



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 6, 2011

Unions Hesitantly Support Obama for 2012

Unsurprisingly, the unions have indicated that they will be endorsing and supporting President Obama in 2012. However, Fox News notes that the labor movement is confronted by a diminishing membership, and that the relationship between Obama and the unions has suffered a bit, therefore making 2012 a more difficult campaign than that of 2008 for the labor movement. First, unions are faced with the difficulties of justifying massive spending for political candidates while suffering from diminished membership.



Fox News reports:

Federal records show labor unions spent close to \$100 million in the 2010 midterm cycle over \$20 million more than what they spent in 2008 but nonetheless saw their share of the electorate drop from one cycle to the next, from 21 percent to 17 percent.

That the unions may be spending more money to achieve diminished results would reflect their shrinking percentage of the population as a whole. In 1950, an estimated 38 percent of the American labor force belonged to a union; today, that figure stands at around 12 percent, and even lower 7 percent for the [private sector](#). This diminution in labors ranks is all the more significant when juxtaposed with the tripling of the American labor force over the same time period.

At the same time, the relationship between President Obama and the unions has been strained in recent weeks.

For example, when Vice President Biden appeared in Las Vegas to meet with a group of Teamsters, he warned those who may consider voting Republican, Let me put it this way. Dont come to me if you do! Youre on your own, jack!

Bidens warning followed a series of remarks made by top union executives in recent weeks regarding congressional Democrats and the White House.

On May 20, AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka (pictured above) told the National Press Club, You can be a friend and make a mistake once in awhile. And we forgive you for that mistake. The different is this: that were not going to spend precious resources helping candidates that dont stand up and help us.

Last month, Trumka made similar assertions while addressing a Beltway audience last month.

I have a message for some of our friends. For too long, we have been left after Election Day holding a canceled check, waving it about [and saying] Remember us? Remember us? Remember us? asking someone to pay a little attention to us. Well, I dont know about you, but Ive had a snoutful of that s***.

Regardless of the seemingly contentious relationship, many unions are still content with endorsing



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Obama. In fact, the National Education Association, one of the largest unions in the country, voted during its annual convention in Chicago on Monday to endorse President Obama for re-election. In total, 72 percent voted in favor of endorsing Obama, while 28 percent opposed it.

Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, remarked on the vote, Maybe some of them wanted to do it next year. But it seems to me that that was also a cautionary note by a union that is overwhelmingly Democratic.

Meanwhile, some Republican presidential hopefuls are looking to garner union support, including Republican front-runner Mitt Romney, who has accredited unions for playing a historic role in the development of the U.S. economy.

At the same time, however, Romney has criticized Obama for pursuing what he dubbed a unions agenda at the expense of the economy.

Romney said, He stacked the National Labor Relations Board with some labor union stooges, and again, if you're in a business that requires a lot of people, you have a lot of employees, that's going to make you pull back because you don't know what your cost of labor is going to be.

In an effort to avoid insulting union members, however, Romney added, There are some unions that continue to train their workers effectively. But in some cases the union bosses, the union CEOs that are running the unions perhaps out the interests of themselves ahead of the interests of their workers.

In contrast, former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty has worked to identify as a stronghold against big labor. In a recently released Iowa TV ad, an announcer referred to a government shutdown in Pawlenty's home state, and placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of big labor.

Minnesota gripped by one of the longest transit strikes in history. Why? Because Gov. Tim Pawlenty refused to cave in to [government](#) unions. Result? Pawlenty won.



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