



Supporting America's Workers

"I think it's time we had a President who will provide the only real economic security: good jobs. A President who will provide middle class payroll tax relief to get money in the pockets of workers who will spend it, not more tax giveaways for those at the top to stimulate the economy in the Cayman Islands and Bermuda. A President who will index the minimum wage to inflation and raise it from a 30 year low, not increase the tax burden on the middle class and those struggling to join it."

-- John Kerry, March 27, 2003

John Kerry has a 90 percent AFL-CIO voting record over an 18-year senate career. He has fought to raise the minimum wage, cosponsored bills to outlaw Striker Replacement and provide workers with Family and Medical Leave to spend time with a new child or care for a family member. He has helped beat back Republican efforts to gut OSHA, weaken worker safety rules and cut funds from worker training and employment programs. And he has fought for workers' right to organize in his home state of Massachusetts, including SEIU workers in Boston, UFCW and CWA workers throughout the state. He's also supporting UAW organizers seeking to organize in Worcester.

Here's what John Kerry has done and will do for working families:

Raise the Minimum Wage: The minimum wage has fallen further and further behind the cost of living. The buying power of the current minimum wage is 19 percent below the 1979 level in inflation-adjusted terms. John Kerry helped lead the fight to pass the last minimum wage increase in 1997 and is a strong supporter of legislation to increase the minimum wage and index it to inflation.

Expand Access to Quality Affordable Health Care: Today, 42 million Americans, including 10 million children, have no health care coverage. Health-care spending rose by 13.7 percent last year. Spiraling health care costs put new pressures on unions and management at contract time and on working families every day. John Kerry believes that if we want a strong economy and strong families, we should not rest until we have tackled the health care crisis, made health care more affordable and guaranteed health care coverage for every American.

Extend and Improve Unemployment Insurance: Unemployment Insurance is the nation's principal safety net for helping people who lose their jobs, but the program has lagged behind economic changes. Half of all unemployed workers received benefits in the 1950s, but only about one-third do today. Unemployment insurance should be reformed to cover more people, to provide sufficient benefits to people between jobs, and help laid off workers gain the workforce training skills that they need. John Kerry supports reforms that help workers and has consistently supported efforts to extend benefits to unemployed workers during recessions.

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Create Jobs: After inheriting an economy that created 22 million jobs over the previous eight years, the Bush Administration has presided over a loss of more than 1.8 million jobs. John Kerry supports efforts that put America back to work. He backed efforts to restore \$31 billion in highway cuts made by the Bush Administration last year, which threatened 300,000 jobs. And he supports creating American jobs and renewing our cities through building infrastructure, school construction and modernization, tax credits and cleaning up polluted areas in our country.

Enforce Equal Pay: Women make 75 cents for every dollar earned by a man -- there shouldn't be two pay scales in America for the same honest day's work. It's wrong that because working women are treated unfairly there is less take home pay for almost every working family in America. John Kerry supports pay equity legislation that would remedy economic injustice.

Protect Worker Safety: Ergonomics injuries, the nation's biggest job safety problem, are caused by heavy lifting and repetitive work and affect more than 1.8 million American workers each year. John Kerry strongly supports implementation of a mandatory ergonomics safeguards to improve workplace safety and have opposed legislative efforts to block these safeguards.

Provide Strong Whistleblower Protection: John Kerry wrote and led the fight to pass a law that prohibits airlines from firing or otherwise discriminating against employees who provide information to the federal government about possible airline safety violations.

Protect Workers Right to Organize a Union: John Kerry has strongly supported the right to organize for many Massachusetts workers. John Kerry supported SEIU Local 254 in their efforts to organize janitors in the Boston area, UFCW Local 791 in their efforts to organize the Star Market employees in the 43 stores in Massachusetts, UFCW Local 1445 in their efforts to organize the employees of Kayem Foods in Chelsea, and CWA Local 1365 in their efforts to organize the employees of Lucent Technology. Kerry also worked with Polaroid Retirees to recover benefits that were lost as a result of the Polaroid bankruptcy filing. And John Kerry is supporting UAW workers at the Sainte Gobaine plant in Worcester who have not been able to get their first contract due to the union busting tactics of the company.

Guarantee Prevailing Wages: John Kerry has voted consistently to protect the Davis Bacon Act and prevailing wage laws.

"The Massachusetts firefighters wanted to be the first to endorse John Kerry because he has been there for us. After the Worcester tragedy, John Kerry kept his promise to turn those lessons into real legislative action. He didn't just help heal our community-- he led the efforts to tell our story on a national level so that firefighters have updated technology, equipment and resources they need to keep us safe. John Kerry understands that homeland security starts with first responders and he has led the fight to make sure that the men and women who put their lives on the line everyday have a champion that understands that it takes resources, not just rhetoric to keep us safe."

-- Bob McCarthy, President, Professional Firefighters of Massachusetts

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