

Terry Bowman

UAW member and President of Union Conservatives, Inc.

Testimony before the Full Committee
U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

8 February 2012

Chairman Issa and members of this Committee, thank you for giving me the privilege of testifying before you today regarding the wrongful use of dues and fees for political spending by labor unions.

This is one of those subjects where almost everyone acknowledges that it happens all the time. In preparation for this testimony, I casually asked union members I work with who represent both sides of the political aisle this question: “Do you think union officials use our regular dues on politics?” Every one without exception laughed and said, “Of course they do.”

To protect workers from the constant political abuses of their dues by the union officials, there are really only two options:

1. Require a combination of Audits and Beck Rights. A non-partisan 3rd party would audit all spending by unions, and all subjective educational spending or anything regarding any political activity must be omitted from the agency fee (the minimum fee that union workers are required to pay in order to keep their jobs). And, make the “*Beck*” decision, (*The Communication Workers of America vs. Beck* 1988 Supreme Court decision) the default position for all union workers, and only those who wish to pay additional dues for political purposes can do so. This would remove the harassment, ridicule, and persecution workers receive who currently exercise their *Beck* rights. The Heritage Foundation's James Sherk estimated in 2006 that the nation's 10 largest unions expended, on average, only about 30 percent of dues on representing workers.¹

¹ <http://washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/columnists/2011/11/manhattan-moment-hands-my-union-dues#ixzz1I5oJOLw7>

2. The best and only clear way to ensure that the rights of all union workers are protected is to pass a National Right to Work law. This would ensure that only those workers who agree with the political activities of their unions are paying for it, and those who, like myself, find the far-left political activities of their unions to be despicable, would not be forced, as a condition of employment, to financially support those activities.

My testimony will show that the first option, like most legislation that requires financial audits, would be extremely costly and burdensome to both union organizations and their members. Audits could never successfully ensure union officials do not infringe upon worker's rights. The 2nd option is the only clear and guaranteed way to ensure that workers will not be forced to support political candidates and issues against their will. For over 15 years now, I have been a UAW member, and I have personally observed the intimidating political activities of my union. I am pro-union: but, in the context of what unions were originally created to do, represent their workers in the realm of the workplace.

I am also the president and founder of a non-profit organization called Union Conservatives. The entire reason I felt the need to start this organization was because my union was using my regular union dues to push a political agenda that I opposed.

In December 2009, my UAW local (local 898) published their newsletter entitled "*Raw Facts.*" In this issue, was a story which particularly enraged me entitled "**Health Care Reform: What Would Jesus Do?**" The article used incorrect theology to make the argument that Jesus was basically a socialist and would approve of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

I have some authority on this issue because I studied at Heritage College and Seminary, and I could easily tell that the author of this article incorrectly used Scripture in order to push a political agenda. It was finally at this moment where I stood up and said "ENOUGH! Somebody has to do something!" And of course, that "somebody" was me. I decided that the only way to

fight back against the abusive actions that union officials engage in with my hard-earned dues was to start organizing conservatives within the unions.

Since I started Union Conservatives, I have heard the stories of hundreds of union workers who are also tired and fed up with the political activities of their own unions. These American citizens rightly believe that the unions have become quasi-political parties and socio-economic groups pushing a radical, left-wing ideology that many of their workers, including me, find offensive. Up to 40% of union workers vote Republican.² That means over 5 million union workers in the United States alone feel harassed, ridiculed and persecuted because of the political activities of their union bosses.

Last month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released its 2011 information about Labor Union membership. There are 14.8 million working union members in the United States, or about 11.8% of the current workforce.³ Considering the Democrat bias of labor unions and that 40% of those union workers vote Republican, this means 5.9 million union members in the US are opposed to the political activities of their union officials.

To prove that this is true, I would like to cite for you some statistics:

1. A 2005-06 National Education Association survey found 45 percent of teachers under 30 classified themselves as conservative, and 63 percent of teachers age 40 to 49 classified themselves as conservative.⁴ Yet, the National Education Association continues to spend workers dues on far-left politics.
2. In a recent Harris Poll⁵, 72% of Americans agree that unions are too involved in politics, and even 60% of union households also agree.

² <http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/miarticle.htm?id=7605>

³ <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm>

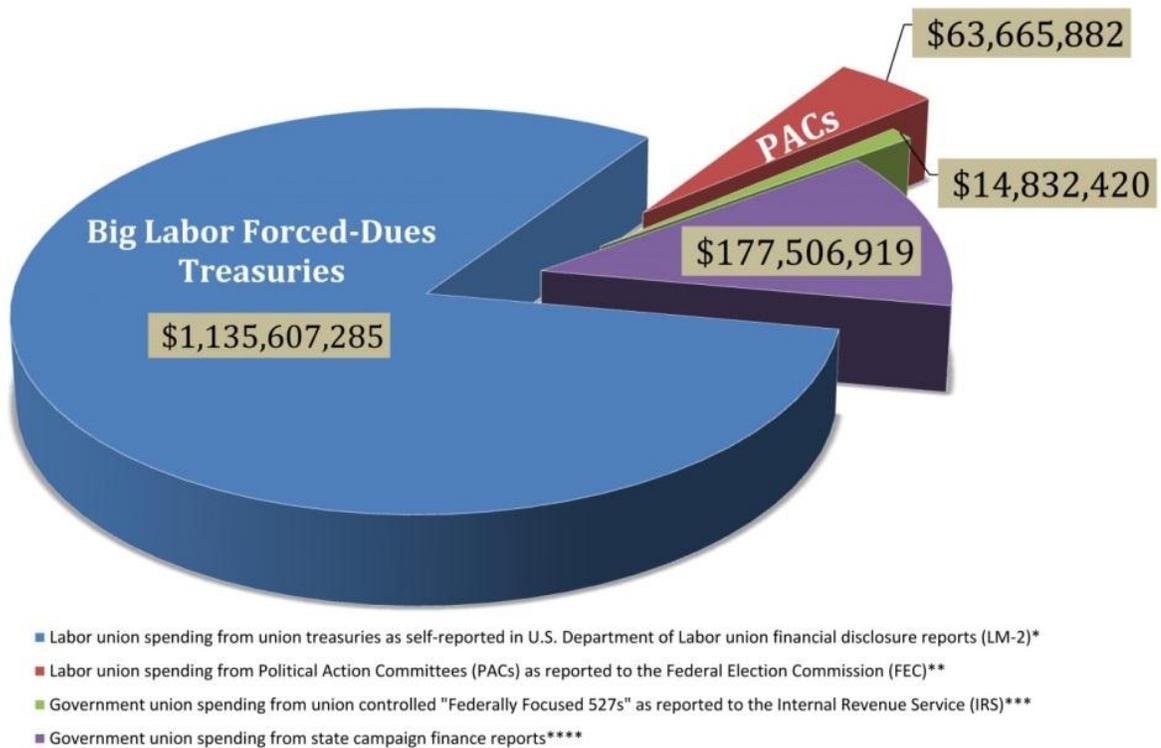
⁴ <http://www.michigancapitolconfidential.com/14013>

⁵

<http://www.harrisinteractive.com/NewsRoom/HarrisPolls/tabid/447/mid/1508/articleId/850/ctl/ReadCustom%20Default/Default.aspx>

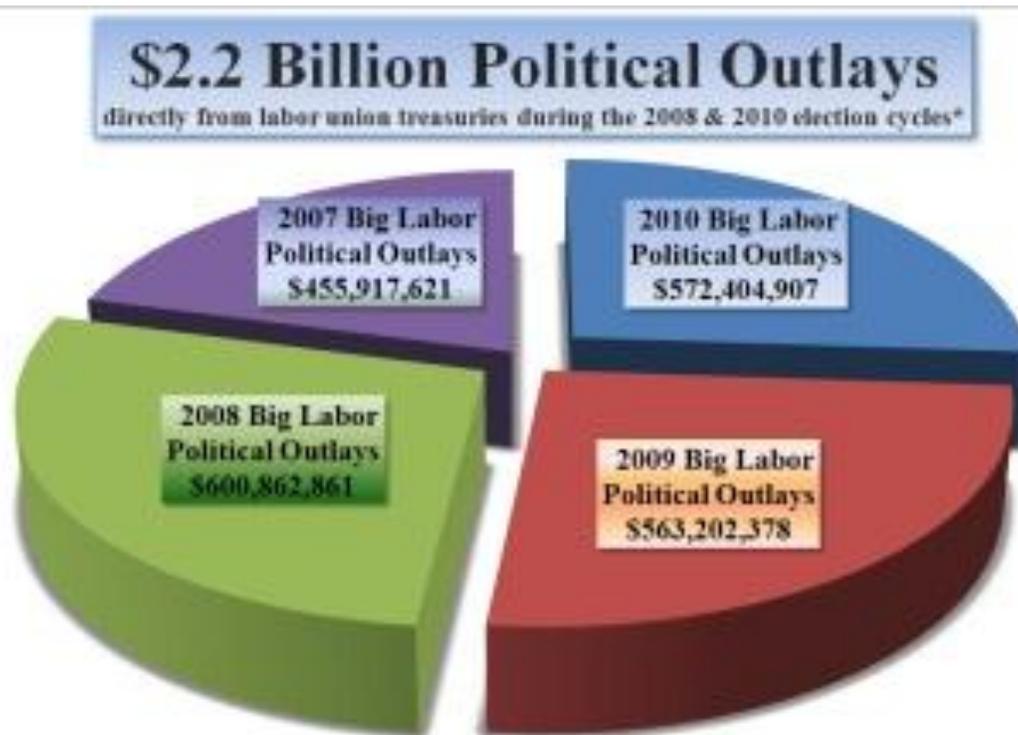
The amount of dues spent on politics by union officials is absolutely enormous. The National Institute for Labor Relations Research (NILRR) reports that Big Labor poured \$1.4 billion into the 2010 election cycle.⁶

BIG LABOR SPENT \$1.4 BILLION FOR POLITICS



The NILRR report continues: *“In 2009, Big Labor reported to the U. S. Department of Labor that it spent \$563.2 million on Political Activity, including lobbying. In 2010, Big Labor bosses reported spending another \$572.4 million on politics from forced-dues-funded union treasuries. Big Labor poured over \$1,135.6 million into political activity during the 2010 election cycle.”*

⁶ <http://www.nilrr.org/publications>



*National Institute of Labor Relations Research study of USDOL LMI-2 Report for the Years 2007-2010

The amount of forced union dues spent on political activities which 40% or more of their members disagree, is staggering.

The Communications Workers of America vs. Beck, Supreme Court 1988

The Supreme Court decision called *The Communication Workers of America vs. Beck*, acknowledged that unions do not have the right to use, for political purposes, the dues of workers who object to the political activities of their union bosses. Union workers must first resign their membership, and then only afterward pay what is called the “agency fee,” which is supposed to be an accurate reflection of the unions costs associated with collective bargaining and grievance handling.

The *Beck* decision, while a step in the right direction, unfortunately falls far short in protecting the rights of **all** union workers against the abuse of union officials who use their dues for political purposes.

Workers who exercise their *Beck* rights are frequently victims of humiliation, persecution and harassment on the job for resigning their union membership, and union officials do nothing to stop or even discourage this intimidating tactic. Because of this, fear stops many union members from exercising their rights.

Secondly, unions still use the “agency fee” as a means to spend money on political purposes – and it happens all the time. Why? Because there have been no consequences to the unions for doing so. They are self-governed, and *they* decide what is considered political, and what is not. This means that unions decide what can and cannot be included in the agency fee.

In December, I wrote an Op-ed for The Detroit News⁷ which lays out the fact that unions use regularly collected dues for political purposes all the time. In this article, I begin by showing an example of how unions use regular membership dues to push a political agenda:

The parking lot sign at my local union (UAW local 898) recently displayed the message: “Recall Gov. Snyder – Sign up here!” This very act turned the entire local office into a political propaganda machine. All the costs associated with the running of the property, building, and the salaries of the union officials who were responsible for displaying that message should have been removed from the “agency fee” that “Beck workers” are forced to pay as a condition of their employment.

But it doesn’t stop there...

Union officials use publications and magazines, websites and newsletters, and many other activities which they call “educational” to promote a political agenda.

For example: the UAW financially maintains their "Black Lake Facility"⁸ a retreat for where union members and staff go to be educated about things like “leadership development, union involvement, health and safety, political action, civil rights and many other topics.”

⁷ <http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20111206/OPINION01/112060316/1008/opinion01/Union-dues-still-spent-unfairly-for-some>

Although I have worked there for over 15 years, I have never once been invited to go to Black Lake Resort. However, many UAW members get their wages paid to attend the 1 week seminars (wages paid by the local union), and the entire retreat is financially paid for with regular union dues - including food and lodging (all of which are right on the premises). Unfortunately, there seems to be a certain group of people who are invited time and time again (workers who are involved with far-left union activity), and the rest of us are never afforded the opportunity to go. I have been told that these “training sessions” are full of political propaganda, and they constantly disparage the Republican Party.

Secondly, the UAW's publications entitled *Solidarity*, local union newsletters, and retiree publications are all promoted by the union officials as educational publications, yet they are full of political propaganda. You will find attached to this testimony just a small random selection of articles which are very biased and are not an accurate representation of the political opinions of their membership.

“Forced Solidarity” is no solidarity at all. Even prisoners in a chain gang have solidarity. Forced solidarity is nothing more than being a prisoner in chains. Only through having a complete volunteer union is there real and true solidarity.

But it doesn't stop there...

In 2004, the citizens of Michigan approved a constitutional amendment called “The Marriage Protection Amendment” which defined marriage as between one man and one woman.

According to Gary Glenn, the president of The American Family Association of Michigan, 66% of union members voted in favor of the amendment, yet their own union officials used their members' dues to fight against it. The Detroit News mirrors this fact and stated in an article dated October 22, 2004 called “**Same-sex marriage ban likely to pass:**”

“Unions oppose the (Marriage Protection Amendment), saying it interferes with collective bargaining agreements, with many now including domestic partner

⁸ <http://www.uaw.org/page/black-lake>

benefits. But the survey shows two-thirds of union households support Proposal 2, identical to the level of support in nonunion households."

But it doesn't stop there...

Union bosses fight against responsible government actions, and use member dues to recall Republican elected officials – many of whom union workers supported during the campaign. Union officials essentially force Republican workers to pay to nullify their own vote in the ballot box.

The violent protests and divisive actions we saw by a contingent of union activists in Wisconsin last year shows that union officials and their community organizing tactics are out of touch with the American people and with most union workers nationwide. None of the funds used for these activities, the salaries of the union officials who engage in them, or the costs associated with the facilities, are removed from the “agency fee” even though at heart, these are political actions. Even “Beck workers” still have to pay for the political actions of their officials.

But it doesn't stop there...

Union officials seem to have forgotten their original purpose, and instead now focus on changing the very core of American principles. Those principles of limited government, free-market economics and personal responsibility run anathema to the union message of big government (to ensure continued forced union dues from government employees), liberalism, and guaranteed reward without personal responsibility. They are now more known to the American public for their radical left-wing activism, violent protests, and their alignment liberal organizations.

The fact that unions are so closely tied with just one political party means that they cannot effectively see the truth of society and its needs.

In his groundbreaking and important book, *Liberating Labor*, Economics professor Charles W. Baird quotes Pope John Paul II. In *Laborem Exercens*, the highly respected pontiff says:

*“The role of unions is not to “play politics” in the sense that the expression is commonly understood today. Unions do not have the character of political parties struggling for power; they should not be subjected to the decision of political parties or have too close links with them. In fact, in such a situation they easily lose contact with their specific role, which is to secure the just right of workers within the framework of the common good...**instead they become an instrument used for other purposes.**”⁹*

On October 2, 2010, union officials from around the country, along with the small percentage of union workers that they could get to attend, rallied in Washington DC. Called the One Nation Working Together Rally, union officials publicly attacked the Republican Party, the Tea Party, and anyone who did not agree with their big government agenda. The salaries paid to union officials who appeared at this rally, and all costs covered by the unions associated with the rally should be removed out of the “agency fee.”

Normally, this action is bad enough and an abusive use of regular union dues. But unfortunately, it got much worse...

Union officials rallied shoulder to shoulder with The Communist Party USA, The Socialist Party, and the Democratic Socialists of America.

It’s important to understand that in none of the UAW flyers for this event, was this partnership mentioned to the members. It was only after seeing YouTube videos of the event the associations were exposed.¹⁰ When I reported this fact to union members, they were outraged that our union officials would join with these groups that want nothing less than the destruction of America as we know it. And yet, our regular union dues were used to pay the salaries of the union officials who attended and spoke. Our dues were used to promote this extremely offensive event.

But it doesn’t end there...

⁹ *Liberating Labor*, Charles W. Baird. 2002 by The Acton Institute, Grand Rapids, Mi.

¹⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7X-0iA8L64>

On Labor Day 2011, President Obama came to Detroit to speak at the Labor Day parade. Paid union officials from around Michigan came to rally for and cheer the President. During this event, Teamster's President James Hoffa made very incendiary remarks:

"We've got to keep an eye on the battle that we face -- a war on workers. And you see it everywhere. It is the Tea Party," he said. "And there's only one way to beat and win that war -- the one thing about working people is, we like a good fight. President Obama, this is your army, we are ready to march," Hoffa said. "But everybody here's got to vote. If we go back, and keep the eye on the prize, let's take these son-of-a-bitches out."¹¹

The disturbing thing about this speech is that Mr. Hoffa, when speaking about the Tea Party, is speaking about many people in his own union. He is calling many of his own members "sons-of-bitches." I know this because I have addressed many Tea Parties, and I have been encouraged to see many in attendance are union members, including Hoffa's own Teamsters. In essence, many in his own union that he called "sons-of-bitches" are paying Mr. Hoffa's \$368,000 salary and generous benefits. His speech is disturbing at best, downright abusive to his own members at worst.

But it doesn't end there....

Recently, a MEA (Michigan Education Association) manual was discovered. For more than two years since its printing, it has urged its members to use students as propaganda in contract negotiations, and lays out how to organize strikes, which are illegal in Michigan.¹²

This manual was not produced and printed using PAC funds. It was produced and printed using regular union dues, even though much of the information in this manual would be considered disturbing at best, downright repulsive and hateful at worst. Let's be clear, at its

¹¹ <http://nation.foxnews.com/teamsters/2011/09/05/teamsters-boss-declares-war-gop-lets-take-son-bitches-out>

¹² <http://www.michigancapitolconfidential.com/16353>

heart, this is a manipulative and subversive use of its member's union dues, and at its heart, it is political in nature.¹³

But it doesn't stop there...

The SEIU "Contract Campaign Manual," encourages civil disobedience and breaking the law. In true militant and intimidating fashion, this manual recommends complete barbarianism tactics to intimidate employers into giving in to contract demands. Workplacechoice.org reports:

*"SEIU's Contract Campaign Manual details the union's strategies for attacking an employer's reputation, its relationship with its customers and vendors, and even its managers personally."*¹⁴

When evaluating the possible methods of attack, the manual offers different tactics that can cost the employer money. Suggestions include: disrupting income sources such as customers or investors, generating bad publicity to deter new customers, filing complaints with various regulators, and disrupting managers' careers.

The National Right To Work Committee provided me with an entire copy of SEIU's Contract Campaign Manual, and I have included it as addendum to my testimony.

These extreme and offensive tactics are disturbing to most union workers – especially the 40% or more of union workers who vote Republican. At its very heart, this is a manual of how to use political pressure.

But it doesn't stop there...

Richard Trumka, the extremely controversial president of the AFL-CIO, has publicly used his regular dues-paid position to go even further. Over the course of the last couple of years, Trumka has said:

¹³ <http://www.mea.org/bfcl/pdf/BFCL-CrisisPlanning.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://workplacechoice.org/2011/09/17/seiu-intimidation-manual-exposed/>

1. *“We need to fundamentally restructure our economy and re-establish popular control over the private corporations which have distorted our economy and hijacked our government. That’s a long-term job, but one we should start now.”* This message is political in nature, many AFL-CIO workers rightly find this propaganda to be offensive.¹⁵
2. *“When U.S., corporations sit on more than \$800 billion without creating jobs, when banks hoard more than \$1 trillion in profits without lending to small businesses and consumers, and when health insurance companies with tens of billions in profits demand huge premium increases, there are only two words to describe such greed says,”* AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka: *“Economic treason!”*¹⁶ Not only is this offensive vitriol political in nature, but it is just not true.
3. At a roundtable in Detroit on the “Future of Unions,” Trumka said *“forget about the law; this is about more than that.”*¹⁷

With Trumka, however, the best was yet to come. In an interview on September 27, 2010, Trumka personally admitted that he is not interested in doing what his job is supposed to entail:

*“... we’re the last line of defense out there. I mean, I got into the labor movement — not because I wanted to negotiate wages. I got into the labor movement because I saw it as a vehicle to do massive social change to include the lots of people. That’s why I got into the labor movement.” (Emphasis added)*¹⁸

In that bizarre admission, Trumka concedes that taking care of his employees holds no interest to him. Only the pushing of social change is what he is interested in. Of course the ability for him to continue to ‘do mass social change’ comes directly from the funding he receives from the regular dues (most of which are forced as a condition of employment) of AFL-CIO employees – many of whom find his words and actions extremely offensive.

¹⁵ <http://blog.aflcio.org/2010/09/27/trumka-working-class-anger-fueled-by-rights-deeply-dishonest-message/>

¹⁶ <http://blog.aflcio.org/2010/09/14/trumka-union-votes-can-beat-false-populism-and-economic-treason/>

¹⁷ <http://biggovernment.com/mvadum/2011/11/03/afl-cios-richard-trumka-is-a-thugs-thug/>

¹⁸ <http://www.thenewamerican.com/index.php/usnews/politics/5817-union-head-richard-trumka-sees-afl-cio-as-socialist-vehicle>

But it doesn't end there...

Within the last 6 months, union officials have found another avenue to forcefully spend their workers hard-earned dues on offensive, political purposes. Partnering with the “occupy protesters;” union officials are supporting these groups with financial contributions and with public support.

For example, the UAW has committed to giving resources to the occupy crowd.¹⁹

The SEIU has reported that they have “showered the protesters with help -- tents, air mattresses, propane heaters and tons of food.”²⁰ Interestingly, Mary Kay Henry, president of the SEIU, consistently says she speaks for the entire 2.1 million SEIU members when she engages in far-left political activity. That is a gross exaggeration of reality said in order to give her some credence.²¹

Both the NEA and the AFT are also engaged in the Occupy community organizing movement.²²

Finally, I must tell you my own personal story with the union fed activities of the Occupy Crowd. During the ***Defending the American Dream*** summit held by Americans for Prosperity at the Washington DC Convention Center in November, Occupy protesters surrounded the center in military fashion, committed acts of violence against peaceful attendees at the conference (an elderly Michigan woman was pushed down concrete stairs and injured – all while the protesters who caused her injury were chanting while she was laying there) and committed frequent acts of civil disobedience.

All of these occupy stories prove that unions are finding more and more avenues to spend the hard-earned regular union dues of their membership on offensive political issues, and they

¹⁹ <http://www.uaw.org/page/uaw-endorses-occupy-wall-street>

²⁰ http://mt-pub2.seiu.org/mt/mt-search.cgi?blog_id=33&tag=Occupy%20Wall%20Street&limit=20

²¹ <http://www.seiu.org/2011/10/seiu-supports-occupywallstreet.php>

²² <http://www.aeteachers.org/index.php/blog/573-nea-a-aft-ties-to-occupy-wall-street-protests>

don't even subtract these activities from the "agency fee" which is supposed to be only a true reflection of the cost to represent those workers who exercise their "Beck rights."

Conclusion

Unions have shown us that they are incapable of fairly governing the spending of the billions in dues they extract from workers. Most of those dues are forced from workers as a condition of their employment.

As stated at the beginning of this testimony, there are only two ways to ensure that worker's rights are protected.

The first way, making each worker a "Beck Rights" worker as the default position, would be a step in the right direction, but as we have seen, the "agency fee" still contains many activities that are very political in nature, and deemed extremely offensive by a large number of union workers.

Even if the government required non-partisan, honest, and incorruptible 3rd party audits of union spending, unions will continue to abuse their ultimate power over the dues of their membership. The only effective answer to this violation of workers' political freedom is to eliminate all compulsory unionism language from the National Labor Relations Act and the Railway Labor Act. This would, in essence, establish a National Right to Work Act.

Then – and only then – will workers receive back some of that ultimate power that their union officials currently hold over the political use of their hard-earned dues.

Then – and only then – will unions be held answerable and accountable to the workers for their offensive and radical left-wing political actions.

Then – and only then – unions will have to – by necessity – perform harder for their members, and for the first time have to compete for members' loyalty. Competition, instead of a compulsion, always makes an organization better.

I ask you to grant to the rest of Americans what President John F. Kennedy granted to the federal workforce in executive order #10988, dated January 17, 1962:

Employees of the Federal Government shall have, and shall be protected in the exercise of, the right, freely and without fear of penalty or reprisal, to form, join and assist any employee organization or to refrain from any such activity.

I ask you to grant to the millions of union workers who do not currently enjoy the Constitutional protections of the 1st Amendment right of Freedom of Association – or conversely – the Freedom NOT to Associate, the right to choose for themselves whether to financially support an outside 3rd party. The United States government has given labor unions the ability to trump individual's 1st amendment rights and force the seizure of an individual's personal property for simply exercising their "pursuit of happiness." Congress should end this extra-constitutional power.

Finally, let me quote founding father Thomas Jefferson:

"To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical."