



Source: Labor Relations Week: News

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AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO Officers Mark One-Year Anniversary With Webcast Answering Members' Questions

Some 1,100 questions from union members streamed in through web, video, and text message prior to and during the Sept. 16 AFL-CIO "State of Our Unions" live webcast as President Richard Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler, and Executive Vice President Arlene Holt-Baker marked the one-year anniversary of their election as top officers.

Covering a range of issues during the one-hour webcast, including the current state of the labor movement, upcoming elections, and job creation, the union officials urged members to continue to send questions in through text messages during the call.

Between now and Nov. 2, union members will mount the largest-ever non-party-based political mobilization to elect candidates who will "fight for working families, especially when it comes to jobs and continuing to fix an economy broken by the failed policies of the past," Trumka said.

AFL-CIO Stands in Middle of Economic Debate

Trumka stated that the past year has included many accomplishments, including "saving the economy from a disaster," a "passed health care bill," as well as putting the AFL-CIO in the middle of the economic debate.

"We've reined in Wall Street, we've created several million jobs even during a recession, and we did that all in a year," Trumka said.

Trumka said during the past year, he, Shuler, and Holt-Baker have traveled across the country and talked to thousands of workers.

"We've heard stories about lost jobs, plant closings, and how that's affected communities," Trumka said. "How stagnating wages have stopped people from having families or sending kids to school ... we've heard that people have lost the American dream."

Meanwhile, Shuler said during the past year as secretary-treasurer she has focused on making the finances more transparent to affiliates and on using "the dues money that comes into the organization wisely."

"Cost cutting, streamlining, looking at budgets has been something I've been immersed in," Shuler said. AFL-CIO has made upgrades to technology and the Sept. 16 webinar is one example of the progress they've made in using new communication tools, she said.

Making Labor Movement More Relevant

Additionally, Shuler said she is "extremely passionate about the young worker outreach that we've embarked upon." During the past six months, the federation has held regional meetings and a national summit, with a focus on making the labor movement more relevant to young people.

"We know young people need unions now more than ever before," Shuler said.

Still, Holt-Baker said that in her experience during the past year of traveling the country, she has learned that the crisis still remains for those looking for jobs. Holt-Baker recently listened to a number of people who had lost homes due to foreclosure in Atlanta.

"What they wanted us to do was make some demands of the banks," she said. "There are demands we must continue to place on Wall Street. They have responsibility to this crisis ... we have a lot of fighting left to do."

In response to a question regarding the current state of the labor movement, Trumka said, "We're looking beyond workers that are just in unions right now." Through AFL-CIO affiliate Working America, he said the federation is recruiting some 25,000 new members per week.

"We changed the way we do business," he said. "We have to be willing to change and we are doing that. We've tried to make the national, state, and local level seamless."

*The webcast may be accessed at
<http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/9614792>.*

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ISSN 1522-8819

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