

# ELECTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

*America's working families have felt the painful consequences of the last two presidential elections as they watched laws undermined, institutions compromised and rights trampled.*

## A FEW EXAMPLES:

### The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)

Run by a Republican-majority appointed by an avowedly anti-union president, the NLRB has issued an array of rulings that have:

- ▶ undermined the nation's labor laws;
- ▶ eliminated union representation for millions of workers;
- ▶ created new obstacles for unions and employers who wish to establish voluntary recognition;
- ▶ curtailed the amount of back pay and other remedies owed to employees who suffer reprisals or discrimination; and
- ▶ denied employees access to e-mail at work.

The overall thrust of the current Board's decisions, as described by Wilma B. Liebman, the longest-serving member of the Board who was appointed by President Clinton in 1997, "...has been to erode confidence in the Board and to lead unions to look to other means to secure representation for workers." In some cases, Liebman pointed out in testimony before a Senate Committee, the Board overturned more than 40 years of precedent to arrive at decisions to curtail union representation.

### The Labor Department (DOL)

Under the Bush White House, the DOL's Wage and Hour Administration issued regulations that cost millions of workers their right to premium pay for overtime. Other regulations issued by the agency have restricted access to union representation for a wide range of occupational groups.

The DOL's Office of Labor Management Services, under the direction of Republican National Committee opposition researcher Don Todd, has issued a spate of regulations to impose onerous new reporting requirements on unions, from top officials to shop stewards. These regulations were first conceived in 1992 by Representative Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and his ally Grover Norquist as part of the "Contract for America." Norquist described the scheme as a way to "crush labor as a political entity" and ultimately to "break unions."

In the wake of the Gulf Coast hurricanes in 2005, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao urged President Bush to suspend

enforcement of Davis-Bacon wage protections for workers engaged in the storm cleanup. Bush did so, but rescinded the order under pressure from lawmakers and union leaders.

The DOL's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has presided over a horrific increase in mine accidents and fatalities by emphasizing "cooperation" with the mining industry.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has dragged out the process of issuing regulations that would require employers to provide personal safety equipment to workers, thus endangering thousands of workers.

Elections have consequences too, when elected officials refuse to allow government to carry out its responsibilities or neglect their duties to citizens. Below are a few examples.

- ▶ **The Consumer Product Safety Commission:** Chaired by an industry lobbyist and saddled with an inadequate budget, the Commission has failed in its mission to keep unsafe products out of the flow of commerce.
- ▶ **The Environmental Protection Agency:** Under the control of industry lobbyists, this agency has ignored science, denied irrefutable facts about global warming and coddled polluters.
- ▶ **The U.S. Department of Agriculture:** Presided over several breakdowns in its meat inspection system which allowed millions of pounds of tainted meat to get on to supermarket shelves before discovering it was infected with e-coli; has evaded the will of Congress for more than five years by delaying regulations that call for country of origin labeling of food products.
- ▶ **The U.S. Department of Justice:** Over the past year, congressional investigators unearthed a wide-ranging pattern of corruption orchestrated at the top levels of the Justice Department to replace federal prosecutors deemed inadequately sensitive to the Bush administration's political objectives.

*Elections do indeed have consequences. The above facts are just a small sample of how presidential elections affect us all. Please keep this in mind when you consider who you vote for this November.*