



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

Union Influence with the Obama Administration

Video footage of the AFL-CIO's Richard Trumka boasting about his close ties to the Obama administration is going viral. In the video, Trumka leans back, drapes his arms over the chairs, and reports 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 proclaims. "Every day."



While this is not necessarily new news, it serves as a reminder that the loyalty of the unions is to the Democratic Party, and that of the Obama administration is to the unions.

It also highlights the hypocrisy and priorities of the mainstream media. [Hot Air](#) explains:

Imagine that this is the Bush administration and an oil company executive is caught on tape saying he is at the White House twice a week and talks to someone inside every single day. Do you think that would have been on the front page of the NY Times? It would certainly be a very big story.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4NrT2oTQqE>

The relationship between the Obama administration and the unions has proven to be problematic on a number of occasions, but the most recent example can be found in the growing climate of union anger that has been seen in Wisconsin over the last few days.

On Saturday, February 19, Fox News [reported](#):

Organized labor is trying to re-energize and take advantage of the growing backlash from the wave of anti-union sentiment in Wisconsin and more than a dozen other states.

President Barack Obama and his political machine are offering tactical support, eager to repair strained relations with some union leaders upset over his recent overtures to business.

Naturally happy with this arrangement, AFL-CIO political director Karen Ackerman declared,

If you take on middle-class people and try to solve the budget crises on their backs, there's a price to pay. Many thousands of people will be energized to fight back.

Public and private unions have begun to organize behind a \$30 million plan to stop anti-labor measures in Wisconsin and 10 other states: Florida, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

In [Indiana](#), for example, Republican lawmakers are in the process of advancing three bills that would reduce the influence of organized labor. One would cut funding for unions through the right to work process. Another would target teachers unions by limiting the contracts that the unions can negotiate with school corporations for wages and benefits. The third would reduce jobless business by raising



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business taxes. Predictably, all three are opposed by the unions.

Republicans are accusing the Obama administration of trying to strangle the efforts of governors attempting to restrain spending and out-of-control governments. House Speaker John Boehner claimed that Obama is helping fuel Greece-style protests in the United States, comparing the Wisconsin protests to those seen in that beleaguered European nation. He added,

His [Obama's] political organization is colluding with special interest allies across the country to demagogue reform-minded governors who are making the tough choices that the president is avoiding.

As the relationship between the Obama administration and the labor movement has been strained, resulting from the President's pledge to freeze federal wages and his administration's failure to pass card check legislation, some Democrats assert the importance of supporting the unions at this juncture in order to keep a large portion of the Democratic constituency.

Democratic pollster Mark Mellman notes,

I think Democrats here are upholding the right principle. Failing to give support to this principle would be a real problem as far as the Democratic constituency is concerned.

Similarly, as unions have been major contributors to Democratic campaigns having spent \$400 million in 2008 alone, much of which went to the election of President Obama the [Daily Caller](#) reports, With President Obama facing reelection in less than two years, the president and his campaign team do not want to be on the wrong side of this union fight.

Recently, President Obama told a Milwaukee television station that efforts of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker to make collective bargaining with unions difficult seem like more of an assault on unions.

Despite being targeted by the White House and the labor movement, however, the Wisconsin lawmakers are not backing down. Governor Walker asserts that he will not allow his state to be bullied" by union thug tactics. Addressing President Obama, he declared,

We are focused on balancing our budget. It would be wise for the government and others in Washington to focus on balancing their budgets, which they are a long way off from doing.

Furthermore, Fox News notes:

Obama's political arm at the Democratic National Committee, Organizing for America, helped mobilize demonstrators in coordination with unions. Democratic Party officials also are watching government-labor disputes in Ohio and Indiana to see if the party should step in there, too.

Likewise, Education Secretary Arne Duncan promised teachers unions during an education summit in Denver last week that he would stand by them against any governors who pledge to shut down teachers' collective bargaining rights.

The Obama administration has already been severely censured for its failure to indicate a real interest in reining in federal spending, and any efforts on its part to prevent governors from cutting spending at the state level are sure to generate further criticism.

While the administration claims it is not opposed to reining in spending, simply to the means in which it is being done, others are not convinced.

Matt Bennett, vice president of Third Way, observes:



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On the politics, we worry that this will be seen less as an attempt to help the middle class broadly and more as an attempt to help a union or an interest group. That does not have a deep wellspring of support among the middle class at the moment.

According to a new Rasmussen poll, 48 percent of Americans side with Governor Walker, while 38 percent side with the unions. It would seem, however, that this administration focuses less on public opinion and more on its own agenda and financial contributors.

Photo: President Barack Obama stands with AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka after he spoke about jobs and the economy at the AFL-CIO Executive Council in Washington, Aug. 4, 2010.: AP Images



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