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A Pro-Worker Path Forward

Workers and unions remain the heart of the Democratic Party, and the Congressional Labor Caucus remains steadfast in our commitment to that fact. We have reached an inflection point where many working Americans feel like neither party is responsive to their needs. As Members of Congress dedicated to advancing the labor movement, we have a duty to reclaim the mantle of the party of working people.

Hardworking men and women, not corporations, are responsible for the growth of our economy, and they deserve to share in that success. In the 1930s, the New Deal breathed new life into the labor movement – pairing bold investment with expanded rights for workers. We must once again support a modern, forward-looking vision with bold new investments that create good-paying jobs at home, unleash worker power and organizing, raise wages and benefits, and ensure safe working conditions for all. A pro-labor agenda that rewards workers and puts people over profits.

Raising Wages, Benefits, and Working Conditions

Working families continue to be crushed by increasing prices, longer work hours, and stagnant wages and benefits. As Americans' wages have not kept up with rising costs, more families are taking extreme measures to make ends meet. Meanwhile, corporations continue to post record profits while workers have been forced to do more with less. We must fight to ensure economic growth results in material gains for workers, not just corporations and shareholders.

The federal minimum wage has been frozen at $7.25 since 2009 and has lost 30% of its purchasing power over the last 17 years, the longest period without an increase since it was established in 1938. That delay is not a coincidence; it's a direct choice from prioritizing those the top instead of the people who built this country. Americans are tired of waiting. Meaningfully raising workers' wages is a first, and bare minimum, step we must take.

Furthermore, we must mobilize around a forward-looking agenda that ensures every worker receives the payment and benefits they deserve, including access to high-quality paid leave, health care, a dignified retirement, and safety on the job from the moment they leave home to the moment they return. Too few workers are able to access paid leave to take care of themselves and their families, access health care as soon as they need it, feel secure in their ability to comfortably retire, and have guaranteed safety on the job. Workers deserve strong working conditions and benefits and these fundamental demands are non-negotiable.

Creating Good Jobs at Home for Everyone

The path to prosperity runs through a good-paying, union job. Job creation has always been the strongest political unifier in American politics and access to a good job remains the strongest safety net in this country. Creating good-paying, union jobs at home is where we make the strongest case to the American public of our commitment to working people and developing paths to opportunity.

Every worker should be able to find a good-paying job that supports their families. Every district in the country has roads and bridges in need of repairs. Every state in the country has a direct stake in expanding

our energy infrastructure to lower energy costs facing consumers and preparing for the energy demands of the future. Every community benefits from a care economy that treats workers as professional employees. Every industry is strengthened by a high-standard, skilled workforce.

Demanding that public investments are paired with strong wage and union labor requirements transforms every federal investment into an opportunity to increase union membership and support American workers – which benefits communities everywhere.

Strengthening Worker Power

Central to this vision is the fundamental principle that collective bargaining is the strongest tool available to workers to create fair workplaces and an equitable economy. Despite record public support for organized labor, rates of unionization have fallen to historic lows. Reversing this trend will require bold action and can unlock significant gains for working people and their families.

The current gap between what workers want and their lived experience is a direct result of a system that does not protect their right to organize. Research indicates 60 million workers would join a union if they had the opportunity. That is not a statement of apathy toward collective action – it's a symptom of a system that is broken. One that has caused many Americans to feel like the American Dream is out of reach. As Members of Congress, we must be part of the solution.

Our work starts with protecting and expanding workers' right to organize. Union jobs are strong when workers can organize, bargain collectively, and win first contracts. Too often we see employers indefinitely delay, intimidate workers, or engage in other anti-union activity – because they know they can get away with it. We must support efforts to remove barriers to collective bargaining and crack down on employers engaging in union-busting activity.

The case for supporting unionization is also strong – communities with high union membership on average experience higher wages, greater economic activity, increased benefits and health care access, stronger workplace safety standards, and reduced inequality for both union and non-union households. Protecting this right is not only a moral imperative, but an economic one.

Conclusion

The Congressional Labor Caucus is unified in ensuring every worker in every sector has a voice on the job and in Congress. This vision is the first step, but our work is far from done. We must organize, mobilize, and energize our partners in this endeavor to address these important topics and develop affirmative, actionable, worker-centered policies. We are committed to leading the charge to create an economy that supports and empowers working people. We will always stand in solidarity with workers, to deliver for workers.