

Planning a **Watch Party**

AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum

Tuesday, Aug. 7

MSNBC TV, 7 p.m. Eastern

Moderated by Keith Olbermann

**WORKING FAMILIES
VOTE2008
AFL-CIO**

www.WorkingFamiliesVote08.org

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Introduction

O **N THE EVENING OF AUG. 7,** candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination will voice their views on working family issues at a nationally televised AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum at Soldier Field in Chicago.

The forum will air at **7–8:30 p.m. EDT (6–7:30 p.m. Central Time) on MSNBC TV**, moderated by “Countdown” host Keith Olbermann, and on XM Radio. Starting at 8 p.m. EDT, Olbermann will broadcast the first half-hour of “Countdown” from our stage.

Unlike other televised debates and forums, questions for the candidates will be asked by working men and women and the topics will focus on working family issues.

The AFL-CIO encourages national and local unions, state federations, central labor councils and union activists to host Watch Parties—large or small gatherings of union members to watch the forum and discuss the issues. This toolkit is designed to help you do just that. If you feel you need additional assistance or information, please call 202-637-5018 or e-mail aomens@aficio.org.

The AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum, sponsored by the national AFL-CIO, Illinois AFL-CIO and the Chicago Federation of Labor, is a great opportunity to educate union members about critical issues and the candidates’ positions. It also is an opportunity to be part of a major national event that will focus widespread attention on the matters we care most about, including good jobs, health care, education, fair trade, retirement security and workers’ freedom to form unions.

Another good source of information about 2008 presidential candidates is the AFL-CIO website www.WorkingFamiliesVote08.org, which includes candidates’ positions and records, the latest news from blogs and pollsters, videos and an interactive forum where working families can make their voices heard in the presidential endorsement process. Please encourage people who view the AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum to share their thoughts and opinions at www.WorkingFamiliesVote08.org/forum.

Talking Points for a Watch Party

What Is the AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum?

- Working people are going to get a chance to hear from the 2008 Democratic presidential candidates on the issues most important to working families at the AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum Aug. 7.
- The forum will be nationally broadcast live from Chicago on MSNBC TV at 7 p.m. EDT (6 p.m. Central). “Countdown” host Keith Olbermann will moderate the forum, with working men and women asking questions of the candidates. Across the country—and here in our town—union members will gather to watch the event at Watch Parties.
- Some of the questions asked of candidates at the Aug. 7 forum have been submitted and voted on by working family visitors to the endorsement website. (To submit or vote on a question, go to: www.workingfamiliesvote08.org/contest.)

Why Is It Important?

- After seven years of disregard by the Bush administration, working people are struggling to make ends meet today and America is in danger of seeing our middle class disappear.
- But we have the power to change course by electing a president in 2008 who will work for working families.

Why a Forum Now?

- The Presidential Candidates Forum is a key step in the AFL-CIO’s presidential endorsement process. It’s an important opportunity for working people to hear from the candidates on the issues most important to working families—and to ensure that the candidates hear from working people.

What Else Have We Done?

- Other efforts have included the AFL-CIO’s interactive website, www.WorkingFamiliesVote08.org; a series of AFL-CIO town hall forums with candidates; many meetings of AFL-CIO affiliates hosting the candidates; and a questionnaire about candidates’ positions on working family issues, distributed to all major candidates of both parties, which was answered by all the major Democrats in the race. (See www.WorkingFamiliesVote08.org/questionnaires.)

Working family voters will go to the polls in record numbers in 2008 to vote for good jobs, health care, education, fair trade and workers’ freedom to form unions to bargain for a better life. The AFL-CIO and affiliate unions expect to mobilize hundreds of thousands of volunteers and reach millions of union household voters with information about the candidates.

Working Families Issues Guide

Share these stunning facts with the guests at your Watch Party. For more details and current developments, visit www.aflcio.org.

Good Jobs

America's workforce is under pressure, facing stagnant wages, rapidly rising health care costs, disappearing retirement benefits and an overall lack of job security. It's taken 10 years for America's minimum wage workers to get a raise, and families still are struggling to get by on what they earn. The next president must put a high priority on ensuring that the U.S. economy is creating good jobs at good wages.

- ▶ **Average wages** today are only 15 percent higher than they were in 1980, despite a 67 percent increase in workers' productivity. (Economic Policy Institute)
- ▶ The median inflation adjusted U.S. **household income** fell 2.7 percent between 2000 and 2005. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- ▶ Up to 14 million **middle class jobs**—information technology, professional, manufacturing and other jobs—are vulnerable to outsourcing in the next 10 years. (University of California at Berkeley)
- ▶ The average **CEO** now makes 411 times what an average worker is paid—up from 42 times in 1980. In 2006, the average CEO of a Standard & Poor's 500 company received \$14.78 million in total compensation. (Institute for Policy Studies/United for a Fair Economy; The Corporate Library)

- ▶ More than half of all **economic growth** since 1979 has gone to the richest 10 percent of America's families, most of it to the top 1 percent. (Economic Policy Institute)

Employee Free Choice Act

America's working families are struggling to make ends meet and our middle class is disappearing. The best opportunity working people have to get ahead economically is joining together in unions to bargain with our employers for better wages and benefits. But the current system for forming unions and bargaining is broken. Employers routinely intimidate, harass, coerce and even fire workers who try to form unions and bargain for economic well-being. America needs a president who will fight for and sign the Employee Free Choice Act to restore our freedom to form unions and bargain for a better life.

- ▶ **America's workers want to form unions.** Research shows nearly 60 million would form a union tomorrow if given the chance. (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 12/06)
- ▶ **Too few ever get that chance** because employers routinely block their efforts to form unions—and our current legal system is too broken to stop them. As many as one-quarter of employers illegally fire workers who try to form unions. (Kate Bronfenbrenner, *Uneasy Terrain: The Impact of Capital Mobility on Workers, Wages and Union Organizing*, 9/6/00)

- ▶ **The Employee Free Choice Act** would give workers a fair chance to form unions to improve their lives by:
 - Establishing stronger penalties for violation of employee rights when workers seek to form a union and during first-contract negotiations.
 - Providing mediation and arbitration for first-contract disputes.
 - Allowing workers to form unions by signing cards authorizing union representation. (H.R. 800, S. 1041, 110th Congress)
- ▶ Allowing working people to choose for themselves whether to have a union is the key step toward **rebuilding America's middle class**. Union workers earn an average of 30 percent more than nonunion workers and are far more likely to have good health care and retirement benefits. (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Members in 2006," 1/07)
- ▶ **A majority in Congress supports the Employee Free Choice Act.** In the 110th Congress, the U.S. House passed the Employee Free Choice Act and it had majority support in the Senate—but a filibuster by Senate Republican opponents prevented it from passing. The Employee Free Choice Act also has the support of hundreds of respected organizations and individuals—major religious denominations, academics, civil and human rights groups, state and local officials and others.

Health Care

America has a health care crisis. Forty-five million Americans have no health insurance, while millions more are feeling the pressure of skyrocketing costs and inadequate coverage. Our health care system needs serious, comprehensive reform that will provide guaranteed affordable health care for all.

- ▶ The cost of an annual family **health insurance** premium has increased by more than 81 percent since 2000, reaching \$11,480 in 2006. (2006 Kaiser Family Foundation Survey)

- ▶ Today in the United States, 45 million people do not have health insurance. Eight out of 10 **uninsured** people hold jobs or live in a household with an employed person. (U.S. Census Bureau; Kaiser Family Foundation)
- ▶ The primary reason people are uninsured is the high cost of health insurance. And in a survey of people with housing problems, 25 percent said **medical debt** created their problem, including the inability to make rent or mortgage payments and the development of bad credit ratings. (National Coalition on Health Care)

Trade and Manufacturing

U.S. trade deals in recent years have cost America's workers millions of jobs and lowered living and working standards for workers globally. The next president must fight for a trade policy that supports, rather than hurts, working families here and abroad.

- ▶ America has lost more than 1 million jobs to the North American Free Trade Agreement alone. (Economic Policy Institute)
- ▶ More than 3 million U.S. manufacturing jobs have been lost since 2000, many of them because of flawed trade policies. (Economic Policy Institute)
- ▶ While good jobs have been leaving the country, the percentage of low-wage jobs keeps growing. By 2010, if current trends continue, about 30 percent of working Americans won't be making even poverty wages. Many of the occupations likely to show the largest job growth this decade pay poorly—retail sales, customer service and food and cleaning services, for example. (U.S. Department of Labor)
- ▶ The U.S. trade deficit in goods and services rocketed upward by more than \$50 billion in 2006 to \$765 billion—or nearly \$2 billion a day. (U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis)

Education

Every child deserves a world-class public education and access to affordable higher education. America's future—our ability to compete globally and grow economically—depends on what we're willing to provide to our children. But our children's schools are crumbling and college costs are growing out of reach of working families. Unfortunately, the current presidential administration and its allies have supported shifting public education funds to private schools and cutting student aid for higher education. We can and must do better.

- ▶ More than 80 percent of schools in the United States **need upgrades or repairs**. (General Accounting Office)
- ▶ Between 1994 and 2005, **teacher salaries** dropped by 3.4 percent when adjusted for inflation. (www.americanprogress.org)
- ▶ **Tuition** for undergraduates at public colleges rose by more than 50 percent between 1999–2000 and 2004–2005 and by 30 percent at private colleges. (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics)

Retirement Security

After a lifetime of work, retirees deserve a basic level of security. But employer-provided pensions are disappearing and Social Security is under threat. The next president must protect workers' pensions and retirement savings and strengthen Social Security rather than allow dangerous privatization schemes.

- ▶ Today, only 21 percent of private-sector workers have guaranteed defined-benefit pension plans. (BLS, National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in Private Industry, 3/06)
- ▶ Half of all American families have no retirement savings. Among families closest to retirement (those headed by someone 55 to 64 years old), nearly two out of five have no retirement savings in a 401(k), IRA or other defined-contribution account. (Federal Reserve Board Survey of Consumer Affairs 2004)
- ▶ The Social Security privatization plan advanced by the White House in 2005 would have cut guaranteed benefits as much as \$9,000 per year and added \$4.9 trillion in debt over the next 20 years. (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)

How to Host a Watch Party

As Soon as You Can

- ▶ Decide the location and style of your Watch Party. Will it be a large gathering at the union hall or other meeting place or a small get-together in someone's home? Will you serve refreshments? How many people do you hope will attend?
- ▶ You may decide you need help planning and putting together the event. If so, recruit people to be responsible for specific task areas such as materials, turnout, room set-up, refreshments and discussion leadership.
- ▶ Reserve the location. Be sure parking is available, the location isn't too hard for people to find and it is accessible for attendees with disabilities.
- ▶ Let us know what you are planning. E-mail us at aomens@aficio.org and describe your event, including where it will be and approximately how many people you expect.
- ▶ If you are inviting people who speak languages other than English, arrange to have a translator for the party.
- ▶ How will you show the forum? If yours is a small gathering, one regular television that gets MSNBC will be sufficient. For a large Watch Party, you will need multiple televisions at different locations around the room or to project the forum on a large screen.
- ▶ Decide who will open the party—greet people and say a few words to set the stage for the forum.
- ▶ If you plan to have an issue discussion after watching the forum (which should conclude around 8:30 p.m. EDT, 7:30 p.m. Central), decide who will lead or moderate the discussion.

- ▶ Customize the Sample Invitation Flier on page 11—or create your own. Invite people to arrive before the 7 p.m. EDT (6 p.m. Central) start time so they have time to greet one another and settle in before the forum begins.
- ▶ Arrange for a microphone and podium if you need them for the event opener and discussion leader.

One Week Before Your Watch Party

- ▶ Meet with the person who will open the party and the discussion leader. Go over his or her remarks with him or her. Information about working family issues is in the Working Families Issues Guide on pages 5–7, and plenty more is available at www.aficio.org.
- ▶ Send out a media advisory (see sample on page 15) if you are inviting press and talk with reporters.

The Day of Your Watch Party

- ▶ Set up the room.
- ▶ Test all equipment—televisions, cable or satellite hookup, projector and microphones, for example—early enough in the day that you can get repairs or replacements if needed.
- ▶ Have the party opener and the discussion leader come by early so they'll be familiar with the set-up and the microphones.
- ▶ **Have a great Watch Party!**

The Day After Your Watch Party

- ▶ Let us know how it went. Please e-mail us at aomens@aficio.org and tell us how many people participated and what their reactions were to the candidates.

AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum

Watch Party

Candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination will voice their views on working family issues at a nationally broadcast Presidential Candidates Forum in Chicago sponsored by the AFL-CIO. Come watch the forum at *[name of group or person hosting Watch Party]*'s Watch Party.

Working families will shape America's choices for Election 2008 and beyond—and workers will be the ones shaping the debate at the AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum. Find out where the candidates stand on the most important issues to working families, including jobs and wages, health care, retirement security, corporate accountability and the freedom of workers to choose whether to form a union free from employer intimidation.

For more information about the AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum, call *[contact person's phone number]*.

Tuesday, August 7

[Time]

[Location]

**WORKING FAMILIES
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www.WorkingFamiliesVote08.org

Media Timeline for Organizing a Presidential Forum Watch Party

Call AFL-CIO Media Outreach for Assistance: 202-637-5018

Two Weeks Out

- ▶ Scout out a good place for the event. It could be a home, a diner, a fellowship hall or a union hall.

One Week Out

- ▶ Invite a reporter or group of reporters. Send out the media advisory and follow up with an initial call to explain the event.
- ▶ Prepare a background packet for the media—include information on the event, the Working Families Issues Guide, a list of speakers, your newsletter, etc.
- ▶ Identify a few local workers who will attend the party who can act as spokespersons with the media. Get the Issues Guide to them and help them prepare to speak with the media on working family issues.

Three Days Out

- ▶ Get final commitments from reporters.
- ▶ Send advisory to TV News Assignment Desks.

Day Before Event

- ▶ Place reminder calls to reporters.
- ▶ Call TV News Assignment Desks to confirm they have the advisory.
- ▶ Speak to your spokespersons, the party opener and the discussion leader. Make sure they are prepared with the core message and agenda. They should know what role they are playing, the message they should deliver and their time limits.

Day of Event

- ▶ Call TV News Assignment Desks in the morning, by 9 a.m., and speak to an assignment editor.
- ▶ Assign someone to greet reporters and introduce them to participants when they arrive. Reporters also should be asked to sign in and give their contact information.
- ▶ Ask reporters if they're planning to do stories and what else they need.

Day After Event

- ▶ Follow up with any reporters who said they would attend and didn't.

Do's and Don'ts for Getting Good Media Coverage of Your Watch Party

Before the Event

DO start your conversations with reporters early—never the day before.

DO make sure reporters understand the issues of greatest concern to working people. Prepare workers to talk about these issues.

DON'T assume because you sent a fax or an e-mail you've contacted anyone. You must do follow-up calls. Don't assume reporters will attend unless they say they will.

DO ask reporters to R.S.V.P.

DO make sure reporters talk to participants who are as diverse and represent your workers and the community.

DON'T have only union leaders speak or take visible roles.

At the Event

DO have someone assigned to meet and greet reporters.

DO make sure workers speak with the reporters who attend.

DO take photos or video for later use in your publications—sometimes neighborhood publications will run photos if you offer them.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

Media Advisory for Tuesday, August 7

Contact: *[list names and telephone numbers of contacts who will be available]*

[City Name] Union Families to Hold AFL-CIO Presidential Forum Watch Party

Local Voters Gather to Watch AFL-CIO Presidential Forum Broadcast Live on MSNBC

On Tuesday, Aug. 7 in *[your location]*, union members and their families will gather to watch the AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum in Chicago, broadcast live on MSNBC. Reporters are invited to join this informal gathering where union voters will hear and discuss what the candidates have to say on issues most important to them, like health care, the freedom to join and form a union, Iraq, retirement security and fair trade policies.

“The AFL-CIO presidential forum will allow union members across the country to assess which Democratic candidate will best fight for working families issues,” said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. “The stakes couldn’t be higher – after seven years of a president who has big business on speed dial, it’s time for us to elect a candidate who listens to working families, not corporate cronies.”

The watch party in *[town]* will be one of hundreds across the country. *[If you’re doing a roundtable]* After the forum, participants will join in a roundtable to discuss the forum and which candidates understood working families best.

“In 2008, we will elect a president who stands up for working families,” said *[local leader attending watch party]*. “Working families in *[town]* are ready for a change, and we’re eager to hear from the Democratic presidential candidates about their plans for turning this country around.”

The AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum is a key part of an intensive six-month program to engage union members and their families in the AFL-CIO endorsement decision-making process. Beginning in April, the AFL-CIO held a series of town hall meetings with Democratic candidates in cities across the country.

WHAT: Watch Party: AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum live on MSNBC

WHEN: Tuesday, Aug. 7, *[time]*

WHERE: *[Location]*

Reporters please R.S.V.P. by calling *[xx]* or e-mailing *[xx]*.



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