

Who should be PRESIDENT?



Make your voice heard

With the 2008 race for the White House already running full tilt, the NALC is surveying all members about who they believe should be the next president of the United States. The postage-paid survey card inserted in this issue is your opportunity to make your voice heard as the NALC considers endorsing a candidate.

"This election will be important for all Americans but especially for letter carriers," NALC President Bill Young said. "The Postal Service continues to face serious challenges, and we cannot leave to chance the political leadership that will either help our employer face the future or hamper our efforts to survive and thrive in the 21st century."

To help assess the presidential contenders, the NALC Legislative and Political Department in late May sent a questionnaire to all declared Republican and Democratic candidates—at the time, 10 Republicans and seven

Democrats. The questionnaire noted that candidates' responses to the questions "will weigh substantially in considering NALC support."

The campaigns were given seven weeks to respond. As the deadline approached, repeated followup requests for responses were made. On the following pages are the answers provided by the seven candidates who responded. They are also the ones listed on the postcard.

"I urge every member to look at these answers and consider where these candidates stand on topics like contracting out letter carrier work, voting by mail, and ending the government pension offset and the windfall elimination provision," President Young said. He added, "The candidates who chose not to respond also have told us a lot about what they think of letter carriers and our concerns."

Members should return their preference cards as soon as possible.

White House hopefuls positions on key issues

Below are the questions posed to all candidates, followed by the complete text of the replies from all who responded.

1. Contracting out

The Postal Service is seeking to significantly expand the practice of outsourcing delivery services across the country to part-time, low-wage contractors. The NALC believes that the growth of so-called Contract Delivery Service not only threatens the jobs and incomes of America's 325,000 city and rural letter carriers, but also the long-term quality and viability of the Postal Service. We believe that Congress should closely scrutinize this practice in the course of fulfilling its oversight function. Would you sign legislation banning the expansion of contracting out of delivery service?

2. Voting by mail

The state of Oregon is currently the only state in the country that conducts its elections solely through the mail. In the 2004 presidential elections, Oregon saw an 87 percent turnout from its electorate. Many other states are also using postal elections or considering adopting some form of VBM as an option. Do you feel that VBM is an effective and efficient format to conduct this nation's elections? In the 110th Congress, there were several bills introduced promoting VBM. These bills range from creating a grant program for counties and states to explore the VBM system to legislation that would guarantee every citizen the ability to cast a ballot through the mail. Would you sign this or similar legislation promoting the VBM system?

3. Do Not Mail registries

Many state legislatures are currently considering bills that would create "Do Not Mail" registries that would prevent mailers from sending direct mail to those who sign up, just as "Do Not Call" registries prevent homes from receiving calls from telemarketers. However, a "Do Not Mail" registry would have an extremely negative effect on letter carriers, mailers and postal patrons alike. Direct mail now accounts for more than 50 percent of mail delivered by the Postal Service. If we were unable to deliver that mail to our customers, it would slash our revenues and adversely affect service levels in ways we can't begin to predict, and the USPS might well be forced to cut down on our overtime, our routes and our jobs. Do you support such registries; if so, why?

4. Employee Free Choice Act

Over the past three decades, the American labor movement has contracted in the face of globalization and weak labor laws. More than half of working Americans—57 million—say they would join a union if they could. Unfortunately, they can't as employers routinely block their workers' freedom of association and right to organize. The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), would level the playing field for employees and restore workers' freedom to form unions and bargain. Would you sign the Employee Free Choice Act that passed the House of Representatives in 110th Congress? If not, please explain why.

5. Health care

If recent spending trends persist, we will spend one out every five dollars on health care costs by 2015. What is your position on solving the health care crisis facing this country? What do you think are the major challenges facing the U.S. health care system? What plan would you offer if elected to solve these very important problems?

6. Preserving Social Security benefits for government annuitants

The Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset severely limit (or completely eliminate) Social Security income for many retirees who receive a federal pension. No such provisions apply for those who receive private sector pensions. Legislation has been introduced in this Congress to address these injustices, and has garnered bipartisan support. Would you support or oppose these bills?



Rep. Dennis Kucinich, Democrat of Ohio

Dennis Kucinich represents Ohio's 10th District in the House, currently serving his sixth term. One-time mayor of Cleveland and a former state legislator, he has a strong labor record and is known for his progressive positions on health care, education and the environment.

1. Contracting out

Yes. I have consistently opposed the wholesale outsourcing of public service jobs since I was mayor of Cleveland 30 years ago.

2. Voting by mail

Vote by Mail makes the democratic process more accessible to millions of citizens and I support it.

3. Do Not Mail registries

Direct mail does not present the kind of intrusion into the personal lives of citizens that telemarketing phone calls do. Based on the information and arguments currently available, I would not consider supporting a "Do Not Mail" registry.

4. Employee Free Choice Act

I am proud to have been a co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act. My voting record in the U.S. House of Representatives has been 100 percent pro-union. And, I am the only card-carrying union member among the Democratic candidates for president. (EDITOR'S NOTE: Kucinich is a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts, AFL-CIO.)

5. Health care

I, along with Rep. John Conyers, co-authored and co-sponsored H.R. 676, which creates a National Health Insurance system that would cover all Americans by removing the for-profit insurance companies and providers from the \$2.2 trillion per year health industry, and institute a universal, single-payer system similar to Medicare. This bill would provide all Americans the health care they need, from any doctor they choose, at a universal, high standard of quality. Americans would not be burdened with co-payments, premiums or deductibles. Rather, they would be guaranteed access to medically necessary health care, including inpatient and outpatient care, dental care, vision care, pharmaceuticals and other treatments that a patient's doctor would deem necessary. In addition, this bill would come at a cost savings to employers.

6. Preserving Social Security benefits for government annuitants

I have co-sponsored and supported these bills specifically because of the injustice the current system inflicts on retirees.

**Sen. Joe Biden,
Democrat of Delaware**

Joe Biden is serving his sixth term in the Senate from Delaware. A graduate of the University of Delaware and Syracuse Law School, Biden was first elected in 1972 at age 29. He is chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and is known as an international relations expert.



1. Contracting out

Yes, I support and am a co-sponsor of the Mail Delivery Protection Act. I oppose the private outsourcing of mail delivery services. We know that the U.S. Postal Service is the best and most efficient mail delivery system in the world. The men and women who work to process and deliver mail to every household across America have always understood the public service they perform, and they have always met that duty. The public will not get the same service from part-time, low-wage workers.

2. Voting by mail

An engaged citizenry is the backbone to a strong democracy, and voting is an essential part of promoting an active and engaged citizenry. I am committed to increasing voter turnout and participation and would consider several ways of increasing voter turnout, including Vote by Mail. We must ensure there are systems put in place to protect against fraud and abuses of the system. Oregon and many parts of Washington have held successful elections with high voter turnout using Vote by Mail and I would like to explore expanding the VBM system. Voting is a fundamental right in this nation and we should be doing more to expand civic participation and increase voter turnout.

3. Do Not Mail registries

I supported the Do Not Call registry because I believe that people have a right to prevent unwanted, intrusive solicitations. However, mail solicitation is not necessarily as disruptive as phone calls or spam e-mail. Any legislation that would have such a dramatic effect on the Postal Service and on jobs should be seriously scrutinized.

4. Employee Free Choice Act

Yes, I would sign the Employee Free Choice Act, which I am proud to co-sponsor in the Senate.

When unions are at their strongest, the middle class is at its strongest and wages grow. When unions are on defense, the middle class standard of living is stagnant.

I think we sometimes forget that labor built the middle class and that there isn't a

white collar worker that is treated well by his employer or a piece of social legislation that exists that isn't because of organized labor. We have a strong middle class in this country because of labor.

My administration would honor the importance of unions. The people I would appoint to the Department of Labor would understand and value labor. They wouldn't be afraid to use the word union.

I would make sure that the NLRB is a fair forum to contest unfair labor practices. I would reverse the NLRB's decision broadening the definition of "supervisor." This is just a backhanded way to deny many workers their historic right to organize. And I would enact the new protections in the Employee Free Choice Act.

I got elected when I was 29 years old for one reason—labor. I was this kid who could not possibly win running against a guy who was practically a legend in my state. But two months before the election, labor endorsed me and my whole political life changed. And every day I remember that. If you look at my record on the fights we have had in the last few years, you'll find that I've always been on your side: Common situs (or site) picketing when I first arrived in the Senate; raising the minimum wage; worker safety; opposing Social Security privatization; protecting Davis-Bacon wages; overtime protections; unemployment compensation, and family and medical leave to name a few.

5. Health care

Everyone—adults and children—should have access to health care in this country. We are 9 million children and 37 million adults short of that goal. Seventy percent of those people are in families with one or more full-time worker.

I will be announcing a more detailed health care plan of action in coming months. It will meet the following goals: 1) insuring every child, 2) assisting families and companies with the burdens of catastrophic cases, and 3) modernizing and simplifying our system.

The path toward universal coverage starts with the most vulnerable in our society. I would make sure that every child has health insurance—one way we can do this is by expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)—and I would relieve families and companies of the burden of catastrophic cases.

Beyond that, we should evaluate the best way to provide coverage for the remaining uninsured. Let me be clear—to me it is not a question of if we're going to provide universal health care, but how we're going to do it.

I would support experimentation on the state level (like in Massachusetts and California) to determine how employer mandates and individual mandates work best. And I would support states, like my home state of Delaware, that are making the transition to electronic medical record systems that allow doctors and patients real-time access to records and help prevent dangerous and costly mistakes.

Focusing on universal access to health care isn't enough. Our national health care policy must also include a strategy to keep skyrocketing costs in check. We can do that by modernizing the system, simplifying it and improving quality. We can modernize health care by using electronic records and providing doctors, nurses and pharmacists with vital histories and information in real time. We can simplify health care by moving to one, universal claims form—some states have already done this and are reducing administrative costs. We can improve health care by taking the best medical practices and applying them to disease management. We must do a better job of promoting prevention and wellness and making sure that people who suffer from common chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes have adequate access to care, can afford medication, and are able to manage and treat their illness and avoid serious complications.

6. Preserving Social Security benefits for government annuitants

I have co-sponsored legislation to eliminate the Government Pension Offset provisions of the Social Security Act for low-income pensioners and support review of the Windfall Elimination Provision to ensure that its application does not yield unintended or unfairly harsh results.

1. Contracting out

I value the contributions of the U.S. Postal Service and will take aggressive steps to maintain its long-term viability. Since 1775, when Benjamin Franklin was appointed the first Postmaster General, letter carriers have played a special role in the lives of all Americans. The Postal Service, which has been a steady source of good jobs for middle class Americans, has helped make the dreams of families all across our country come true.

I will work to maintain the U.S. Postal Service as a source of good, full-time jobs with benefits when I am president. That means not contracting these jobs out to firms that pay their employees less and provide lower quality service. I have campaigned on a platform of cleaning up our contracting system by significantly reducing the number of contractors and providing transparency in the process. I will cut at least 500,000 federal contractors and save approximately \$10 to \$18 billion a year in the process. I will also put an end to no-bid contracts and will ensure that in the instances where contractors might be necessary, we run a fair process for evaluating the proposals. I will also make certain that every government agency publishes its budget online so any public service that is contracted out to private companies will be known to the public and open to scrutiny.

The Bush administration has contracted out with impunity and now we are paying the price through out-of-control deficits and diminished confidence in the federal government. Over the past six years, this administration has steadily outsourced critical government functions to private companies, adding more than 2.4 million private contractors to the federal payroll. Today, government contractors have essentially become yet another special interest, with the top 20 contracting firms spending nearly \$300 million since 2000 to lobby the government for more business to leave the government and come to them. This administration often contracted out vital government services without even running a competition. The result, as we saw with Katrina and Iraq, has too often been incompetence. I will put an end to this situation when I am president.

2. Voting by mail

In the Senate, I have made voting rights for all Americans one of my highest priorities. The greatest democracy in the world should have a voting system that builds, not undermines, faith in our elections. To that end, I have championed numerous policies to make it easier for people to vote, including easing restrictions on voting by mail. I introduced the Count Every Vote Act, which includes a provision called "No Excuses Absentee Balloting." This provision prohibits states from imposing any

requirements on absentee ballots other than that the voter requests an absentee ballot and that the ballot must be postmarked prior to Election Day. I think Oregon's high turnout rate is encouraging evidence about the promise of voting by mail.

3. Do Not Mail registries

I have not had the occasion to consider a "Do Not Mail" registry in my capacity as a public official. I understand the arguments on the other side of this issue, including the negative environmental impact of unsolicited direct mail, but also recognize its effect on the Postal Service. I will give the concerns of the letter carriers careful consideration if this issue presents itself.

4. Employee Free Choice Act

I am proud to be a strong champion of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), which will ensure that employees will not be unfairly punished by their employers for attempting to unionize. EFCA would create an atmosphere where workers would be able to choose a union free from employer coercion by strengthening penalties for the coercion when employees are attempting to organize, encouraging mediation and arbitration for first-contract disputes, and allowing employees to form unions by signing cards authorizing union representation. I am committed to ensuring that workers are able to organize a union without coercion or intimidation, and also that federal contractors that benefit from taxpayer dollars demonstrate fairness towards their employees.

I believe we need a basic bargain in our country—that if you work hard, you can have a chance at the American dream, and unions are critical to that. As president, my agenda will be to make collective bargaining fair and free workers to organize without undue corporate interference. The Employee Free Choice Act is central to that agenda.

5. Health care

Since day one of my campaign I've spoken about guaranteeing every American affordable health care. I've offered three principles that will guide my work: cost, quality and coverage.

We currently spend \$2 trillion on health care, more than any other country in the world, without seeing the results. I have proposed a seven-point plan that would reduce health care costs by \$120 billion a year. My plan would create a ground-breaking national prevention initiative to reduce the incidence of such diseases as diabetes and cancer; institute a "paperless" health information technology system; transform care of today's chronically ill population to improve outcomes; constrain



**Sen. Hillary Clinton,
Democrat of New York**

Clinton is serving her second term in the Senate from New York. A graduate of Wellesley College and Yale Law School, Clinton was first elected to the Senate in 2000, becoming the first former First Lady elected to public office. During her first term she focused on children's and family issues.

excess prescription drug and managed care expenditures; and put in place common-sense medical malpractice reforms.

I've spent a long time on the problem of coverage, and no one has more scars from this fight than I do. I know from these battles that we have to build consensus to get universal coverage. This is not just a question of ideas, but of political will. I'm going to reach out, talk to the American people, and work with Congress to get the job done. As president, I'll fight for universal coverage so that every American is secure in knowing that they won't lose coverage because they lose a job.

6. Preserving Social Security benefits for government annuitants

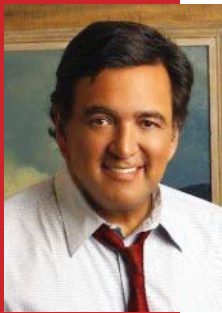
I am very concerned about these provisions and look forward to addressing them when I am president. We owe it to our seniors and our aging workers to ensure that they can live and retire in dignity. That is why I strongly believe that all public sector employees should be treated fairly and should not have their Social Security income penalized as a result of having spent substantial portions of their career in public service.

I also believe it is critical that we continue to protect the defined benefit plans that provide secure retirement benefits for tens of millions of workers. I have supported legislation, which was enacted into law, to require that companies fund 100 percent of their defined benefit pension obligations.

Moving forward, I think we need to take a new, more expansive approach to retirement savings in America. I believe we should require every employer to open a retirement account for every worker and allow for full portability, so workers can take their pensions with them when they change jobs. I also think employees deserve advice and guidance to allow them to invest wisely.

**Gov. Bill Richardson,
Democrat of New Mexico**

The governor of New Mexico, Richardson served seven terms in the House and was both ambassador to the United Nations and Secretary of Energy in President Clinton's Cabinet. A graduate of Tufts University, he was re-elected as governor in 2006 and emphasizes his hands-on executive experience.



1. Contracting out

Yes. I am opposed to the Bush administration's increasingly used policy of contracting out the delivery of mail in urban and suburban areas. I agree with NALC's President William H. Young when he says that "this policy must be reversed quickly before more damage is done." I support the legislation that was introduced by Senator Harkin (S. 1457) that will combat this privatization, and as president, I will always stand by our federal postal workers.

2. Voting by mail

Yes. Oregon has experienced tremendous success with Voting by Mail (VBM). At the same time, it has maintained high standards of privacy and accuracy. Americans rightfully feel secure putting our most private personal and financial information into the hands of our letter carriers; we can do the same with our votes. In many states and regions, VBM will undoubtedly increase voting, just as it has in Oregon. The merits are well-documented: convenience, speed, reliability of the mail, confidence in security, and finally, a verifiable paper trail.

More broadly, this is an extremely serious issue; every eligible American must not only have the right to vote, but must have the confidence that his or her vote will be counted. Following the election irregularities of 2000 and 2004, I helped to push through legislation in New Mexico ensuring that there would be a paper trail for all ballots, and I've campaigned around the country for other states to do the same. As president, I will work with Congress and state governments to ensure that we live up to the spirit of our Constitution and that we guarantee every voter can cast his or her ballot with absolute confidence.

3. Do Not Mail registries

As a governor, I know that states sometimes know better than the federal government—especially over the past six years. I believe this is one of those situations. States know best if certain populations, such as college students, are being unfairly targeted by advertisers or credit card companies. At the same time, it would not be effective or practical to create such a registry for the entire country.

I am concerned that while we must protect certain groups from unscrupulous advertisers,

overreaching federal regulation might have adverse impacts on the entire United States Postal Service.

Potential solutions to this issue might include the provision of incentives to industries and individual businesses that consolidate their advertising into more manageable packages such as Value-Paks. These packages would keep revenue coming into the Postal Service: they could charge a similar rate for packs as they do for individual mailings. Also, encourage

localities to establish recycling sub-programs specifically designed to manage unwanted mailings, which often fall into varied categories of recycling (paper, plastic, cardboard). Perhaps establish one day during the mailing week when such mailings would not be distributed.

4. Employee Free Choice Act

Yes, I would sign the Employee Free Choice Act. Unions have played and continue to play a critical role in our economy. Organized labor created the middle class, and its contributions should not go ignored. The next president must work very hard to reverse the damage done to workers by the Bush administration: record deficit spending, stagnant wages, shrinking benefits, rising costs, and the lowest job creation numbers since the Hoover administration.

The next president must strengthen the right to collective bargaining. We must institute card checks—like I did as governor in New Mexico. If an employer fails to bargain in good faith, there should be mediation and arbitration for their contract. I did that, too. And, there should be more forceful penalties for employer violations while workers are attempting to form a union.

One of the first actions I took as governor was to reinstate collective bargaining for public employees, to ensure that they can organize if they see fit to do so. Then we dramatically expanded health benefits for state employees and produced one of the most generous labor contracts in the country. We also secured the first public works labor agreements in New Mexico history. Then, we made our prevailing wage a union wage.

Our next president must focus on supporting unions—just like I do as governor. As president, I will appoint a Secretary of Labor who is a union member: someone who understands how necessary the right to organize is for all workers who wish to do so. The United States must restore its commitment to its labor force. As such, our next president must also embrace the Employee Free Choice Act.

For too long working Americans have endured being underappreciated and misunderstood by the current administration. As president, I will join the efforts of working families and together we will reinstate the rightful place that organized labor deserves at the negotiating table.

5. Health care

American families are struggling under the current system. As a governor, I deal with these issues every single day. And I've done it by controlling costs and balancing the budget. It's time for the federal government to step up and get to work. A Democratic president will be inheriting a mess after eight years of a Republican administration that has not invested in our nation's health. I had the same problem in New Mexico and am proud of my record in expanding access, improving quality and controlling costs.

Since 2000, health care premiums for American families have risen by over 80 percent. People can't afford it. Each day, 4,000 more Americans lose coverage. All of us end up paying the price. The high costs are bad enough, but our health care system is also inefficient. About 31 percent of health care expenditures are for red tape instead of direct care. We have 50 different state Medicaid programs and a Medicare system administered by hundreds of different health plans. We need a responsible, common-sense approach. My plan consists of new ideas using proven methods. It will not create any new government bureaucracies.

Imagine everyone having access to the same quality of health care as members of Congress and the president. Americans deserve no less. My plan includes the following solutions to achieve universal health care:

- Working families and small businesses will be able to purchase coverage through the same plan that members of Congress and the president have.
- Americans 55 to 64 will be able to purchase coverage through Medicare.
- My plan provides choices. If you like your current coverage you can keep it.
- Veterans will get access to the high-quality care they deserve without bureaucratic hassles or having to travel long distances. No one who has served in our military should have to drive 100 miles to the nearest VA facility just to get care. Under my plan, every veteran returning from active duty would receive a Heroes Health Card that provides them with the care they need, when they need it. It's high time we treat our military personnel and veterans with the respect they deserve. I've done it as governor of New Mexico, and I'll do it as your next president.

My plan also keeps costs under control through a partnership between businesses, employees and government—state and federal.

- Everyone who needs help in affording coverage will get an advance refundable tax credit based on income.
- We will clamp down on credit card companies that charge outrageous interest rates for medical care charges. Lenders need to do their fair share.
- Like auto insurance, all Americans will have to have health coverage and employers will pay their fair share of employee health care costs.

1. Contracting out

I have strongly supported strict oversight of federal agencies that outsource government jobs to contractors. I co-sponsored legislation that would have mandated strict oversight of federal agency outsourcing decisions. It required outsourcing be based on the results of a public-private competition process and meeting specified requirements. It also required jobs to be converted into public-sector jobs if contracting costs exceeded that of performance by a federal employee or if contracting out failed to meet quality control standards. As president, I will bring these strongly held positions to the White House.

2. Voting by mail

In the wake of the 2000 election debacle, I authored and helped pass the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). This legislation increased voting accessibility and worked to address problems America faced during the 2000 election. While I believe that HAVA is the first of many important steps towards assuring Americans that their vote counts, we have a long road ahead of us to stem voter suppression and address the problems we are currently finding in electronic voting. That is why I think Vote by Mail is an important component of increasing voter participation and confidence. I have introduced the VOTER Act—the Voting Opportunity and Technology Enhancement Rights Act—to build upon the steps we took with HAVA. If enacted, the VOTER Act would provide for a nationwide federal write-in/absentee ballot; require states to provide for a voter-verified ballot; ensure that provisional ballots cast anywhere in a state are counted; eliminate regional and local disparities in the allocation of voting machines and poll workers; mandate early voting and election day registration procedures; and protect against improper purging of registration lists in federal elections.

3. Do Not Mail registries

As states move forward in enacting legisla-

- We will invest in prevention, streamline administration, and support healthier lifestyle choices.

As governor I've done a lot of work in this area. We took junk food out of schools and added physical education back in. [In July], I signed a bill that bans smoking in all public buildings.

My plan is the reasonable and safe path to giving everyone in America access to quality health care. With my plan, no new government bureaucracies are created, and families who like their current plans can keep them. We don't need to raise taxes to get things done. We do need to reprioritize how we spend, though. We've spent more than \$400 billion on Iraq.

tion regarding mail delivery, I would hope that they keep in mind the rights and well-being of postal employees. Any decision on these issues should take into account the jobs of letter carriers and other postal workers so they are not adversely affected.

4. Employee Free Choice Act

If we are to have any hope of meeting the challenges of the 21st century, it will begin with a vibrant labor movement fighting for fair wages, worker protections and security in retirement. I believe that the freedom to form unions is one of our most fundamental rights. For this reason I am a proud co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act. As president, I would be proud to sign that bill into law.

In addition, I have authored the RESPECT Act, which would reverse a series of decisions from the National Labor Relations Board that unfairly expanded the definition of a "supervisor" so that many workers would be denied the right to join a union. I believe that there is a direct connection between the decline of union membership and the growing gap between the rich and poor in this country. The Employee Free Choice Act and the RESPECT Act will improve the workplace by creating an atmosphere where union representation and collective bargaining are secure.

5. Health care

I believe that the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that every American receives affordable, quality medical care and that universal health coverage can be achieved through universal responsibility. We need a system where everybody is covered and where every person and every business contributes based on their ability to pay.

As president, I will call on the federal government to create a health insurance marketplace based on, and parallel to, the Federal

Think of what we could do if we were to spend some of that money right in our own country, on health care for Americans.

It's time to make this happen. Americans want secure, affordable health care. My common-sense approach will help all Americans get to that day when they no longer have to worry about how they will afford health care.

6. Preserving Social Security benefits for government annuitants

I am certainly in favor of these bills. Both of these Social Security provisions, especially the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), are unfair. I have always championed properly rewarding people for the hard work they do. The promise



**Sen. Christopher Dodd,
Democrat of Connecticut**

Chris Dodd is in his fifth term in the Senate from Connecticut, first elected in 1980. A graduate of Providence College and the University of Louisville Law School, he is a former Peace Corps volunteer. His priorities have been children's issues, education, health care and crime.

Employees Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP). Every employer and individual will be given the chance to go to the marketplace to purchase high-quality, affordable health care or, if they wish, keep their existing insurance arrangements. No one will be forced into the marketplace, and individuals, as well as businesses, will contribute based on their ability to pay.

A systemic lack of preventative care and the skyrocketing costs of information collection are two challenges facing the health care system that we can solve immediately. By putting special emphasis on prevention so we can treat illnesses like asthma and diabetes before they require a trip to the emergency room, and by investing in technology and data collection for better care and better efficiencies, we can better serve all populations of patients. Savings that stem from better care and better efficiencies will finance new coverage. The purchasing power of millions of Americans under one plan will drive costs down for consumers.

6. Preserving Social Security benefits for government annuitants

I am a co-sponsor of S. 206, legislation that will completely repeal both the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. I believe we should be doing everything we can to help public employees. These provisions unfairly penalize retirees who receive a federal pension, and I am a committed supporter of any effort that will eliminate this unfairness.

of our Social Security program is a tremendous success: in 2000, 40 percent more people over the age of 65 would have been living in poverty if not for Social Security. These provisions target specific groups. The Windfall Elimination Provision punishes public employees outside of the Social Security system, such as teachers, who stand to lose significant portions of their Social Security benefits. This means that WEP actually deters those already receiving Social Security benefits from becoming educators or public servants as they would lose their benefits. This is wrong. I will make it right by demanding that Congress pass legislation to change these policies, and I will sign it.

John Edwards,
Democrat of North Carolina



John Edwards is a graduate of North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina Law School. A successful trial lawyer, Edwards was the Democratic vice presidential candidate in 2004 and did not seek re-election to the Senate. His signature issues are fighting poverty and union rights.

1. Contracting out

American families have relied on USPS employees for more than a century. These career government employees have gained the trust and respect of American families.

I believe the increasing use of part-time contractors is weakening the USPS's standards with a lower-quality, lesser-trained, temporary, unscreened service. The USPS has been circumventing the collective bargaining agreement in its drive to privatize mail delivery service. The contractors it has hired are not subject to the same screening processes as USPS employees and they do not receive the same level of training.

I support the Mail Delivery Protection Act, which would prevent the USPS from continuing to degrade mail service on any new routes other than in the most rural areas. We should provide one consistent, professional, safe and qualified source of federal mail delivery.

Congress should hold hearings on current USPS practices to investigate the effect on service and security, as well as the legality of USPS actions.

2. Voting by mail

The right to vote is a fundamental right that should be guaranteed to every American. It is the foundation of our democracy. I believe we should make every effort as a nation to ensure a safe, confidential and free environment to vote.

Unfortunately, far too few Americans vote. The experience of states like Oregon strongly suggests that voting by mail is a popular way to increase turnout. It's easy to see why: there are no lines, no troublesome touch-screen voting machines, no voter intimidation at the polling places, and a guaranteed paper trail. I would strongly consider legislation encouraging all states to offer accessible Voting By Mail options for federal elections.

3. Do Not Mail registries

I have serious reservations about mandatory do-not-mail registries. Direct mailings account for the bulk of mail delivered by the USPS and serve to fund other vital services that we all depend on. Without the revenue generated by direct mail, stamp prices would jump, delivery time would increase, service to remote or rural areas could become prohibitively expensive.

4. Employee Free Choice Act

I am a proud supporter of the Employee Free

Choice Act. Illegal employer efforts to block union drives have unfortunately become commonplace. To level the playing field, we need to make it easier for workers to organize themselves into unions. If a person can join the Democratic or Republican Party by signing their name to a card, any worker in America ought to be able to join a union by doing exactly the same thing. Making the Employee Free Choice Act the law of the land will be a top priority when I am president.

Organized labor has been the most important anti-poverty movement in American history, strengthening the middle class and providing good-paying jobs for millions of Americans. Unions have fought for and made better the lives of every working man and woman by giving them a voice. We need stronger unions in this country, and we need a national effort to get them.

Over the last few years, I have helped working families all around the country. I have helped more than 20 national unions organize thousands of workers into unions. I have participated in more than 170 labor activities and organizing drives since 2004. Walking picket lines, calling and writing to employers, and meeting with workers behind closed doors, I have seen firsthand what unions go through every day trying to protect the right to organize, bargain collectively, get decent wages and benefits.

On a personal note, union membership is personal for me. My mother worked for the U.S. Postal Service and she and my father got health care because she was a member of the Rural Letter Carriers' Association. I know what a difference the union and the benefits they won made in the life of our family.

5. Health care

There is a health care crisis in this country. We must act now to make health care more affordable and guarantee universal health care coverage for everyone in America by 2012.

I was proud to be the first major presidential candidate to propose a specific plan to guarantee quality affordable health care for every man, woman and child in America. Under my plan, businesses will either cover their employees or help pay their premiums. The government will make insurance affordable through new tax credits and by leading the way toward more cost-effective care. New "Health Care Markets" will give families and businesses purchasing power and a choice of quality plans, including one public plan based on Medicare. Finally, once these steps have been taken, all American residents will be required to take responsibility and get insurance.

America spends more per person on health care than anywhere else in the world, but the results of all that spending are often disappointing. Under my plan, families without insurance

will get coverage at an affordable price. Families that have insurance today—who sometimes have trouble paying their share of health insurance payments—will pay less and get more security and choices. Businesses and other employers will find it cheaper and easier to insure their workers. I have proposed steps that will save an average family \$2,000 to \$2,500 a year and eliminate at least \$130 billion a year in wasteful health care spending.

Structural reforms in my plan will achieve significant savings. Universal coverage will bring down premiums. The cost of caring for the uninsured adds \$922 to an average family policy. Health Care Markets will bring down costs for small businesses through negotiating power and administrative efficiencies. Giving individuals in Health Care Markets a choice of insurance plans including a public plan will force private insurers to operate in a more competitive market, holding down costs and improving care.

I will cut the cost of and improve treatment for chronic conditions—which account for three-quarters of national health care spending—by requiring health care plans to proactively monitor the health of patients with chronic ailments, reducing complications and hospitalizations.

Thirty cents of every dollar spent on health care goes toward administration and system waste. My plan requires insurers to spend at least 85 percent of their premiums on patient care.

Nearly one-third of patients experience medical mistakes, medication errors or lab problems. Overall, better, more consistent quality could save 100,000 to 150,000 lives and \$50 billion to \$100 billion a year. I will require health care providers to use information technology that protects privacy, bring the private sector together to establish standards, and provide targeted help with implementation.

The Medicare prescription drug benefit is needlessly expensive due to giveaways to drug companies. When I am president, I will rewrite this drug bill to put patients and people above drug companies and HMOs. I will clamp down on skyrocketing drug costs by empowering the government to negotiate better drug prices.

At the same time, we must honor our promise of decent health care benefits to retirees.

6. Preserving Social Security benefits for government annuitants

Corporate CEOs get pensions, and deferred compensation, and stock options—and they get Social Security too. But somehow, when it comes to federal employees, the government says you can't get both your pension and the Social Security that you earned.

That is an insult. It's time we repealed both the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provisions within Social Security. When I was in the Senate, I co-sponsored legislation that would have done just that.

1. Contracting out

Yes. I am a co-sponsor of the Mail Delivery Protection Act of 2007, which aims to do just that. At every level of our government, public workers perform invaluable services for our country. From postal workers in Paterson to nurses in Chicago to correctional officers in Atlanta to sanitation workers in L.A., public service employees play a vital role in our labor force. Over the past several years, we have seen a new "Ownership Society" philosophy in Washington that says government has no role in solving our problems and that the services provided every day by government employees are better left to the whims of the private sector. I have been a consistent critic of this philosophy.

Mail carriers have effectively served our country for 118 years. Expansion of CDS will undermine workers' wages and compromise the quality service that Americans have come to expect. Americans trust the U.S. Postal Service precisely because public employees are required to perform uniform service at uniform rates—regardless of where they live. Expansion of CDS threatens to increase the costs of delivery to remote areas—an unnecessary risk to undertake when the U.S. Postal Service has been working so well and for so long.

2. Voting by mail

Yes. I am a co-sponsor of the Vote By Mail Act, which provides grants to states for implementing Vote By Mail programs for all elections at the state and local level. I am also a co-sponsor of the Count Every Vote Act of 2007, which would give any person eligible to vote the right to vote by absentee ballot. Voting lies at the heart of our democracy, and we benefit by any policy that increases voter turnout while safeguarding against voter fraud. Voting by mail does exactly this and should be more broadly implemented. We should also ensure that vote by mail systems make necessary accommodations for disabled Americans.

3. Do Not Mail registries

I do not support the creation of Do Not Mail registries. While bills proposing Do Not Mail registries have been introduced in many state legislatures in recent months, many of these bills have been tabled or killed by their own sponsors after they have met with the many members of organized labor and the direct mail industry who have raised valid concerns about those bills. Broad Do Not Mail registries could result in the loss of jobs as well as potentially dramatic price increases for ordinary Americans. While I support the industry and other organizations' efforts to help consumers remove themselves from mailing lists, as well as current law that protects consumers from sexually explicit mail or mail that addressees deem pandering, I do not think this

issue needs to be legislated further at this point.

4. Employee Free Choice Act

Yes. I am an original co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act and voted for the legislation because I firmly believe that workers should choose whether they want to join a union without fear of intimidation, coercion, or threats to their livelihoods. I am convinced that millions of Americans would join a union if given a fair opportunity, but the National Labor Relations Act in its current form too often allows employers to violate workers' rights with impunity. The Employee Free Choice Act is a bipartisan effort to make the process of organizing less vulnerable to employer lawbreaking by requiring card-check recognition and increasing penalties on employers that violate the law.

I was disappointed that the Senate failed to pass EFCA. Strengthening our workers' right to organize shouldn't be controversial. It will be working Americans, united and organized, that will help us restore a sense of shared prosperity and security to this nation. I will continue to advocate for EFCA as a senator and will sign it as president. EFCA is a starting point, but there is more to do. I will use the bully pulpit of the presidency to educate our country about the important role of unions. And I will use the power of the office to appoint members of the National Labor Relations Board who understand the situation of working families and respect their desire to organize.

5. Health care

The United States is one of the wealthiest nations in the world, yet approximately 45 million Americans have no health insurance. The United States spends more on health care than any other country, nearly \$2 trillion, yet ranks 19th in life expectancy at birth and 28th in infant mortality.

As president, I will sign a universal health care bill by the end of my first term. My plan will lower costs for the typical family by up to \$2,500, cover the uninsured, and lower costs to families and businesses. I will allow people who do not have access to group coverage through their employers or public programs (such as Medicaid, SCHIP, and Medicare) to buy into a national pool, which will offer a new public plan similar to the one I have as a member of Congress. My plan will also allow people to buy private plans that offer comprehensive benefits and meet quality standards. If they wish, unions and employers will be able to supplement the comprehensive coverage in the public plan. Federal subsidies will be made available to those who need it to make coverage more affordable. And employers will have



Sen. Barack Obama,
Democrat of Illinois

Obama is serving his first term in the Senate from Illinois. A graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School, he was a state senator from 1997-2004. Keynote speaker at the 2004 Democratic national convention, he was elected to the Senate later that year. He initially concentrated on ethics and lobbying reform.

access to reinsurance to protect them from volatile and high increases in the cost of insurance. Finally, my plan will mandate health insurance coverage for every child in America.

I will go after runaway health care costs by investing in information technology, focusing on preventive care, increasing health care quality, reducing medical errors, and stopping price gouging by drug and insurance companies. Together, these changes would mean a reduction in premiums of up to \$1,000 a year for the average family.

I have a proven record on expanding access to affordable health care. In the Illinois State Senate, I spearheaded successful legislation to extend health care coverage under KidCare and FamilyCare to 154,000 residents, including 70,000 children.

We are not short on ideas to address the problem, but what we have lacked is consensus and political will. Solving our health care crisis depends on transforming our politics.

6. Preserving Social Security benefits for government annuitants

I have and will continue to support these bills. I am a co-sponsor of the Social Security Fairness Act, which would repeal both the Windfall Elimination Provision as well as the Government Pension Offset. We have a responsibility to take care of workers who have devoted their lives to public service. We need more of our young people going into public service, not less, and we should not discourage them by telling them we won't be living up to our side of the bargain when they retire.