



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 23, 2011

AFL-CIO Considers Formation of Super PAC

As if the AFL-CIO does not have enough political clout, it has announced its initiative to launch a super Political Action Committee in order to raise money. According to The Blaze, the effort is “part of the federation’s goal to build a year-round political organizing structure instead of ramping up and down based on election cycles.” The initiative was discussed earlier this month at an AFL-CIO executive council meeting. The proposal is still subject to approval, and will be open for discussion for the next few weeks.



Supporters tout a number of benefits, especially the impact such a committee could have on struggles over state legislation, where unions have been particularly entrenched in recent months.

For example, unions invested millions of dollars this year into the Wisconsin recall elections, which challenged those state legislators who voted in favor of legislation that minimized collective bargaining for public employees. The AFL-CIO alone contributed \$5 million to the effort.

AFL-CIO political director Michael Podhorzer asserts this benefit of a PAC:

As far as our ability to hold folks accountable for next year’s state legislative battles, we hope this will make a difference and that’s why we’re pursuing this.

The essential idea is that changes in the law for the first time really allow the labor movement to speak directly to workers, whether they have collective bargaining agreements or not. Before, most political resources went to our own membership.

The movement to create super PACs exploded after the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. The high court’s decision permits super PACs to raised unlimited amounts of money from individuals, unions, and corporations, as long as the PACs are not working with a political campaign. More than 100 have been created since that decision.

As observed by the *Boston Globe*, “Both GOP- and Democratic-leaning super PACs have flourished” since that “landmark decision,” and are “expected to play a major role in the 2012 elections.”

A number of GOP candidates are already being backed by super PACs. Texas Governor Rick Perry has the support of “Make Us Great Again,” while former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney is backed by “Restore Our Future.”

Conservative super PACs have been working diligently to raise money for the 2012 elections, most notably American Crossroads and Club for Growth Action, both of which have raised a combined total of \$4 million for the upcoming election.

According to [ABC News](#), liberal groups have also jumped at the opportunity to create super PACs following the Supreme Court ruling. The most prominent of the liberal-oriented super PACs are House Majority PAC, Priorities USA Action, and Majority PAC, all of which were formed after the high court’s



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decision. Thus far, they have raised a total of \$5 million for the 2012 elections.

Sheila Krumholz, executive director of the watchdog group Center for Responsive Politics, contends that super PACs “could attract new kinds of money, and to the degree they could be successful with that, it opens up a whole new avenue for contributing and opportunities for spending.”

Unions have already been major players in election campaigns, spending approximately \$400 million on Obama’s 2008 presidential election and another \$200 million during the 2010 midterm elections.

However, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka (pictured above) has already indicated that the union may spend less money on federal political campaigns this year in lieu of state elections, because the states are where unions have faced efforts to limit union rights.

The *Associated Press* writes,

Many union leaders are frustrated that their money has not brought more meaningful support for the union agenda in Congress. Some activists want to reallocate more resources to bolster grass roots support in the states.

In May, Trumka [told](#) the National Press Club that congressional Democrats were not doing enough to support the unions in battles over state legislation and announced that the union would be redirecting its funds and attention on state elections if it continued to see that lack of support at the federal level. “It doesn’t matter if candidates and parties are controlling the wrecking ball or simply standing aside,” he said. “The outcome is the same either way. IF leaders aren’t blocking the wrecking ball and advancing working families’ interests, working people will not support them.”

Trumka’s announcement came just months after [video footage](#) of him boasting about his frequent visits to the White House went viral. In the video, Trumka leans back with an air of arrogance, drapes his arm over a chair, and indicates that he is a weekly visitor of the White House, sometimes as often as a couple of times a week. “I have conversations every day with someone in the White House or in the administration,” he claimed. “Every day.”

Evidently those conversations were not enough to secure what Trumka perceives to be sufficient union support from the White House. He is hoping the creation of a super PAC will positively impact union interests.



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