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Label Letter

Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Every Election Matters: Make Your Plan to Vote



Every election matters.

It's easy to focus on races for President or Congress, but many of the decisions that affect working people are made much closer to home. From the school board and city council to county commissioners, state legislators, governors, members of Congress, and the U.S. Senate, every elected official has a role in shaping the laws and policies that impact our jobs, our communities, and our families.

For union members, voting is one of the most important ways to have a voice outside the workplace.

ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL

The phrase “all politics is local” has endured because it's true.

Local elected officials decide how communities grow, invest in infrastructure, support public services, and develop workforce training programs. State legislators determine labor laws, prevailing wage protections, workers' compensation rules, unemployment benefits, and public

employee rights. Members of Congress vote on issues ranging from workplace safety and retirement security to infrastructure investments, trade policy, and labor protections.

The people elected at every level of government help shape the environment in which working people earn a living.

LEARN WHERE CANDIDATES STAND

“A union contract protects you at work. Your vote helps determine the laws and leaders that protect your rights beyond the workplace.”

— Rich Kline, President, Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Before you cast your ballot, take time to learn about the candidates running in your community.

Many state AFL-CIO organizations, Central Labor Councils, and affiliated

unions evaluate candidates based on issues affecting working people and publish endorsements or voter guides before elections. These resources can help members better understand where candidates stand on workplace issues and labor priorities.

Your own international union or local union may also distribute endorsements, voting information, or educational materials for races in your area.

KNOW YOUR VOTING INFORMATION

Election rules vary from state to state. Before Election Day, make sure you know:

- Whether you're registered to vote.
- Your polling location.
- Whether your state offers early voting or vote-by-mail.
- What identification, if any, you'll need.
- The hours your polling place is open.

Your state's election office is the best
See 'Every election,' page 2

source for official voting information. Nonpartisan organizations such as Vote.org also provide tools to check registration status, locate polling places, and review voting deadlines.

CONNECT WITH THE LABOR MOVEMENT

State AFL-CIO federations and local Central Labor Councils play an important role during election season.

They often provide:

- Voter guides and endorsements.
- Volunteer opportunities.
- Labor walks and phone banks.
- Information about important local races.
- Election updates and reminders.

Getting involved is a great way to meet other union members while helping educate working people about the election process.

MAKE YOUR VOTING PLAN

Research shows that people who make a voting plan are more likely to cast their ballot.

Ask yourself:

- Am I registered to vote?
- Do I know what's on my ballot?
- Will I vote early, by mail if available, or on Election Day?
- Where is my polling place?
- What time will I vote?
- Do I need childcare or transportation?
- Can I remind a friend, coworker, or family member to vote too?

Having a plan removes uncertainty and makes it easier to follow through.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Every election helps shape the future of our workplaces and our communities.

Whether the office on the ballot is city council, county commissioner, school board, governor, Congress, or the United States Senate, the decisions made by elected officials affect working people every day.

When union members stay informed, participate in the process, and make a plan to vote, they strengthen not only their own voice but the collective voice of working families across America.

Your Union Voter Checklist

Make Your Plan Before Election Day

Casting your ballot is easier when you plan ahead. Spend a few minutes now to make sure you're ready when it's time to vote.

✓ CONFIRM YOU'RE REGISTERED

Registration deadlines vary by state. Don't assume you're still registered because you've voted before. If you've recently moved, changed your name, or haven't voted in several elections, check your registration status and update it if necessary.

✓ LEARN WHAT'S ON YOUR BALLOT

Many local races receive little media attention, yet they often have the greatest impact on your community. Review your sample ballot ahead of time and learn about the candidates and ballot questions you'll be voting on.

✓ CHECK YOUR UNION'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Many international unions, state AFL-CIO federations, Central Labor Councils, and local unions interview candidates and publish endorsements or voter guides. These resources can help you understand where candidates stand on issues that matter to working people.

✓ VERIFY WHERE AND WHEN YOU'LL VOTE

Find your polling place before Election Day and check its hours of operation. If your state offers early voting or vote-by-mail, decide which option works best for you.

✓ KNOW WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Some states require identification to vote. Find out what forms of ID are accepted and gather anything you'll need before heading to the polls.

✓ MAKE A TIME COMMITMENT

Don't simply plan to vote "sometime Tuesday." Decide exactly when you'll vote.

Will you stop before work? During your lunch break? After your shift? Vote in early voting? Putting a specific time on your calendar makes it much more likely you'll follow through.

✓ PLAN FOR ANY OBSTACLES

Think ahead about transportation, childcare, work schedules, or anything else that could interfere with voting. Solving those problems in advance helps ensure nothing gets in the way on Election Day.

✓ ENCOURAGE OTHERS

Voting is contagious. After you've made your own plan, remind your coworkers, friends, and family members to make theirs. Offer someone a ride to the polls, share official election information, or simply ask if they have a voting plan.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- **Vote.org** – A nonpartisan resource to check voter registration, find your polling place, view election deadlines, and access state election information.
- **Your State Election Office** – Official information on voter registration, polling locations, voting deadlines, early voting, absentee voting, and voter ID requirements.
- **Your State AFL-CIO** – Statewide labor endorsements, voter guides, volunteer opportunities, and election information.
- **Your Central Labor Council** – Local labor activities, endorsements, and volunteer events in your community.
- **Your International or Local Union** – Candidate endorsements, legislative updates, and information on issues affecting your members.

The Time Has Come to Modernize America's Labor Laws

For too long, working people have watched their rights swing back and forth depending on who occupies the White House.

One administration strengthens workers' ability to organize and bargain collectively. The next rolls those protections back. A new National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) overturns decisions made by the previous Board. Federal courts reinterpret longstanding precedent. Then the cycle begins again.

The result is a labor law system that has become increasingly unstable.

That instability has real consequences. Workers trying to organize a union face changing election procedures and legal standards. Employers must adapt to shifting rules governing bargaining obligations and workplace policies. Unions spend years securing protections that can be narrowed—or erased—after the next election.

The U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in *Trump v. Slaughter* has brought that reality into even sharper focus. Although the case centered on presidential authority to remove leaders of independent federal agencies, its implications reach well beyond the agency involved in the dispute. For the labor movement, it raises an important question: How long can workers' rights depend on changing administrations and shifting judicial interpretations rather than stable laws enacted by Congress?

THE PENDULUM KEEPS SWINGING

When Congress enacted the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, it sought to establish a lasting framework for labor relations. The law created the NLRB to protect workers' right to organize, bargain collectively, and engage in concerted activity. Congress gave Board members staggered terms and protections against arbitrary removal to promote continuity and independence in enforcing federal labor law.

That system was never entirely insulated from politics. Presidents appointed Board members with different legal philosophies, and courts continued to interpret the law. But over time, Congress

largely stopped updating the National Labor Relations Act. As labor law reform stalled, more policy decisions were left to the NLRB, executive agencies, and the federal courts.

Issues ranging from union election procedures and captive-audience meetings to joint-employer standards, bargaining obligations, and remedies for unfair labor practices increasingly became matters of administrative interpretation rather than legislative action. Labor law began changing not because Congress amended the statute, but because administrations changed.

The Supreme Court's decision in *Trump v. Slaughter* threatens to accelerate that pattern.

By overturning the 1935 precedent established in *Humphrey's Executor v. United States*, the Court concluded that Congress generally cannot prevent a President from removing the leaders of independent executive agencies. Although *Slaughter* involved the Federal Trade Commission, many legal observers expect its reasoning to affect agencies such as the NLRB that have historically operated with a degree of independence.

If that happens, changes in presidential administrations could bring even greater changes to the composition of the Board—and, with it, the interpretation and enforcement of federal labor law.

Workers deserve to know that the rights guaranteed by the National Labor Relations Act will not change every few years. Employers also benefit from stable, predictable rules that allow them to comply with the law and bargain in good faith. Constantly shifting standards undermine confidence in the law itself.

The impact of judicial decisions extends beyond the National Labor Relations Board and reaches the broader labor movement as well. In 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* held that public-sector employees cannot be required to pay fair-share fees to the unions that represent them in collective bargaining. The ruling fundamentally changed the financial and organizing landscape for public-sector unions, placing greater emphasis on voluntary mem-

bership and member engagement. Like many landmark labor decisions, *Janus* demonstrates how a single Supreme Court ruling can reshape the labor movement for decades.

THE NEED FOR LASTING REFORM

The debate surrounding *Slaughter* is about more than one Supreme Court decision. It highlights a labor law system that has become increasingly dependent on executive appointments and judicial interpretation because Congress has failed to comprehensively modernize the National Labor Relations Act.

Congress cannot simply overturn a constitutional ruling through legislation. It can, however, strengthen and modernize federal labor law by establishing clearer statutory protections, improving remedies for violations, and reducing the extent to which workers' rights depend on changing administrative interpretations.

The labor movement has long argued that the National Labor Relations Act no longer provides workers with the timely and effective protections Congress envisioned in 1935. Organizing campaigns can drag on for months or years. Employers who violate the law often face minimal consequences. Workers who are illegally fired for union activity may wait years for relief while organizing efforts collapse.

Those are problems that no NLRB—regardless of who appoints its members—can solve alone.

Ultimately, *Slaughter* serves as a reminder that lasting change will not come solely from the courts or the next Board majority. Durable protections for working people require durable laws. That responsibility rests with Congress and with the elected officials who write, amend, and defend the nation's labor laws.

As Americans prepare to vote this November, it is worth remembering that every election helps shape the future of workers' rights. The officials elected to Congress, state legislatures, governors' offices, and ultimately the White House will decide not only who enforces labor law, but whether it is strengthened, modernized, or allowed to continue swinging with the political pendulum.

When Money Speaks Louder Than Workers

The American labor movement has always believed in a simple principle: democracy works best when every voice has an opportunity to be heard.

That principle applies in the workplace, where workers have the right to organize and bargain collectively. It also applies at the ballot box, where every citizen is entitled to one vote.

But one vote does not always translate into one voice.

Over the past several decades—and particularly since the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*—the influence of money in American politics has grown dramatically. A series of Supreme Court rulings has steadily narrowed Congress's ability to regulate campaign spending, allowing wealthy individuals, corporations, and outside organizations to spend unprecedented sums to influence elections.

The Court's most recent campaign finance decision continues that trend by striking down long-standing limits on coordinated spending between political parties and candidates. While supporters argue the ruling strengthens political speech protected by the First Amendment, critics contend it further weakens safeguards intended to limit the influence of money in federal elections.

The result is a political system in which the ability to spend millions—or even billions—of dollars has become an increasingly powerful tool for shaping campaigns and public debate.

MORE THAN ONE ELECTION

This discussion is not about one candidate or one political party.

Nor is it about one billionaire.

It is about a campaign finance system that increasingly allows a relatively small number of extraordinarily wealthy individuals and organizations to exercise influence far beyond that of the average voter.

Working people understand this imbalance better than most.

No individual worker can match the political spending of a billionaire, a Fortune 500 corporation, or a network of wealthy donors. That is one reason unions have long encouraged workers to

join together—not only at the bargaining table, but also in the democratic process. Collective action allows working people to advocate for policies that improve wages, strengthen workplace protections, expand apprenticeship opportunities, and protect the freedom to organize.

Yet as campaign finance restrictions have been weakened, many Americans have grown concerned that access and influence increasingly follow wealth.

Whether those concerns involve government contracts, regulatory priorities, tax policy, or appointments to key federal agencies, the perception that major political donors enjoy greater access to decision-makers than ordinary citizens can erode public confidence in government itself.

Democracy depends not only on fair elections, but also on public confidence that elected officials are serving the public interest rather than the interests of their largest financial supporters.

WHY IT MATTERS TO WORKERS

For the labor movement, campaign finance is not an abstract constitutional debate.

The officials elected today appoint members of the National Labor Relations Board. They nominate federal judges who interpret labor laws. They appoint cabinet officials responsible for enforcing workplace safety standards, wage and hour laws, and employment protections. They decide whether to support or oppose legislation affecting collective bargaining, prevailing wage laws, retirement security, apprenticeships, infrastructure investment, and workers' rights.

When enormous sums of money increasingly shape political campaigns, working people naturally ask whether their voices carry the same weight as those with the resources to spend millions of dollars influencing elections.

That question is not partisan.

It goes to the heart of representative government.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S VOICE

Unions participate in politics because the laws that govern workers' rights are written by elected officials.

Labor organizations encourage members to become informed, volunteer, vote, and support candidates who share their values. Those activities are part of the democratic process.

But the labor movement has also long argued that democracy functions best when working people know who is attempting to influence their vote and when no single individual or special interest can dominate the political conversation simply because of extraordinary wealth.

DEMOCRACY REQUIRES MORE THAN ELECTIONS

The Supreme Court has repeatedly concluded that political spending is entitled to substantial constitutional protection. Those decisions have fundamentally reshaped the nation's campaign finance laws and limited the tools available to Congress to regulate money in politics.

That does not end the conversation.

Congress retains authority to pursue reforms that are consistent with constitutional requirements, including measures that improve transparency and strengthen public confidence in the electoral process. Those debates are likely to continue as campaign spending reaches record levels and new questions emerge about the influence of concentrated wealth on American democracy.

For working people, the issue is larger than campaign finance alone.

It is whether our democracy continues to reflect the voices of millions of workers, retirees, veterans, and families—or whether those voices are increasingly overshadowed by a small number of individuals and organizations with the resources to shape the political landscape.

The labor movement has always understood that there is strength in solidarity. That principle applies in our workplaces, in our communities, and in our democracy. As Americans continue debating the role of money in politics, the central question remains the same: how do we ensure that every citizen's voice matters—not just those who can afford to spend the most?

Hawaii & Citizens United: Change Doesn't Always Start in Washington



When the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* in 2010, it fundamentally changed the role of money in American elections.

The ruling held that corporations, labor unions, and other organizations have a First Amendment right to spend unlimited amounts advocating for or against candidates, provided that spending is independent of the campaigns themselves. Over the years, the decision helped fuel the growth of Super PACs and outside political spending, while making it increasingly difficult for Congress to place new limits on money in politics.

Many Americans assumed that was the end of the conversation.

It wasn't.

This year, Hawaii became the first state to enact a law specifically designed to challenge the practical effects of *Citizens United*. Rather than attempting to overturn the Supreme Court's ruling directly, Hawaii took a different approach. The new law redefines the powers granted to corporations under state law, declaring that corporate charters issued by the state do not

include the authority to spend money influencing elections. The measure is widely expected to face constitutional challenges, but supporters hope it will ultimately give the courts an opportunity to reconsider the reach of *Citizens United*.

Whether Hawaii's approach ultimately survives judicial review remains to be seen.

What it demonstrates, however, is that important public policy debates do not begin and end in Washington.

They often begin in state legislatures.

The lawmakers who introduced, debated, and passed Hawaii's legislation were elected by voters. The governor who signed it into law was elected by voters. If courts eventually review the law, it will be because state officials chose to test a new legal theory through the legislative process.

For working people, there is an important lesson.

State legislatures are not simply responsible for roads, schools, or state budgets. They frequently become the testing ground for ideas that shape national policy. From campaign finance reform to

workplace protections, prevailing wage laws, paid leave, apprenticeship programs, and collective bargaining rights, many of the debates that eventually reach Congress or the Supreme Court begin in state capitols.

That is why every election matters—not only those for President or Congress, but also the races for state representative, state senator, attorney general, and governor. Those officials write the laws, defend them in court, and often determine whether new ideas receive a hearing at all.

The debate over money in politics is far from settled. Hawaii's new law may ultimately be upheld, narrowed, or struck down. Whatever the outcome, it serves as a reminder that democracy is not a spectator sport. The laws that shape our nation often begin with citizens who elect leaders willing to test new ideas, challenge existing precedent, and ask the courts to take another look.

For the labor movement, that's an important reminder. Lasting change rarely happens all at once. More often, it begins one legislature, one election, and one law at a time.

Union-Made Labor Day Picnic



DO BUY

look for these products for your Labor Day picnic

HOTDOGS & SAUSAGES:

- » Ball Park
- » Boar's Head
- » Foster Farms
- » Hebrew National
- » Hofmann
- » Hormel
- » Oscar Mayer
- » Gianelli
- » Kroger brand

BREAD AND ROLLS:

- » Wonder Bread
- » Alfred Nichols Bakery
- » Strohmann
- » Arnold
- » Francisco

CONDIMENTS:

- » French's mustard
- » Gulden's mustard
- » Heinz ketchup
- » Jack Daniel's barbecue sauce
- » Vlasic pickles and relish

SNACKS:

- » Munchos
- » Funyuns
- » Rold Gold

- » Frito-Lay
- » Doritos
- » Chex
- » Mikesells Potato Chips
- » Mission Tortilla Strips

BEER:

- » Anheuser-Busch
- » Black Eye Ale
- » Blue Heron Pale Ale
- » Blue Moon
- » Camo Black Ice
- » Coors
- » Hamm's
- » Iron City
- » Killian's
- » Lionshead
- » Mad River Brewing Co.
- » Michelob
- » Miller
- » Rolling Rock
- » Samuel Adams
- » Shock Top
- » Widmer Brothers Brewing

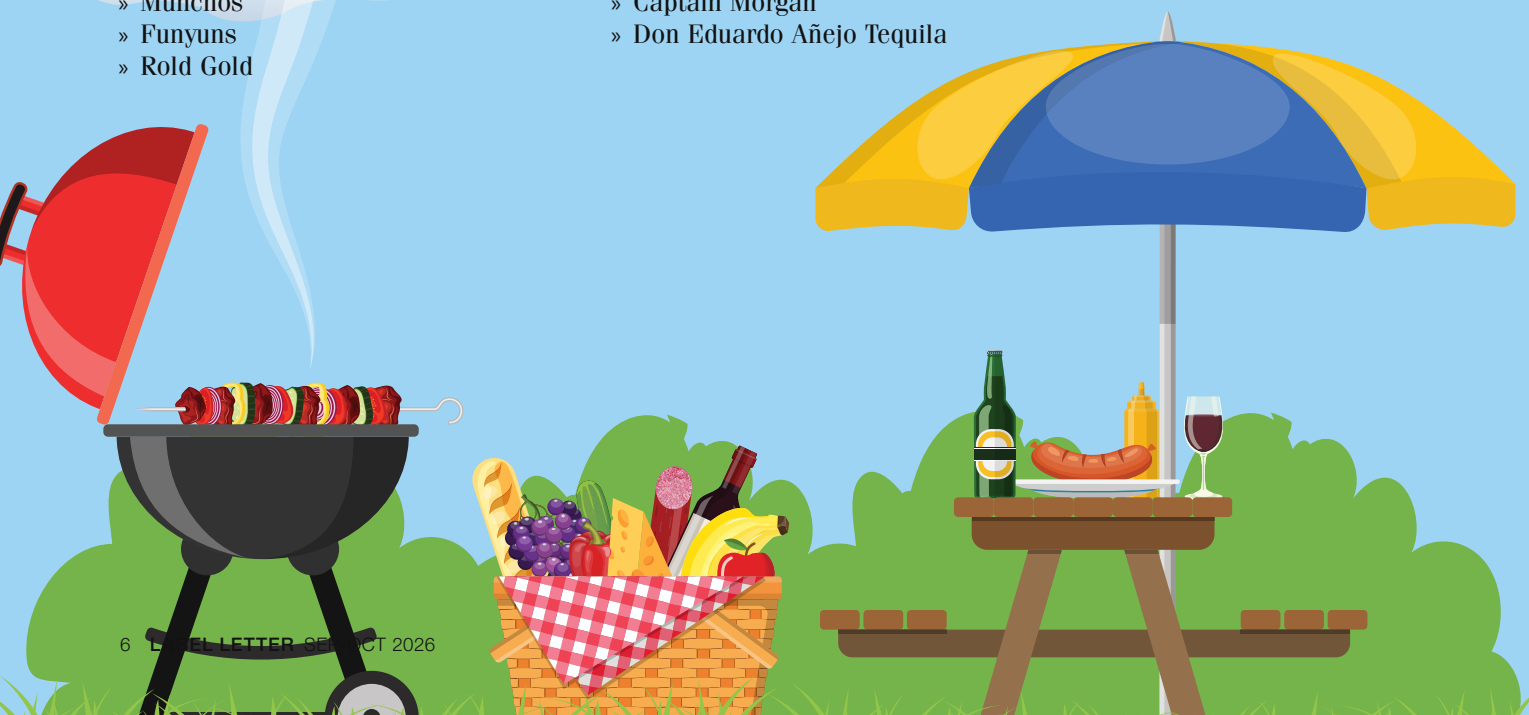
SPIRITS AND LIQUEURS:

- » Bacardi
- » Barefoot Wine and Bubbly
- » Captain Morgan
- » Don Eduardo Añejo Tequila

- » Four Roses Bourbon
- » Gilbey's Gin
- » Jack Daniel's
- » Jim Beam
- » Knob Creek
- » Pinnacle Vodka
- » Rain Vodka
- » Seagram's Seven Crown
- » Southern Comfort

MIXERS AND OTHER NONALCOHOLIC DRINKS:

- » Schweppes (tonic, club soda, ginger ale)
- » Minute Maid juices
- » Sprite
- » Clamato
- » V8
- » Welch's juices (including sparkling juice)
- » Coca-Cola
- » Dr. Pepper
- » Pepsi
- » Gatorade
- » Little Hug Fruit Barrels
- » SunnyD
- » Ditka's Kick Ass Bloody Mary Mix



AFL-CIO NATIONAL BOYCOTTS

SEP-OCT 2026



RETAIL

SUBMITTED BY AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS (AFT)

- » Target — Do not shop at Target for back-to-school and other school-related supplies.

COMMUNICATIONS

SUBMITTED BY COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA (CWA)

- » T-Mobile

EVENT CENTERS SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

- » Montgomery County Conference Center—Bethesda, Maryland (Note the boycott extends only to the Conference Center)

FOOD

SUBMITTED BY Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM)

- » Mondelez International Snack Foods (those made in Mexico)

HOTELS

SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

Support workers at these hotels by boycotting the following properties:

ALASKA:

- » Hilton Anchorage
- » Marriott Anchorage Downtown

- » Homewood Suites by Hilton Anchorage
- » Hampton Inn Anchorage
- » Hilton Garden Inn

CALIFORNIA:

- » Hilton Long Beach
- » Hyatt Centric Fisherman's Wharf
- » The Jay, Autograph Collection
- » Hilton Los Angeles Airport
- » Terranea Resort
- » Hyatt Regency Santa Clara
- » Four Seasons Beverly Hills
- » Langham Huntington

LEGAL

SUBMITTED BY American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

- » Gleason, Dunn, Walsh & O'Shea
- » McDonald, Lamond, Canzoneri and Hickernell

OTHER

SUBMITTED BY Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC)

- » Reynolds American, Inc., Vuse e-cigarettes

RESTAURANTS

SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

WASHINGTON, DC:

- » **STARR restaurants:** The Occidental, Osteria Mozza and Le Diplomate
- » **Knightsbridge Restaurant Group:** Modena, Bombay Club and Rasika

When some labor disputes with businesses cannot be resolved, the AFL-CIO supports its affiliates by endorsing their boycotts. A boycott is an act of solidarity by voluntarily abstaining from the purchase or use of a product or service.

POLICY GUIDELINE FOR ENDORSEMENT OF AFFILIATES' BOYCOTTS

The AFL-CIO Executive Council has developed policy guidelines that regulate how the federation endorses boycotts undertaken by its affiliates. To get AFL-CIO sanction, boycotts should be directed at primary employers.

THE GUIDELINES INCLUDE THESE PROVISIONS:

All requests to the national AFL-CIO for endorsement must be made by a national or international union.

Any affiliated union with a contract in force with the same primary employer will be contacted by the AFL-CIO to determine whether there is an objection to the federation's endorsement.

Affiliates will be asked to provide the AFL-CIO with background information on the dispute in a confidential information survey. Prior to endorsement of the boycott, the executive officers, or their designees, will meet with the national union's officers, or their designees, to discuss the union's strategic plan and timetable for the boycott, or other appropriate tactics, and to discuss the federation's role.

The national or international union initiating the boycott is primarily responsible for all boycott activities; the AFL-CIO will provide supplemental support.

Boycotts will be carried on the AFL-CIO national boycott list for a period of one year, and the endorsement will expire automatically at the end of that time. National and international unions may request one-year extensions of the listings for actions where an organizing or bargaining campaign is actively in place.

(These guidelines were adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council in April 2011.)

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EndNotes

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By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*

Voting Rights Are Union Rights *That Protect Workers' Rights*



The workplace protections of your union contract are threatened by anti-union, anti-worker politicians. The evidence is clear: a pro-company Labor Department and NLRB, weakened federal agencies like OSHA, and Supreme Court decisions that degrade the democratic process.

Republicans in Congress, at the direction of President Trump, passed the Save Act in the House of Representatives in February. The Save Act, if passed by the Senate, would create obstacles for many American citizens seeking to vote.

What is your defense against this ongoing assault upon workers' rights?

How can you stop attacks on voting rights? How can you join the fight to return the Labor Department, the NLRB, and OSHA to their values and missions?

One of the most significant things you can do is to register and vote for pro-union candidates. And help others do this, too. In fact, in many places you will find your union brothers and sisters running for office. Offices ranging from school board to Congress, from statehouse to city. More friends in political office will ensure that our voices, views, and needs will be considered.

Your vote will count this November only if you cast it. Help to reset the nation's course this November 3. Reverse the negative policies that confront working Americans by voting for our fellow union members and allies.

More active participation, such as phone banking and canvassing, is a further step. A valuable contribution that makes a difference for labor-friendly candidates.