be pulled away.

As described by the news website *People’s World*, “the other two-thirds of Trump backers are a combination of ‘fed-up voters’ who are concerned with particular issues but who back Trump ‘because he says what he thinks’ and voters who form their impressions of the business mogul from the extensive TV coverage of him, his rallies, and his statements.” Beating Trump, the report suggested, will take an extensive effort, time-consuming and expensive. That’s because changing those voters’ minds will require one-on-one conversations with workers and their families. “It will take a massive ground operation of the type only labor and its allies can mount to defeat right-wing populism in 2016,” *People’s World* noted. (*People’s World* is a Communist Party publication descended from the *Daily Worker*.)

Working America believes it can serve as the sort of information source for

which workers are hungry, “an independent voice to deliver information and with whom they can discuss the issues” raised by Trump. Lines of attack include the “disparity between what he says and what he actually does” in terms of his business practices, as well as “implications of his policy positions and questions about the effect his shoot-from-the-hip approach might have on international issues.” Providing “a combination of validation and information” from “extensive conversations” to “fed-up and low information voters” was “effective in changing the conversation from simplest initial responses to a more-thoughtful framework.”

Trump, the report warned, “has opened up a vein of right-wing rhetoric that has appealed to many Republicans and to middle-of-the-road white working-class Democrats as well. . . . Whether or not Trump becomes the GOP nominee, his candidacy is legitimizing a hard-right agenda among working-class voters, similar to the re-emergence of right-wing political parties throughout Europe. . . . Without a countervailing pull of authentic engagement about issues and a progressive vision for the future of the country, the appeal of right-wing rhetoric will continue.”

In response to concerns about Trump, the AFL-CIO launched digital ads attacking him as part of what Reuters called “a multi-pronged effort to derail the New York billionaire’s bid for the White House and dampen union workers’ enthusiasm for him.”

“Donald Trump is nothing but a house of cards,” said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, “and once we educate people, the house of cards comes crashing down.”

Nussbaum’s Working America group announced that its study of working-class voters will be used to guide a door-to-door campaign that will include half a million “conversations” with Ohio voters before the election.

Among Trump’s weaknesses that will be discussed: his problems in Las Vegas, where Trump’s dealings with unions

have not always gone smoothly. He is currently fighting Culinary Union Local 226 over the nonunion status of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas. (Local 226, which represents housekeepers and restaurant and casino workers, is part of UNITE HERE and is the largest union local in any Right to Work state.) In December, the union won a representation election 238 to 209, but Trump’s organization has challenged the election, claiming coercion of workers and improper influence on the outcome.

The Working America report has certainly thrown a spotlight on the danger that Trump poses to unions’ political power, but union officials saw the problem coming months ago.

#### Saying “amen”

On *Meet the Press* September 6, 2015, host Chuck Todd asked Trumka, “how many of your members hear Donald Trump talk about bad trade deals and say ‘amen?’” Trumka responded that “probably every [union member] that hears him say it’s a bad trade deal . . . they say amen that bad trade deals are bad for the country.”

Tony Lee of Breitbart News wrote that “Trump’s opposition to unfair trade deals and his pro-American worker immigration plan may compel enough blue-collar Democrats who could not pull the lever for Mitt Romney to consider his candidacy, especially against someone like Clinton who supports massive amnesty legislation (and waffled on unfair trade deals) that would hurt their interests.”

Connor Wolf of the *Daily Caller* wrote in September that the Teamsters union was hesitating to throw its support to Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton because of her hesitance in taking a stand against supposedly unfair trade deals and due to her opposition (on Global Warming grounds) to the Keystone XL pipeline, which was projected to create tens of thousands of jobs.

Fox News correspondent James Rosen reported that Teamsters leadership wanted to meet with Trump before endorsing any

candidate. “Union sources say the decision was driven by three motivations,” Rosen said. “First as an intentional snub to Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton who last week opposed construction of the Keystone pipeline. Second the Teamsters want to know if Vice President Biden will jump into the race. Then the union executive told me they want to sit down with Republicans candidates. Most notably frontrunner Donald Trump.” Of course, Biden declined to become a candidate, and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) became the main opposition to Clinton. As of this writing, Teamsters officials have not met publicly with Trump.

The day after the report on the Teamsters’ hesitation, Chris Shelton, president of the 600,000-member Communication Workers of America, told *Politico* that his union was putting off a presidential endorsement for the same reason. “If our members come out with Donald Trump, then we’re going to endorse Donald Trump,” he said. He was not pleased to feel pressure from his grassroots members, noting that “Trump is not exactly as pro-union as he seems to be. He deals with unions when he has to. He doesn’t when he doesn’t.”

Trump certainly has a lot of experience dealing with unions. A working relationship with unions was a necessity, given the nature of his business empire. Sean Higgins wrote in the *Washington Examiner* in October:

Roger Stone, a veteran Republican strategist and long-time Trump ally . . . [said] the New York-based developer has a long history of dealing with unions, particularly in the construction industry, and usually finding ways to work with them. “He’s generally union-friendly. He plays golf with and is friendly with, on a social basis, a number of union leaders in New York City,” said Stone . . .

Trump was particularly close to Ed Malloy, former president of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York. Malloy died in 2012.

The union interest in Trump is based more on grassroots support, though, Stone said. The candidate’s blue-collar [populism] and image as a successful businessman is appealing to regular union members, particularly in the current economy. “The reason rank-and-file union members are interested is because Trump means jobs. Trump means growth. Trump is a builder. To build that wall in Mexico, that means a lot of jobs,” Stone said. . . .

[Trump] told *Newsweek* in a July interview that he had “great relationships with unions.” In his 2000 book *The America We Deserve*, he wrote, “Is Trump a union man? Let me tell you this: Unions still have a place in American society. In fact, with the globalization craze in full heat, unions are about the only force reminding us to remember the American family.” Trump is a card-carrying union member himself, having joined the Screen Actors Guild as a result of his numerous appearances in television and in movies.

“There is deep economic anxiety among our members and the people we’re trying to organize that I believe Donald Trump’s message is tapping into,” said Mary Kay Henry, president of the Service Employees International Union, the union that is most closely associated with President Obama. (Its then-president was the most frequent visitor to the White House in the first year of this administration.) SEIU, by the way, is largely female and has a high percentage of African-American and Latino members.

Interviewed January 4 by David Axelrod, the chief strategist for the 2008 Obama campaign, Henry said, “I am deeply concerned about what is stirring, even in our membership.” Could she see Trump winning the election? “Yes, I could, I could,” she said, adding: “Sixty-four percent of our public [sector] members identify as conservative, and are much more interested in the Republican debate than the Democratic debate at the moment. Our white conservative membership that we

hear is responding to Trump's appeal are more concentrated in the Midwest and the South." She said union leaders are personally pressuring members. "We're doing one-on-ones with every one of our members right now. We're going into hyperdrive, especially in the pockets of our membership that have a lot of Muslim leaders to stand against what is being said" by Trump. Citizenship for more immigrants is a "core agenda" of her union, said Henry, a strong supporter of Hillary Clinton.

Trump is "touching this vein of the terrible anxiety that working-class people feel about their current status, but more importantly, how terrified they are for their kids, not being able to do as well as they have, never mind doing better," she said. Surveying members, the union found "that broken sense of the future."

Noam Scheiber, formerly of the *New Republic*, wrote in the *New York Times* in January:

In expressing her concern, Ms. Henry reflected a different form of anxiety that is weighing on some union leaders and Democratic operatives: their fear that Mr. Trump, if not effectively countered, may draw an unusually large number of union voters in a possible general election matchup. This could, in turn, bolster Republicans in swing states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, all of which President Obama won twice.

The source of the attraction to Mr. Trump, say union members and leaders, is manifold: the candidate's unapologetically populist positions on certain economic issues, particularly trade; a frustration with the impotence of conventional politicians; and above all, a sense that he rejects the norms of Washington discourse. "They feel he's the one guy who's saying what's on people's minds," Thomas Hanify, the president of the Indiana state firefighters union, said of his rank and file. Mr. Hanify said that Mr. Trump has so far dominated the "firehouse chatter" in his state.

While he allowed that his members tilt Republican, he estimated that most followed the lead of the union's international leadership and supported Mr. Obama in 2008 and 2012.

The potential pairing of Mr. Trump and union members could be helped along by a sense that Mr. Trump, unlike more conventional Republicans, has historically enjoyed a cordial relationship with labor on many of his real estate projects. "He has put his fair share into hiring union people," said Richard Sabato, the president of a building and construction trades council in northern New Jersey. "He's done that in Manhattan, in New Jersey." . . . Mr. Sabato said that his members, who lean Republican but in many cases voted for Mr. Obama, would "march behind" Mr. Trump on the issue of illegal immigration. Even more important for many union members has been the issue of economic globalization. . . .

"We like that he does not support [the Trans-Pacific Partnership], that he has taken the position that there should be trade tariffs for a company that moves jobs overseas," said Ryan Leenders, 30, a member of the International Association of Machinists in Washington State. Mr. Leenders, who estimated that one-quarter to one-third of his factory's union workers were Trump supporters . . .

#### Endorsement

Trump's first union endorsement, in December, came from a union focusing on law enforcement: the New England Police Benevolent Association. Before the vote to endorse Trump, the group's executive director, Jerry Flynn, told the Associated Press: "Listen, our message very clear: It's what is the next president of the United States going to do to unite this country in an effort to save police officers? Because it's open season on police officers."

The union represents nearly 5,000 members from about 200 locals across the region, according to Flynn. [For informa-

tion on the Left's campaign against police officers, see *Labor Watch*, October 2015.]

In a Fox News interview in January, former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who is close to Trump, said he had had contact with a union leader who planned to support Trump in the April 19 New York primary. "I'll give you one person I just had dinner with, the head of the correction workers union [Correction Officers Benevolent Association] in New York, Norman Seabrook. African-American, enormously well respected. He said to me tonight, 'I'm endorsing Donald Trump, because he can get jobs,'" Giuliani said. COBA is the largest municipal jail union in the country.

On March 30, a union representing some 16,500 federal employees made its endorsement of Trump. The National Border Patrol Council represents agents and support staff in the U.S. Border Patrol, the uniformed law enforcement arm of U.S. Customs and Border Protection within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). (The Border Patrol's mission has been "to detect and prevent illegal aliens, terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States, and prevent illegal trafficking of people and contraband," as the agency's website declared in 2011, although that language appears to have disappeared from the site.) The union is part of the American Federation of Government Employees and, through AFGE, of the AFL-CIO. The council in its endorsement declared:

We represent 16,500 agents who selflessly serve this country in an environment where our own political leaders try to keep us from doing our jobs. The NBPC has had a longstanding practice of not endorsing presidential candidates in the primaries. . . . [W]e are breaking with our past practice and giving our first-ever endorsement in a presidential primary. We think it is that important: if we do not secure our borders, American communities will continue to suffer at the hands of gangs, cartels and violent criminals preying on the innocent. The lives and security of the

American people are at stake, and the National Border Patrol Council will not sit on the sidelines.

. . . We need a person in the White House who doesn't fear the media, who doesn't embrace political correctness, who doesn't need the money, who is familiar with success, who won't bow to foreign dictators, who is pro-military and values law enforcement, and who is angry for America and NOT subservient to the interests of other nations. Donald Trump is such a man.

Trump has called for a massive increase in security at the nation's Southern border, famously promising to build a wall to keep out persons trying to enter the country illegally. He has said he would triple the number of employees at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, another part of DHS.

Although it's unusual nowadays for a union to endorse a Republican, and highly unusual for such an endorsement to come from a union of government employees, the move by the Border Patrol union was not a surprise. Members of the union have felt betrayed by President Obama and the Democratic Party, and Trump, more than any other candidate, took up their cause.

#### Carrier to Mexico

Campaigning in New Hampshire, Trump declared: "I work in areas where we have unions, [and areas where] we don't have unions. Manhattan is . . . essentially a hundred percent union. So I've worked with unions over the years. I've done very well with unions. And I have tremendous support within unions, and I have tremendous support in areas where they don't have unions. . . . My support is really with those workers, those people . . . the policemen, the firemen, the construction workers, the lathers, the sheetrock workers, the electricians, the plumbers. That's where my support is. Every poll shows it."

He said his weakest support is with "very rich people. . . . Isn't that funny? I don't get along that well with the rich." Union

organizations are almost all aligned with Democrats, he said, but the Teamsters union put off endorsing in the presidential race because so many members support him. "The men and women of the Teamsters are with Trump. The workers of this country are going to vote for me, [because] I'm going to create jobs."

In a February 12 article, John Nichols of the left-wing magazine *The Nation* wrote about Trump's appeal:

"This country is dying. And our workers are losing their jobs," Donald Trump declared. Noting the announcement of plans by the air-conditioner company Carrier to transfer production (and 1,400 union jobs) from Indianapolis to Mexico, the billionaire said, "Carrier is moving. And if you saw the [workers]. . . . They were crying." Promising a no-more-tears presidency, Trump said he'd renegotiate "trade pacts that are no good for us and no good for our workers" and tell corporations to keep production in the United States or "we're going to tax you." . . .

Trump's recognition of shuttered plants and crying workers struck Ohio Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur. "I heard him. I heard exactly what he was saying, and so did the people of Indianapolis and Indiana," Kaptur said. "So did everyone else who has lost a job to offshoring and outsourcing, or who knows they are just one more trade deal away from losing a job."

Kaptur, a Democrat who represents a multiethnic, multiracial district stretching from Toledo to Cleveland, has decried Trump's divisive remarks as shameful . . . But she cautions Democrats against assuming that the revulsion to Trump's hateful language and crude politics will immediately disqualify him in the eyes of scared and angry voters in states that have been essential building blocks for Democratic wins in presidential races of recent decades. Kaptur's not alone in this view. . . . "I don't think the Democrats are ready for this,"

adds Ralph Nader . . .

Union leaders fret about internal surveys that show the billionaire is attracting greater support than is usually afforded Republicans. While much of it comes from white male voters, these union leaders say they've seen some evidence of a broader openness to Trump's message. [Pollster Frank] Luntz claims that his candidacy "would get the highest percentage of black votes since Ronald Reagan in 1980." That's not a high bar—exit polls gave Reagan 14 percent—but the prospect of losing any working-class votes in states like Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania should be a wake-up call for Democrats.

Robert Romano, writing in *NetRightDaily* in December, analyzed the potential for a Trump victory:

Consider what happened in 1992 with Perot on the ballot. Voter turnout exploded by nearly 13 million to 104.4 million, a 12.27 percent increase from 1988. All that while the growth of the voting age population was slowing down—it had only increased 6.7 million that cycle. In addition to Perot's 19.7 million votes, Democrats increased their 1988 vote total by 3.1 million to 44.9 million, while Republicans lost 9.7 million supporters down to 39.1 million.

Meaning, Perot's presence in the race may have brought as many as 5 to 10 million voters to the polls who would have stayed home if he were not in the race. He expanded the universe of potential voter universe with the direct economic populist appeal. Throw in fresh concerns over terrorism and immigration thanks to Paris and San Bernardino, and what you have might be an electoral powder keg ready to explode, more than 20 years in the making. . . .

In 1992 the Perot campaign was controversial because it seemingly split the Republican vote. But lump the two constituencies together—as Nixon and Reagan successfully did



in 1972, 1980, and 1984—and the potential of another slaughter of Democrats at the polls emerges. That is actually the model that has produced the most success for Republicans in the past half century. Once again, Trump is onto something. But it only works with blue-collar voters on the table, whom the Democrat President Obama is now denigrating as angry, frustrated and fearful. Does that elitist attitude, combined with support for unlimited immigration, open borders and global trade deals that are bad for American workers, backfire on Democrats in 2016? That is what Trump is betting on.

Timothy Noah of *Politico* has attempted to debunk the idea that Trump would attract hordes of blue-collar Democrats:

In [his 2013 book] *The White Working Class Today*, Andrew Levison calculates that in 2016 the Democrats' white blue-collar support would have to fall to 33 percent (as it did in the 2010 midterms) to make a Republican presidential victory even possible. What that means is that Democratic nominee Clinton or Sanders would have to fall to the levels of white working class support experienced by Walter Mondale and George McGovern—the Democrats' two worst-performing presidential candidates during the past century—to hand Trump a proletarian-driven victory. . . . Trump's best chance, Levison says, is with [that segment of white working class members who are] nonideological voters, "not racists, not motivated primarily by hate ... so much as deep frustration" with politics and the economy. Levison calls them "demoralized or apolitical white working class voters," and they constitute nearly half the white working class. The catch is that they don't vote. Might Trump inspire them to? "That's the group," says Levison, "that I would consider a threat to Democrats."

Ed Rendell, former governor of Pennsylvania and former General Chairman

of the national Democratic Party, said he isn't worried. "My belief is that for every one of those blue-collar white working-class voters that he gets to vote for him, we will get two suburban Republican moderates." Still, Rendell confessed, "It scares me a little bit because you just don't know."

#### Switchers

"A normal Republican cannot think of bringing in Michigan," Trump said while campaigning at Macomb Community College, "and if you don't bring in Michigan, it's tough. You have a very narrow road. But I'm going to bring in places like Michigan." The state has gone to the Democrats in the past six presidential elections.

Macomb County, Michigan—predominately working class, made up largely of Catholics and "ethnics" (minorities that the government refuses to recognize)—voted 63 percent for Kennedy in 1960 and 66 percent for Reagan two decades later. Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg's reports on Macomb County popularized the term "Reagan Democrats."

In a poll of Massachusetts voters reported by the *Boston Globe* February 27, the Saturday before the state's primary, Trump drew supporters roughly evenly across all of the listed demographic groups, but was especially strong in union households. Among union members and their families, he won the support of 54 percent of likely GOP primary voters, compared to 16 percent for Ohio Governor John Kasich in second place. The contest was much closer in non-union households, with Trump at 41 percent, followed by Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida at 21 percent.

Meanwhile, according to Matt Stout in the *Boston Herald*, February 29—

Nearly 20,000 Bay State Democrats have fled the party this winter, with thousands doing so to join the Republican ranks, according to the state's top elections official. Secretary of State William Galvin said more than 16,300 Democrats have shed their

party affiliation and become independent voters since Jan. 1, while nearly 3,500 more shifted to the Massachusetts GOP ahead of tomorrow's "Super Tuesday" presidential primary.

Galvin called both "significant" changes that dwarf similar shifts ahead of other primary votes, including in 2000, when some Democrats flocked from the party in order to cast a vote for Sen. John McCain in the GOP primary.

The primary reason? Galvin said his "guess" is simple: "The Trump phenomenon," a reference to GOP frontrunner Donald Trump, who polls show enjoying a massive lead over rivals Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz and others among Massachusetts Republican voters. "The tenor of the Republican campaign has been completely different from what we've seen in prior Republican presidential campaigns," Galvin said. "You have to look no farther than the viewership for some of the televised debates.

"The *New York Times* referred to the campaign as crude; I suppose that's fair," added Galvin, a Democrat. "The fact of the matter is the tenor has been very different this time. And that has an effect. People are interested. It's exciting."

On primary day, some 630,000 people voted in the state's Republican primary, although only 468,000 people were actually registered Republicans. In Massachusetts, unenrolled (that is, independent) voters can cast a ballot in the primary of any party.

In Chicago, the local CBS affiliate reported in March:

Just west of Midway Airport, in the bungalow belt dominated by Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, some Democrats are defecting to The Donald. "Right here, I'm a Donald Trump voter," says retired city plumber Tom Izzo. "So many Americans are out of a job, but we got all these illegals working here.

Something's got to happen," he says. Izzo represents a bit of a trend. In 2008, just 6 percent of Chicago primary voters selected Republican ballots. This year, it's up to 10 percent. And that's not far away from the 13 percent back in 1980, the year Ronald Reagan attracted so-called blue collar Reagan Democrats.

#### "Going to hell"

Leo Martin, 62, a machinist from Newport, New Hampshire, who attended a Trump rally, told the *New York Times*, "The Republican Party has never done anything for the working man like me, even though we've voted Republican for years. This election is the first in my life where we can change what it means to be a Republican."

The *International Business Times* reported on March 8:

Brian Sepe has been a dues-paying member of the United Steelworkers for over three decades. Last week, he voted for Donald Trump in Massachusetts' Republican primary. "My country is going to hell," said Sepe, a 55-year-old utility worker and resident of Lowell, the famed mill town that is now one of the state's poorest cities. "You look back at all the different trade agreements over the past 30 years, [and] it's always been to move jobs out of the country. That's got us in so much trouble. We don't have good jobs left in this country."

"[Trump] is a no bulls--- kind of guy," Sepe continued. "He calls it what it is." Sepe belongs to a breed that's causing serious concern among officials from organized labor and the Democratic Party: union members who support billionaire real estate mogul Trump for president. . . . Sepe blames the Democrats for the North American Free Trade Agreement, the hotly contested deal with Canada and Mexico championed by President Bill Clinton. He also blasted the Obama administration's support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a

similarly controversial agreement between the U.S. and 11 other Pacific Rim countries that would cover 40 percent of the world economy. . . .

Larry Cohen, a former president of the Communications Workers of America union who recently became a labor adviser to Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders' campaign, told *International Business Times* he has witnessed firsthand how Trump's rhetoric resonates with some union members on the campaign trail. Without Sanders and his brand of left-wing populism in the race, rank-and-file support for Trump would be even greater, he said. "I think you have to look not just at the Clintons but [also at] the migration of the Democratic establishment in and out of finance capital, their families, their contributions, the way they combine social liberalism with free market economics and some lip service to workers' rights but deliver nothing," Cohen said. "People have had it with that liberal establishment." . . .

Michael Watson is another proud union member who backs Trump. Watson is a heavy highway contractor who sits on the advisory board of his Indiana district of Operating Engineers Local 150, a 22,000-member local that stretches from eastern Iowa to northern Indiana. . . . "I'm so tired of paying for freeloaders while they sit on their a-- while I have to work and take care of them, meaning illegal immigrants, people on welfare, able-bodied but won't do anything to help themselves," Watson said. "[Trump]'s not politically correct. I seem to have the same problem. I get tired of people's feelings getting in the way of their thinking, and he speaks his mind."

#### Whose side...?

Trump breaks the rules of politics by focusing on a small number of issues about which he cares strongly, by taking a non-ideological "I solve problems" ap-

proach to other issues, and by presenting himself without apology as the champion of people who work hard and play by the rules.

Many conservative political activists are appalled by his lack of understanding of conservative beliefs and by his positions on certain issues. Many Republicans of all stripes are repelled by aspects of Trump's personality, especially his rudeness, and by the people Trump brings into the party, whom they consider ruffians.

On the other side of the fence, "Progressives" hate Trump because he is seen as the champion of the people they hate most: working-class Americans. Any alliance between Progressives and workers is structurally flawed, and can be broken if the opposition is sufficiently skilled. The rise of Donald Trump exposes this potentially fatal divide in the Democrats' coalition and threatens to realign the nation's political parties, provided that Trump or another Republican presidential candidate can persuade workers that the GOP will fight for them.

*Next issue, in Part 2 of this report, we'll look at how Barack Obama and his allies laid the foundation for the Trump movement by abandoning blue-collar workers and others whom unions were meant to serve.*

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**And please remember CRC in your will and estate planning.**

# LaborNotes

The death of **Justice Antonin Scalia** was a disaster for the American people, not least in the way it will likely alter the result of the **Friedrichs** case. As we noted in *Labor Watch* February 2016, the **U.S. Supreme Court** appeared likely to rule 5-4 in **Friedrichs** that unions could no longer force government employees to support the political causes of public-sector unions. Without Scalia, the vote was tied 4-4, which leaves in place the decision of the lower court in favor of the **California** teachers' union. As the case was described by **RedState**, "**Rebecca Friedrichs**, the main plaintiff in the case, and her lawyers were hoping that the court would overturn an earlier case allowing public sector unions to charge non-members fees for union collective bargaining on the theory that employment bargaining is non-political in nature. In reality, when union contracts cover subjects such as taxpayer expenditures, class size and teacher tenure, teachers who disagree with union positions on those indisputably political issues find themselves forced to fund their political opponents." California is one of at least 23 states that do not have laws on the books safeguarding public employees' First Amendment rights in such a situation.

Boosted by heavy turnout in **Wisconsin's Republican** primary, **state Supreme Court Justice Rebecca Bradley** was elected to a 10-year term, keeping the job to which she had been appointed last fall by **Gov. Scott Walker** (R). By 53 to 47 percent, she defeated **Appeals Court Judge JoAnne Kloppenburg**, who had attempted to unseat another Republican justice during the union-backed campaign against Walker and anyone associated with him. (See *Labor Watch* June and July 2015.) Pro-Bradley forces reportedly spent some \$4 million on the campaign; pro-Kloppenburg forces spent more than \$1.5 million and benefitted from the unions' political machine.

Update on last month's *Labor Watch* report on legislation that would change the air traffic control (ATC) system: *Flying* magazine reports the measure has been "tossed out. At least for now. ATC privatization has been a high priority for the [**House Transportation**] **Committee's** chairman, **Bill Shuster**, who is known to be closely linked with **Airlines for America**, an organization in favor of privatizing ATC services. A4A's president and CEO **Nicholas Calio** has worked for years with Shuster to transfer air traffic services away from the **FAA**, claiming that the agency is incapable of putting through NextGen, the modernization of the air traffic control system. General aviation alphabet groups lobbied heavily against the bill as the suggested not-for-profit ATC services organization would have been governed by an airline-centric board and funded by user fees."

**Marc Scribner** of the **Competitive Enterprise Institute** took issue with our view that the proposed law would give **NATCA**, the air traffic controllers' union that is a successor to **PATCO**, the power to strike. To strike, he said, NATCA would have to "challenge Congress's law that makes the ATC Corporation a fictitious legal federal agency for limited labor relations purposes. However . . . if the union strikes and challenges the ATC Corporation's limited legal status as a federal agency and then loses in court, the union will likely be put out of business. [NATCA] has not once in these negotiations expressed interest in gaining a legal right to strike." *To be continued...*

The **Organization United for Respect at Walmart** (OUR Walmart), an anti-Walmart group founded by the **United Food and Commercial Workers** union—see *Labor Watch* September 2013—appears to be defunct. An obituary in the socialist/union publication *In These Times* declared, "OUR Walmart was a public relations irritant to the company, but it never was a strategic challenge to Walmart's power or its business model. Perhaps the campaign contributed to recent increases in minimum wages; perhaps it contributed to the growing national conversation about increased inequality; perhaps Walmart's recent increase in its starting hourly wage to \$10 was result of this campaign (though it may also have been the result of tightening labor markets because other employers have raised their wages as well). But none of these is 'organizing,' and none builds a powerful union."

The UFCW's publicly filed LM-2 report indicates the union's relationship with the anti-Walmart group ended May 2015. In September, OUR Walmart staged a relaunch at which organizers promised to "continue to publicize how Walmart as an employer and a business presence within most American communities has pushed down work standards and often taken from communities as much as it contributes." The group was pushing for a \$15-an-hour "minimum wage," "full-time, consistent hours," "racial justice," and policies supposedly related to Global Warming ("climate change"). At the time of the re-launch, supporters included **National People's Action**, **Demos**, the **Working Families Party**, **Interfaith Workers Justice**, **Color of Change**, **Jobs With Justice**, and **Environmental Action**. A pro-union reporter counted 12 actual Walmart workers, most of whom had been fired, at the re-launch. Why kill the group? UFCW President **Anthony "Mark" Perrone** opposed funding the group, noting it had spent a lot of the union's money without ever unionizing a Walmart store.