

## The Liberal Lock on Congress: *Loyal Allies Lobby for Big Government Programs* By Matthew Vadum

**Summary:** Liberal advocacy groups—and the foundations that fund them—expect the 110th Congress to add new layers of government regulation onto businesses that keep the U.S. economy dynamic. They want to raise taxes, take away consumer choice, engineer social changes, and further regulate the environment, while weakening government’s ability to defend Americans from terrorist attack.

America’s left-wing advocacy groups are tickled pink that their team is reasserting ownership of Congress. For the first time since the so-called Republican Revolution of 1994, the Left can turn to politicians who will act on their demands—or so they hope.

“When Republicans were in control, it was all about stopping bad things from happening,” observes David Noble, director of public policy at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Antonia Cortese, executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, adds that things are very different now with Democrats in control of Congress: “We’re very optimistic that we are going from a ‘Do-Nothing’ Congress to a Congress that does something.”

And that’s what scares conservatives.

Democrats in the House of Representatives have passed their much-hyped “100 Hours” agenda, which includes a raise in the federal minimum wage; support for price cuts for prescription drugs; cuts to student loan interest rates; federal funding for embryonic stem cell research; and an end to certain tax breaks for oil and gas companies. These



**The Left’s new power brokers: Upper row, left to right: AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, Children’s Defense Fund president Marian Wright Edelman, National Council of La Raza president Janet Murguia; Lower row: Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards, Brady Campaign president Paul Helmke, NAACP lobbyist Hilary Shelton**

issues were carefully selected to win overwhelming support from the Democratic caucus while attracting substantial Republican support. Liberal activists have accepted this initial strategy, which is intended to downplay controversy and build public confidence in the new Congress. But they want lots more.

One little-noticed proposal would change the rules and give partial voting rights in the House to the five delegates from non-states

### March 2007 CONTENTS

The Liberal Lock on Congress

Page 1

Philanthropy Notes

Page 8

(the District of Columbia, Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam and Puerto Rico). All the current delegates, except Puerto Rico's, are Democrats. Liberal activists are cheering on this brazenly unconstitutional power grab that will help cushion their vote margins. The rule change cleared the House on a vote of 226 to 191 on January 24. The Constitution provides that only elected officials who represent states are permitted to vote.

Republicans have vowed to challenge the rule change in court. GOP Whip Roy Blunt (R-Missouri) said the change constituted "representation without taxation," while House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) called it "an outrageous grab of power by the majority."

Another little-noticed proposal pushed by Democrats would reward organized labor for its loyalty by giving collective bargaining rights to the Transportation Safety Administration's 43,000 airport security screeners, the Wall Street Journal reported February 21. The Bush administration opposes the rule change, which Democrats wove into legislation aimed at implementing the 9/11 Commission's recommendations. "Democrats are betting the White House won't have the nerve to veto an otherwise

popular, if ill-understood, bill over this single provision," the newspaper editorialized.

### The Pressure From The Left Begins

The Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), which is co-chaired by two Democratic congresswomen from California, Lynn Woolsey and Barbara Lee, is a collection of far-left lawmakers in Congress. It includes freshman Democratic senators Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Sherrod Brown of Ohio,



**Representatives Lynn Woolsey (left) and Barbara Lee (right) jointly chair the Congressional Progressive Caucus**

and promises to stop House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid from governing from the political middle. Liberal interest groups also vow to keep the Democratic congressional leadership's feet to the fire. "Democrats ran the most populist elections in memory," said Robert Borosage, co-director of the Campaign for America's Future. "We need to make sure the Democrats deliver on their promises."

In December, more than 40 advocacy groups agreed on a common strategy to support congressional Democrats while tilting them to port. Led by Americans United for Separation of Church and State, USAction and Borosage's Campaign for America's Future, the ad hoc coalition also includes the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), the AFL-CIO, League of Conservation Voters, MoveOn.org, National Education Association, National Council of Churches, National Organization for Women, People for the American Way, and the Sierra Club.

These groups and the CPC want Democratic lawmakers to challenge every action of the Bush administration. They want to pull the U.S. out of Iraq and abandon the war on terror. To no one's surprise, one of the CPC's

first official events after the November election was to invite George McGovern, the party's 1972 presidential candidate, to address it on foreign policy. The 84-year-old former senator has proposed a phased withdrawal of troops from Iraq to be completed by June 30.

The CPC, which has 71 members in the new Congress—"just 6 short of equaling 1/3 of the entire Democratic Caucus," a CPC press release boasted—officially endorsed a six-month Iraq pullout plan on February 7. The statement calls the retreat a "redeployment plan." The CPC further declared it is "opposed to establishing any permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq, support[s] rescinding the President's Iraq war authority, and support[s] greater diplomatic and political engagement in the region, while ensuring that the Iraqi people have control over their own petroleum resources." (For more on the CPC, see "The Congressional Progressive Caucus: Fringe-Left Democrats Wield New Influence," by Cheryl K. Chumley, *Foundation Watch*, January 2007)

A shameful advertising campaign launched by Vote Vets Action Fund and the left-wing front group Americans Against Escalation in Iraq, may offer a taste of what the public will have to endure for the life of the new Congress. In a widely seen inflammatory television ad the groups turn patriotism on its head. In the ad, veterans who lost limbs while serving their country urge the rejection of President George W. Bush's proposal to send more U.S. troops to fight the war in Iraq. "If you support escalation, you don't support the troops," veteran Robert Loria said matter-of-factly.

George Soros and the political group MoveOn are behind the ad, which aired February 4 during Superbowl XLI. Vote Vets counts as official advisors Wesley Clark, the former general and Democratic presidential candidate, and Bob Kerrey, the former Democratic senator from Nebraska.

The co-founder and chairman of VoteVets.org is Jon Soltz, a veteran of the Iraq War. Soltz accused President Bush of cowardice on January 11. "Because this president is too much of a coward to admit he's made a mistake, more troops have to die," he said.

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Americans Against Escalation in Iraq describes itself as a coalition of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), MoveOn.org Political Action, Center for American Progress, USAction, Win Without War, Vote Vets, Campaign for America's Future, and USSA (United States Student Association). Soros has provided significant financial support for several of these groups, reportedly pledging \$3 million to the Center for American Progress and \$5 million to MoveOn.org.

Urged on by Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), MoveOn and the Progressive States Network, an association of liberal state lawmakers and activists, are behind a push to have state legislatures approve resolutions opposing the president's plan to send more troops to Iraq, the New York Times reported February 15. "Your voices, your calls, your e-mails and your resolutions have an impact on the debate," Kennedy said. The Progressive States Network describes its mission as helping "to pass progressive legislation in all fifty states by providing coordinated research and strategic advocacy tools to forward-thinking state legislators."

### Foundations Want A Piece Of The Action Too

Charitable foundations want Congress to shell out more federal money for health care, social programs, and the arts, but fear that the House's recent adoption of "pay-as-you-go" budget rules, which require new spending to be offset by spending cuts or tax increases, may make less money available, the Chronicle of Philanthropy reported. Foundations are not sure if the new Democratic majority is sympathetic to their issues, including the tax treatment of donations and how nonprofit groups are regulated.

Foundations favor a proposal expected to be debated by lawmakers that would give donors who do not itemize on their tax returns a tax break. They also support extending a soon-to-expire tax law provision that allows individuals aged 70 to direct funds tax-free from their individual retirement accounts (IRAs) to charities.

And the fiscal responsibility that Democrats have promised to impose on Congress is worrying to nonprofits, which according to

one estimate depend on government funds for roughly 30% of revenues. A Chronicle of Philanthropy report found that charities took in more than \$2 billion in congressional earmarks, also known as "pork," in 2005.

"There is nothing like the federal budget that affects the sector," said Diana Aviv, president of Independent Sector, an umbrella



**Diana Aviv, president of Independent Sector**

group for liberal nonprofits. Deborah Weinstein, executive director of the Coalition on Human Needs, said her group will try to make Congress aware of the "painful problems" posed by fiscal restraint in order "to spare the worst cuts."

### Welfare State Supporters

In his 1991 book, *Parliament of Whores*, satirist P.J. O'Rourke lampooned Big Government advocacy groups that make never-ending demands for legislation to enlarge America's already-bloated welfare state. The groups, which O'Rourke labeled "compassion fascists," have been lying low—but now they're baaack.

"I hope we can begin to come to our senses," said Marian Wright Edelman, longtime presi-

dent of the Children's Defense Fund (2005 revenue: \$18.3 million). "I hope the new leadership will be much more thoughtful." Edelman's group is concentrating on renewing and enlarging the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), a so-called federal-state partnership that significantly increased state spending after it was enacted in 1997. Edelman is shopping around CDF's new proposal, which would guarantee health insurance coverage to all children in families making up to \$60,000 at no additional cost to the states.

Linda Couch, deputy director of the National Low Income Housing Coalition (2004 revenue: \$1.8 million) boasted that there were "a lot of high fives in the housing community" when Democrats won the November election. "I think Congress will be a lot more open to hearing our proposals." NLIHC says it is "dedicated solely to ending America's affordable housing crisis," which means it favors more money for publicly funded housing programs. In 2005, it failed to secure passage of its proposal to require the secondary mortgage market titans Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to hand over 5% of their profits to a so-called affordable housing fund that politicians and liberal interest groups would effectively control. Dubbed by Republicans the "Barney Frank slush fund," its chances of passage have increased now that the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee is Representative Barney Frank.

Groups such as the Coalition on Human Needs want to strengthen the federal government's food stamp program and make it easier for families to collect under the welfare program. It is a "hard to apply" for program, complained Weinstein. The group's board of directors includes representatives of AFSCME, the public sector union; the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic interest group; Catholic Charities and the National Education Association. The Coalition also plans to push for more subsidies for child care.

**For frequent updates on environmental groups, nonprofits, foundations, and labor unions, check out the CRC-Greenwatch Blog at**

**[www.capitalresearch.org/blog](http://www.capitalresearch.org/blog)**

## Trial Lawyers

The 60,000 member American Association for Justice (AAJ)—formerly and more accurately known as the American Trial Lawyers Association (ATLA)—also has high hopes for the most left-wing members of Congress. AAJ (2004 revenue: \$36.7 million) expects them to help it thwart efforts to reform policies that produce more litigation and legal costs.

AAJ opposes Securities and Exchange Commission efforts to reform the Sarbanes-Oxley law, which has made corporate accounting rules more rigid, boosting compliance costs and harming business competitiveness. It would block a Bush administration plan to limit individuals' right to sue, and it favors a ban on legal settlements that require parties to refrain from publicly discussing negligence that led to injury. The trial lawyers' lobby also wants to stop companies from requiring their customers to consent to mandatory binding arbitration in the event of a legal dispute, a common provision in credit card member agreements. House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, a Michigan Democrat, recently described the group's congressional agenda as "viable."

AAJ was offended by President Bush's remarks last January indicating that he was

about getting justice and holding wrongdoers accountable, we win." AAJ is hiring strategists like Chris Lehane, the spokesman for Al Gore in 2000 and John Kerry in 2004, to help it change its image.

Still, of the 18 House candidates who were trial lawyers, 14 won election, notes AAJ vice president Linda Lipsen. "The whole idea that 'trial lawyer' has some stigma attached to it was disproved by the fact that so many of these members faced vicious attacks...and they won," Lipsen said. Individual AAJ members gave at least \$20 million to U.S. Senate candidates, and AAJ's political action committee gave \$2.4 million to all federal candidates in 2006—96% to Democrats and just 4% to Republicans. (For more on Democrats' ties to trial lawyers, see "Kerry, Edwards and 'the Lawsuit Lobby': How Trial Lawyers Picked the Democrat Team," by Robert James Bidinotto, *Organization Trends*, October 2004).

## Environmentalists

Environmentalist pressure groups are optimistic about the prospects for their agenda. Green groups are particularly eager to have Congress hold hearings on Bush administration environmental policies. Wilderness Society analyst Michael Francis wants Congress to investigate the Interior Department's

industries to cover cleanups of contaminated sites. They also want to help House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Nick Rahall, a West Virginia Democrat, revise the General Mining Act of 1872, which they say gives away mineral rights to some public lands.

And now that emboldened greens sense they have an edge in the ongoing public debate on climate change, they are smearing their opponents. "The debate [about global warming] is fundamentally over," Phil Clapp, president of the National Environmental Trust, told E&ETV's "OnPoint" on February 7. Scientists who dissent from environmentalist orthodoxy on global warming are "paid quacks," said the lobbyist who received a handsome \$190,462 in salary and deferred compensation, according to the group's 2004 tax return. Other greens are going further, likening climate change skeptics to Holocaust deniers.

Most green groups "are putting their largest investments into getting action on reducing greenhouse-gas emissions," Clapp noted separately. This hope got a big boost in mid-January when Speaker Pelosi did an end-run around House Energy Committee Chairman John Dingell, Detroit's defender of the internal combustion engine. Pelosi unveiled plans for a Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, which apparently will be chaired by Representative Ed Markey of Massachusetts.

Kevin Knobloch, president of the media-savvy Union of Concerned Scientists, said it was "just terrific to see the speaker establish that [global warming] is one of the highest priorities of this Congress." (For more on the group, see "The Union of Concerned Scientists: Its Jihad against Climate Skeptics," by Myron Ebell, Iain Murray, and Ivan Osorio, *Organization Trends*, March 2007)

Sierra Club executive director Carl Pope does not expect the new Congress to clamp down on carbon emissions, but he hopes it will lay the groundwork for a future Congress to do so. "I don't think *this* Congress is going to regulate carbon dioxide, but they have to make it clear that they're *eventually* going to regulate carbon dioxide," Pope said. (For more on the group, see "The Sierra Club: Crusading Against U.S. Energy Security," by John K. Carlisle, *Organization Trends*, November 2002)

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***The American Trial Lawyers Association changed its name last year to the American Association for Justice. ATLA's last president, Ken Suggs, explained that AAJ beats ATLA because "if our message is about helping lawyers, we lose. On the other hand, if we're about getting justice and holding wrongdoers accountable, we win."***

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"worried about frivolous lawsuits running [up] the cost of health care." It released a statement describing the speech as an "assault on America's civil justice system" and accused the president of "disingenuously blaming lawsuits for high medical costs." Jon Haber, CEO of AAJ, accused Bush of "misleading the American public all to make the case for further padding the profits of his insurance industry friends."

Explaining ATLA's name change, its former president Ken Suggs said: "Our research shows that if our message is about helping lawyers, we lose. On the other hand, if we're

approach to energy development. "We'd like to change the overall predilection of the Bureau of Land Management to think that [it is] in the oil and gas development business instead of in the land protection business," Francis said.

Greens want to push so-called cleaner energy technologies, boost conservation programs, block development on federal lands, and strengthen the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act. They vow to back the plan of Senate Environment Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer, who wants to reintroduce the Superfund tax on oil and chemical

Some environmentalists hope the U.S. Climate Action Partnership (USCAP), an odd coalition created in January, will help convince Congress to impose a “cap and trade” system for limiting carbon emissions. Green groups that have signed on include Environmental Defense, the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, and Natural Resources Defense Council. Corporate members include Alcoa, BP America, Caterpillar Inc., General Electric, and Lehman Brothers.

But Fred L. Smith, Jr., president of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, warns that “simply because some business leaders join with environmental pressure groups to promote a policy does not mean that the policy is good for the economy or the American people.” In February Smith told the Senate’s environment committee: “In general, if a company’s stance on an issue appears to be too good to be true, it probably is...[T]he corporations we see baying for a cap and trade program are out to enrich themselves without thought for the poor. A fair approach, an egalitarian approach, is to let the market work its magic for the good of all, rather than stacking the deck to enrich the few.”

Pope says the Sierra Club will move against the oil and coal industries on the state and federal levels: “We’ll be investing more in the states, because we’re going after the carbon lobby. And if we can squeeze them at the state level, that’s terrific.” (See “State Global Warming Laws: How Foundation Grants Affect Climate Policy,” by David Hogberg and James Dellinger, *Foundation Watch*, June 2006)

Pope can count on help from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (2004 assets: \$6.5 billion). Its environment program has an annual \$25 million budget, a figure the Wall Street Journal (February 12) described as “one of the biggest war chests in the green movement’s campaign for government policies to curb the fossil-fuel emissions linked to global warming.” The Hewlett and Energy foundations intend to step up their campaigns to press states to implement their own global warming policies. Together, the two groups have been plowing roughly \$300,000 per year into litigation. Most of that money has gone to pay lawyers working for the Natural Resources Defense Council (2003

revenue: \$57.3 million) and the Sierra Club (2004 revenue: \$91 million).

## Civil Rights

Left-leaning civil rights pressure groups that habitually exaggerate the scope of racism in the United States are keen to set a common agenda that will restore concern for “racism” to the top of Congress’s list of priorities.



**Center for Constitutional Rights president Michael Ratner**

They are resolved to repeal voter-security laws requiring voter identification, vow to fight so-called hate crimes and racial profiling with new laws, and combat housing discrimination. They also seek action on issues that conservatives say have nothing to do with civil rights, such as the reform of immigration laws, the No Child Left Behind law, and funding for indigent health care.

Civil rights groups support Senate Banking Committee Chairman Christopher Dodd’s (D-Connecticut) plans to crack down on so-called predatory lending by banks. They also support House Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank’s (D-Massachusetts) plans to probe alleged discrepancies in mortgage rates among white and minority home purchasers.

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights wants to kill the new “Real ID” Act, which establishes nationwide standards for state-issued driver’s licenses and identification cards. Liberals say the law discriminates against illegal aliens by making it more difficult for them to obtain driver’s licenses, which in turn makes it less likely that they will obtain automobile liability insurance.

Groups such as the ACLU are determined to give America’s terrorist enemies access to the U.S. civilian justice system and are eager to shut down the U.S. military’s high-secu-

rity prison for terrorists at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Their actions reflect the American Left’s obsession with undermining the nation’s efforts to defend itself from Islamist aggression.

This mindset is epitomized by comments by Michael Ratner, a longtime admirer of Fidel Castro and Ernesto “Che” Guevara, who heads the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR). “Guantanamo represents everything that is wrong with the U.S. war on terrorism. The Bush administration reacted to 9/11 with regressive and draconian measures worthy of a dictatorship, not a democracy,” Ratner said in an interview that the website AlterNet.org published in 2004. CCR ignores the fact that detainees at Guantanamo are terrorist “unlawful combatants” whose approach to fighting war places them outside the protection of the law of war, and that wars are supposed to be waged on battlefields, not in U.S. courtrooms.

The Center, which is at the forefront of the legal Left’s push to curtail the federal government’s war-fighting powers, held a press conference in January urging Congress to shut down the Guantanamo detention facility. Of course, CCR also has no problem accepting donations from Hollywood liberals and from groups such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) that are alleged to have links to terrorism. (For more on CCR, see “The Terrorists’ Legal Team: Case By Case, The Center for Constitutional Rights Undermines America,” by Matthew Vadum, *Organization Trends*, September 2006)



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The ACLU favors Senator Dodd's newly proposed "Restoring the Constitution Act of 2007," which would give unlawful combatants held at Guantanamo habeas corpus rights and gut the system of military commissions used to try the captured terrorists.

Caroline Fredrickson, director of the ACLU's Washington Legislative Office, blames politicians and the American people for being asleep at the switch. "The only thing scarier than a government that would take away our basic freedoms is a Congress and a people that let it happen. We urge lawmakers to stand for the Constitution by restoring due process," she said on February 13.

## Immigration

The Left, like the Right, is split over how to handle the immigration issue. Hispanic interest groups want liberalized laws—including awarding legal status to undocumented aliens—and have high hopes for the Democratic-controlled Congress. "It feels to me like we're on offense," said Janet Murguia, president of the National Council of La Raza. "We were playing defense last year." ("La Raza" is Spanish for "The Race.")

Rosa Rosales, president of the League of Latin American Citizens, said she is optimistic that public marches and demonstrations scheduled for the spring will place a spotlight on the immigration issue.

However, the NAACP is not for amnesty. "Our position in a nutshell is that everyone in the country needs to be documented," said Hilary Shelton, who heads the NAACP's Washington, D.C., office. "Hard-working poor folks are having to compete with those who don't have basic protections."

The AFL-CIO welcomes more immigration and looser immigration rules, seeing the pros-

pect of reversing the decline in union membership rolls. But some individual unions fear the labor competition new immigrants create.

## Gay Rights

The 110th Congress will not consider Republican proposals for a constitutional amendment banning same sex marriage. Allison Herwit, legislative director of the Human Rights Campaign (2005 revenue: \$23.7 million), reports that her group is excited that it is not "having to be on the defensive, and we are just looking forward to doing some proactive policy work... We have a [congressional] leadership in place that is going to be interested in what we have to say."

The Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (2005 revenue: \$1.9 million) wants Congress to rescind the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. However, spokesman Steve Rawls is guarded about the prospects for repealing the rule: "We know that many of the new Democratic members are 'Blue Dog' Democrats from conservative districts who aren't going to choose gay-rights legislation, *per se*, as the first bill they jump onto."

Gay rights groups want to add sexual orientation to federal hate crimes laws and support a prohibition on employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. Other issues, such as immigration policies affecting homosexuals could also surface. Some groups argue gays should be allowed to help their partners obtain green cards. Activists also want federal law changed so gay couples whose marriages are recognized in their home state qualify for federal benefits such as Social Security.

## Gun Control

Although many liberals acknowledge that gun control measures lose them votes at the ballot box, groups like the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence are optimistic. "The challenge now is to help convince leadership that this is an issue that's going to help their members pick up votes in the future," said Paul Helmke, president of the Brady Campaign, formerly known as Handgun Control, Inc. "I'd like to see them start addressing the issue in a positive manner, particularly reversing some of the backward steps they've taken over the past four to six years."

The Brady Campaign (2005 revenue: \$5.7

million) and the Violence Policy Center (2005 revenue: \$773,000) will press Democrats to make gun ownership data publicly traceable. Current federal law restricts access to "trace data" to law enforcement personnel. Kristen Rand of the Violence Policy Center says of such privacy restrictions: "It's just a gold mine of information for advocates trying to effectively target policy proposals."

The trace-data proposal has support from Mayors Against Illegal Guns, which is co-chaired by two liberal mayors, Republican Michael Bloomberg of New York City and Democrat Thomas Menino of Boston. The mayors' group met in January. "What they want to impress upon Congress is that this is not about gun control; this is about crime control," said Bloomberg aide John Feinblatt.

Rand wants congressional hearings on violent crime, which according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation rose in 2005 and the initial half of 2006. The Brady Campaign also wants Congress to make background checks at gun shows more burdensome.

## Abortion

The abortion lobby is eager to put the squeeze on Democratic lawmakers, but activist groups are far from united on their approach. Some wish to make the issue a legislative priority but others prefer a more low-key approach.

"They've got two years to deliver and prove to the American public that they get it...that they understand that people want solutions and are tired of the divisiveness," said Nancy Keenan, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America. NARAL, which stands for National Abortion Rights Action League, spent \$2.5 million on the 2006 election, and more than \$500,000 of that went to federal candidates.

But the president of Planned Parenthood, Cecile Richards, prefers not to discuss abortion. A recent National Journal report noted that she refrained from even using the A-word in a January interview. "I think there is an opportunity now to separate politics out of the health care debate...[and] get back to the business of being a health care provider." Richards is a former Pelosi aide and daughter of the late Texas Governor Ann Richards.

Many groups are focusing their resources on state-level fights, especially in Southern

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states where proposals curtailing abortion rights are plentiful. Groups helped defeat a South Dakota ballot initiative last fall that would have curtailed almost all abortions.

## Labor

Organized labor baldly asserts that Democrats owe them big time. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney called the November election results a “mandate for a union agenda.” (For a full discussion of organized labor’s goals, see the two-part series, “Big Labor’s Agenda for the 110th Congress,” by Ivan Osorio, which appeared in the January and February 2007 editions of Capital Research Center’s *Labor Watch*.)

Suffice it to say that unions expect Democrats to push hard for “card check,” the procedure that would eliminate the federal law’s guarantee of a secret ballot in determining whether employees want a union to represent them in collective bargaining. With Democrats in the majority, the card-check bill—deceptively known as the Employee Free Choice Act—has strong support. The House version of the bill was introduced on February 7 and had 230 co-sponsors at press time.

Vice President Dick Cheney said that President Bush plans to veto the bill. “Our administration rejects any attempt to short-circuit the rights of workers. We will defend their right to vote yes or no by secret ballot and their right to fair bargaining,” Cheney said on February 14.

Bill Samuel, legislative director for the AFL-CIO, has compared card-check to civil-rights legislation. If the president does veto the measure, it could yet be a “very big issue” in the 2008 election cycle, he warns. “There are few major social advances made in one year. The Civil Rights Act had been debated and voted on numerous times over a decade.”

Fearful of foreign competition, labor unions have never shown much fondness for free trade. In recent years, unions have urged the executive branch to require that international trade agreements be accompanied by side agreements that set labor and environmental standards. The new Congress is likely to heed these demands.

Early indications suggest Democrats will

be receptive to labor’s legislative push. “Labor is an important force in the American economy, and I want to assist them,” said Representative Robert Andrews, a New Jersey Democrat who chairs the House Education and Labor Committee’s labor panel. The Democrats who are labor’s closest allies are sure to battle over giving the president “fast-



**National Education Association president Ken Weaver**

track” Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) for negotiating trade agreements. The president’s authority expires on June 30, 2007.

## Teachers

The National Education Association (2004 revenue: \$304 million) and the American Federation of Teachers (2004 revenue: \$134 million) together claim 4.5 million members. They want Congress to provide more money for Head Start, student loans, school modernization, teacher training, and individuals with disabilities. They also want to change the centerpiece of President Bush’s education policy, the No Child Left Behind law, which is up for reauthorization in 2007. The law requires all public schools to make students proficient in reading and writing at their grade level and imposes a standardized testing regime to measure success.

The unions want to make the law’s testing and accountability requirements less rigorous, but raise the amount of federal funding. They claim the Bush administration has under-funded No Child Left Behind to the tune of \$55 million over the past five years. NEA president Reg Weaver says the law “falls

short in providing the promised additional tools and support that educators and students need.” This is Washingtonese for “more money.”

## Conclusion

Will liberal Big Government activists succeed in shoving America to the left in the 110th Congress? Not likely, but it remains to be seen what kind of long-term damage they can inflict on the American economy. It would also help if President Bush were willing to use his veto pen – he has vetoed only one measure so far in his six years in the White House.

Since Democrats won control of Congress, Bush has been conciliatory toward his political adversaries. “The entire White House is spending a lot more time talking to the Hill and a lot more time seeking feedback and giving them the time that they want,” said Karl Rove, his senior adviser. Rove said he personally followed up on “a letter to me from a Democrat member” who requested that he “look into a specific issue,” which he failed to specify in an interview that appeared February 13 in *The Politico*, a Washington, D.C. newspaper.

“Why this member feels comfortable saying, ‘Here’s something that I want you to look into,’ I can’t speak to,” said Rove. “But I’m glad that she feels that she can say: ‘I’d like you to look into this. I think we can find a way to work together.’”

*Matthew Vadum is Editor of Foundation Watch.*

## FW

Editor’s Note: This article has drawn heavily on reports by Lisa Caruso, Richard E. Cohen, Brian Friel, Margaret Kriz, Kellie Lunney, Alyssa Rosenberg, Greg Sangillo, Marilyn Werber Serafini, and Bara Vaida, which collectively comprise the bulk of “Wish Lists: What’s on the agenda of liberal activists now that Democrats control Congress?” (*National Journal*, January 27, 2007) a special magazine-length feature. This article has also drawn heavily on “Courting the New Congress,” by Suzanne Perry (*Chronicle of Philanthropy*, January 25, 2007).

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**Terrence Scanlon, President**

# PhilanthropyNotes

Three Democratic lawmakers, including House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi**, failed to disclose that they are officers of family charities as required by law, USA Today reported. The others were Representative **Rahm Emanuel** (D-IL) and Senator **Evan Bayh** (D-IN). Pelosi and Bayh said the non-disclosure, which comes as majority Democrats push to make ethics and increased transparency top congressional priorities, was an oversight. An Emanuel aide said the congressman, who is fourth in line in the House leadership, believed he was following the rules properly.

The government of Venezuelan President **Hugo Chavez** is gearing up for coercive corporate social responsibility. It plans to force banks to contribute a percentage of their profits for social programs. "The proposal has a lot of support, so it will happen," said a spokesman for the junta. Chavez unveiled plans in January to nationalize the electricity and telecommunications industries as part of his drive to achieve what he calls "21st century socialism."

Charities and foundations need to be more transparent and accountable to the public, Massachusetts Institute of Technology researcher **Michael Schrage** argued in a February 15 op-ed in the Financial Times. Today's publicly traded companies are much more transparent and better run than the typical wealthy charity, he wrote. "As grant-making institutions seek greater influence on public perception, policies and practices worldwide, their need for greater openness and technical assessment has intensified. Good intentions should not excuse poor accountability."

Federal tax dollars help fund a rehab center co-founded by a Scientologist, the Wall Street Journal reported. In fiscal 2004 Congress appropriated \$350,000 for the **Second Chance** treatment center, which treats non-violent prisoners who have substance abuse problems. The facility, near Albuquerque, New Mexico, is based on principles espoused by **L. Ron Hubbard**, the late founder of Scientology, who believed that taking saunas and vitamins helps addicts shake their addictions.

Attorneys general in several states filed briefs in a case before Pennsylvania's Supreme Court involving a \$5 billion charitable trust overseen by Pennsylvania's attorney general. The court ruled unanimously that the **Milton Hershey School Alumni Association** cannot contest decisions made by **Milton Hershey School officials**, the Harrisburg Patriot-News reported. Pennsylvania officials argued that allowing legal challenges to school operations would encourage lawsuits from groups with little connection to the trusts involved.

A charity argues that blocking distribution of its funds is unconstitutional, but a federal appeals court has held "there is no constitutional right to fund terrorism." The assets of the Columbia, Missouri-based **Islamic American Relief Agency-USA** will remain frozen by a 2005 U.S. Treasury Department order, the court ruled. The government contends the charity is affiliated with the Sudan-based **Islamic African Relief Agency**, which is accused of funneling funds to al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

A Manhattan court convicted **Cheryl McEwan** of embezzling more than \$400,000 from the employee matching gift program of \$3.3 billion **Rockefeller Foundation**. McEwan, a Rockefeller grants administrator, tried to argue that the scam was run by her husband who beat her whenever she raised the topic in conversation. She could receive a 15-year prison term. A Rockefeller spokesman said it anticipates recouping \$300,000 through insurance.

Twenty-one Americans each donated a minimum of \$100 million to charities last year, setting a new philanthropic record, the Chronicle of Philanthropy reported in its annual survey of giving. Even without **Warren E. Buffett's** \$37 billion-plus gift to the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and other charities, affluent Americans gave \$7 billion, up from \$4.3 billion the year before.