

Your Family and the 2002 Elections:



A Look at
Some Key Issues
and How Our
Votes Could
Determine
the Outcome



2 We can make not just a difference, but the difference.



4 Social Security privatization already flopped, so why do it here?



3 Seniors need real treatment for outrageous prescription prices.



6 Do union members who hunt need to back anti-labor candidates?

Ask President Francisco

Q With all the money big business and the wealthy have to spend backing and influencing politicians, can people like us **really** make a difference in the upcoming elections?
Al Link, Local 8, Peoria, Illinois

A I understand why people feel discouraged or cynical about politics. I also know that many are still reeling from the way the Supreme Court decided the 2000 presidential election.

But let me tell you why I feel more ready than ever to fight.

It's obvious that we'll never match the deep pockets of greedy corporate special interests that outspent America's unions by a 15-1 margin in 2000.

Luckily, we don't have to outspend them to beat them. But we do need every precious dollar our hardworking members can contribute to our political action fund. Even one dollar per month keeps us in the fight, especially when a million union members each decide to pitch in.

But what we have and they don't, are millions of working Americans who can be unstoppable when they mobilize for economic and social justice.

Put aside all those outrages in Florida, like chads, butterfly ballots, illegal purging of voter rolls and intimidation of minority voters and focus just on the "official" 537-vote Bush victory margin. It illustrates how every one of us can make a difference.

There are several thousand NCFO members in Florida. Certainly some of them were not registered and others did not vote for one reason or another. And suppose more Florida members had given a pep talk on the issues to a relative, neighbor or



friend and got them to vote, or transported an elderly or disabled person to the polls.

Our locals in Florida worked very hard in the 2000 election and did a good job. But suppose 100 more members answered the union's call to volunteer just a couple of hours in a voter registration drive or in a get-out-the-vote telephone bank.

You get the point. Union members and the volunteers who helped mobilize them in record numbers around the country proved it in a number of victories, too.

If not for union households, Democrat Debbie Stabenow would have gone down in flames by a 20 percent margin in the Michigan Senate race. But because of union votes, she won.

In fact, union families accounted for 26 percent of *all votes cast* in 2000 (up from 23 percent in 1996 and 19 percent in 1992). There were 2.5 million more voters from union households in 2000 than in 1996.

Make sure you're registered so that on November 4, you can vote for a

The Journal, National Conference of Firemen & Oilers' Newsletter, is the quarterly publication of and for the membership of the National Conference of Firemen & Oilers (NCFO).

NCFO PRESIDENT
George J. Francisco, Jr.

NCFO SECRETARY-TREASURER
Daniel S. Anderson, Jr.

CONFERENCE VICE PRESIDENTS
Frederick D. Winters
Paul V. Shiplett
Sharon A. Munley
Robert S. Franco
Thomas F. Doyle
Timothy P. Healy

The Journal, National Conference of Firemen & Oilers' Newsletter is published quarterly by the Conference of Firemen & Oilers, SEIU, NCFO, 1023 15TH ST NW 10TH FL, WASHINGTON DC 20005. Tel: (202) 962-0981, Fax: (202) 872-1222. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C. USPS 017-471.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Journal, NCFO, 1023 15TH ST NW 10TH FL, WASHINGTON DC 20005



U.S. Representative who will fight for you. There also are U.S. Senate elections in 34 states and gubernatorial races in 36. In every state you have at least until 30 days before the election (check the chart in the summer *Journal* that's also on the NCFO website).

I know there are some pro-labor Republicans and some Democrats who can't be called friends of working families. But if Republicans keep or enlarge their slim five-vote majority in the House and take back control of the Senate, the next two years will be terrible, with attacks on the rights and standard of living of working families, on Social Security, Medicare, public education and protection of the environment.

Let's not let that happen. Together we can make not just a difference, but *the* difference.

America's Seniors Needs Strong Medicine To Cure Pharmaceutical Price Gouging

NCFO members like Felix Landeros and Carol Buck want to know when Congress and the President will stop listening to the powerful pharmaceutical companies and take *effective* action to help senior citizens get affordable prescription drugs.

The Republican majority in the House of Representatives passed a plan backed by the pharmaceutical industry and President Bush. It would leave most seniors paying the lion's share of drug costs, force them to buy private insurance (with no uniform, guaranteed benefits) and do nothing to control the cost of prescription drugs.

Republican leaders were able to block a much better Democratic bill in the Senate that was backed by a majority (52 Senators), but not the super majority of 60 needed under the Senate rule in effect. It would provide more extensive benefits and would make prescription drug coverage part of Medicare. This would help to lower drug prices through the "buying power" Medicare could exert. It would not go as far as to regulate drug prices, but it's a move in the right direction.

Landeros, a Local 713 member in El Paso, Texas, already knows that the costs of prescription drugs can and should be slashed. Family members routinely cross the border into Mexico to purchase the blood pressure, cholesterol and other medications his uncle Manny needs. A 10-day



PHOTO: R.C. De La Torre

Both Local 1184 member Carol Buck (above) and Manny Landeros, uncle of Local 713 member Felix Landeros, get their life-saving prescriptions filled in Mexico at a small fraction of the U.S. cost.

supply of just one of his medications, which costs about \$170 in El Paso, is only \$35 in nearby Mexico.

Is it the same medicine? Absolutely, says Local 1184 member Carol Buck, who gets her two diabetes medications from Mexico at a fraction of the cost in Seattle, with the help of friends living in southern Arizona. "I've had the medications checked for quality," says the licensed practical nurse and 43-year NCFO member.

Other Americans are heading north for medicine. Recently, the union-backed Alliance for Retired Americans brought 378 seniors to Canada by bus. They saved an average of \$1,340 each on their medications.

"Prescription prices are simply outrageous in the U.S.," says Felix Landeros. "I don't know how people living on just Social Security can manage. Often I guess they just don't."

Buck and Landeros both understand that relying on cross-border trips cannot be a solution for most Americans.

"I spent my career helping sick people as a nurse," adds Buck. "Now I'll fight for them as an activist. We need to elect a Congress this November that will pass a strong Medicare prescription drug bill."

Painful Facts That Need a Cure

- The pharmaceutical industry has more Washington lobbyists (625) than any other.
- It has more than one lobbyist for every Senator and Representative (535).
- It spends more on lobbying and political contributions than any other industry.
- In 2001 the cost of the 50 drugs most used by seniors went up three times more than the rate of inflation.
- The U.S. is the only industrialized country that does not regulate the price of prescription drugs.

Learning from the Disaster in Great Britain

Will We Let Them Destroy Social Security with Privatization?

The November Elections May Provide the Answer

Privatizers will begin destroying our Social Security if you don't stop them in the elections for U.S. Senators and Representatives. British workers, who have suffered through privatization, tell you what it did to them—and why you should vote out the privatizers.

zation don't want to talk about it during their election campaigns.

They just want to begin destroying it if the Republicans wind up in control of Congress.

Pro-privatization propaganda celebrates Great Britain, but the actual record there shows why privatization would be a sorry legacy for Bush and terrible for us.

British Social Security was instituted after World War II by a union-backed Labor Party administration. Both the Basic State Pension (BSP) and national health care were funded by employer-employee payroll deductions. The BSP provided an "income floor" for all retirees.

A second tier was added in 1974 to cover workers lacking employment-based pensions to supplement the BSP. It's known now, for short, as S2P (Second State Pension).

Elected Prime Minister in 1979, archconservative Margaret Thatcher began her war on British Social Security as part of a Bush-like pro-corporate, anti-worker agenda.

"Thatcher changed just about everything in the workingman's life for the worse," explained Derek James, an operator at a power plant 75 miles from London, in a 1997 interview.

Thatcher first started slashing Social Security benefits—using the cuts to make Social Security look less appealing and to help pay for her initial privatization move.

George W. Bush has been pushing for privatization of Social Security ever since he announced his candidacy for President in 1999 and his stacked Social Security commission predictably called for replacing part of Social Security with individual investment accounts.

Earlier this year, the top Republican in the House of Representatives, Majority Leader Richard Armey, vowed to help Bush reach the goal of making Social Security privatization "the legacy of his administration."

Americans seem to like the idea of investing part of their Social Security contributions in individual accounts, but only until they learn that private accounts will require sharp benefit cuts, huge budget deficits, more years of working, costly administrative fees and great risk in the stock market.

As Americans digest the lessons of the Enron and other scandals, see the volatile stock market screwing up retirement plans for people they know, and learn about the dangers of privatization, the Republican leaders pushing it are running scared.

Many Republican Senate and House candidates who back privati-



▲ "I urge you in America to fight through your unions to defend your Social Security. Once you bring in the profit motive, the people who lose are working families."
British Rail Union Leader John Tilley

▲ Now a railroad worker with a good pension plan, Paul Fletcher had only British Social Security in his previous job. He bought into privatization and administrative fees ate up his meager savings. "I'd never do it again," he says.



▲ Because of the partial privatization of the British version of Social Security and the benefit cuts needed to pay for it, poverty is way up among senior citizens.



▲ “Thatcher changed just about everything in the workingman’s life for the worse,” says power plant operator Derek James, of the Bush-like anti-worker pro-corporate program of Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, which included an assault on British Social Security.

As a result of Thatcher’s attacks, the weekly individual basic benefit now is around \$109. If not for the changes it would be \$152. Similarly, someone retiring in 2020 will get a second-tier benefit worth only 1/2 of the 1978 value.

Privatization started with the 1986 Pensions Act. It bribed people with tax rebates and other incentives to leave their work-based pension plans or the second tier of social security and open individual private pension accounts. A massive propaganda campaign followed.

But a huge “mis-selling” scandal developed. Government regulators say that at least 1.7 million workers were duped into leaving better company pension plans for private savings schemes. Investment and insurance companies have been forced to pay an estimated \$15 billion in fines and compensation to victims. But millions of victims got nothing.

Now a union rail worker, Paul Fletcher was an auto mechanic in a nonunion shop when he was duped by all the propaganda about private accounts. “I didn’t understand it all too well and the company [which had to contribute to the S2P but not to the individual account] encouraged me to leave.” The result, says Fletcher, “high fees eating up my savings and I couldn’t afford to put in what the investment company wanted me to. I’d never do it again.”

Just as privatization in the U.S. would carry a whopping price tag (one study estimates *three trillion dollars* in the next 75 years), so it has in Great Britain. The cost of the pension and social security privatization push—in the incentives and lost taxes—is estimated to already be over \$55 billion, and counting.

That money was desperately needed by the health care and education systems.

As would be the case in the U.S.—where for one in four female seniors Social Security is the *only* source of income—the privatization in Great Britain has had its worst impact on women (who like women in the U.S., earn less and live longer).

“My father died early and my mother wound up living and dying in poverty,” explains Shona Hastings, a public housing worker. “I had to take out a bloody loan just to bury her,” she says.

That’s part of why experts like Peter Morris, former research director of Great Britain’s largest public employee union, worries that the privatization will place huge burdens on the country in the future.

“They’ve mortgaged the future with the privatization of our social security. The British public would never support it now,” he argues.

John Tilley, a national executive board member of Britain’s largest railroad union, reiterates that message.

“I urge you in America to fight through your unions to defend your Social Security. Once you bring in the profit motive, the people who lose are working families.”



◀ Public housing worker Shona Hastings knows that Social Security privatization has its worst impact on women — who tend to earn less and live longer than men. “My father died early and my mother wound up living and dying in poverty,” she says. For one in four female seniors in the U.S., Social Security is the only source of income.

Hunting for Votes of Union Gun Owners: Many Members Wind Up Voting for Foes of Working Families

" [The gun issue] is the one thing that will spin the blue-collar union member away from his union."

FORMER NRA STAFFER
AND NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER
NEAL KNOX

There's a lot of territory between where NCFO Stewards Kevin Gregory of Maine and Fred Mouser of Kentucky live and work, but they have much in common beyond their shared commitment to their union.

Hunting is an important part of their lives and a cultural tradition. They are quick to oppose politicians they perceive as threatening their rights as hunters.

So much so that Mouser voted for George W. Bush for President in 2000 and Gregory almost did, too.

There are millions of other (mostly male and white) Americans for whom gun rights are a huge issue.

And though AFL-CIO analysis of the 2000 election shows that union members overall voted for Gore over Bush by a 31% margin (63%-31%), union members who own guns favored Gore by only an eight percent margin.

That's a big gap, and discussions with Mouser and Gregory shed light on what unions can do to close it.

Generations of Hunters

Like his grandfather and father before him, Kevin Gregory is a paper mill worker in Millinocket and he has been hunting since he was 10. His six-year-old son Steven already goes out hunting with him and loves it.

"I don't have a problem with waiting periods or registering guns and I think safety locks are a good idea," says the Local 3 member, a registered Indepen-



dent. "But hunting is an important part of our life here, I believe I have a Constitutional right to have guns and I believed that my guns would be safer with Bush."

Gregory went back and forth, but wanted "to defend good jobs as much as I did my right to bear arms." He voted for Gore, because, he says "he was much more for the working man."

Gore proposed no measures to interfere with the rights of hunters like Gregory, so why the concern?

"The National Rifle Association (NRA) pushed a lot of money to Republicans and convinced many people that their guns would be taken away if Gore and the Democrats won," says Gregory's

◀ New York City born and raised Tony Capone hasn't fired a firearm since Vietnam, but many of his Local 3 coworkers at Great Northern Paper in Maine are dedicated hunters. "In New York City, where you can buy a gun from a hotdog vendor, I'm all for getting guns off the streets," he says. "But here fathers teach their sons gun safety and the hunting tradition. They don't carry guns for killing people."

◀ Local 3 members (from left) Jim Busque, Kevin Gregory and Mike Manzo all are hunting enthusiasts for whom protecting the rights of hunters is a key issue. Busque—who sometimes sports his NRA "Charlton Heston Is My President" T-shirt—voted for George W. Bush in 2000. Gregory almost did too, but he and Manzo both backed Al Gore. "A lot of people in America who are concerned about gun violence don't understand the hunting culture," says Manzo.

◀ Kentucky Local 320 Steward Fred Mouser (right) and sons Kelly (left) and Bryan check the sights on their hunting rifles. Mouser voted for George W. Bush because he believed NRA propaganda that his guns would not be safe under President Gore. But now that he's seen how much Bush has hurt working families, "if I could do it all over again, I'd vote for Gore in a heartbeat," he says.

coworker at Great Northern Paper, Brent Kelly. "Unions did a good job talking about other issues, but not in counteracting that one," he adds.

"A lot of people in America who are concerned about gun violence don't understand the hunting culture," adds Local 3 member Mike Manzo. He believes this culture would be better appreciated within the labor movement (and union hunters would offer stronger support to labor's agenda) if there were a national union organization for hunters (an idea reportedly under consideration within the AFL-CIO).

Down in New Haven, Kentucky, Fred Mouser *lives* the hunting culture.

"If Fred isn't hunting, he's preparing to

hunt or building tree stands," says his wife Connie, a teacher who, unlike her husband, voted for Gore.

Though a committed and hard-working NCFO steward at Carbide Graphite in Louisville, Fred Mouser admits that he hasn't spent enough time on politics, and is more likely to read a hunting magazine than a union newsletter.

Impact of NRA

A former NRA member, Mouser got a number of election calls from the organization and was convinced that Gore was "going to jump in and take our hunting rights away," so he voted for Bush.

It's a vote he now regrets because of Bush's attacks on worker health and safety rights, his policies favoring the rich and his attacks on Social Security.

Mouser also realizes that the election of Gore would not have threatened his rights as a hunter, nor would the election of a Democratic Congress this year.

"If I could do it all over again, I'd vote for Gore in a heartbeat," he says.

But he thinks that supporters of gun control legislation could be clearer that the rights of hunters are not in their targets and that unions need to do more to reach people with his concerns.

His son Bryan, who is working and going to college, is also an avid hunter who voted for Bush. He had only one source of election information in 2000, NRA radio commercials "which said Gore would try to take our guns out of our home. I never heard anything disputing that," he says.

"The NRA pushed a lot of money to Republicans and convinced many people that their guns would be taken away if Gore and the Democrats won. Unions did a good job talking about other issues, but not in counteracting that one."

LOCAL 3 MEMBER BRENT KELLY

Taking Aim at Working Families

Anti-worker organizations see "the gun issue" as one they can use to destroy unity among working families. Actor Charlton Heston, long-time president of the National Rifle Association (NRA), played a key role in helping one such organization attack the right of workers.

The right to strike, as a weapon of last resort, is a critical tool for winning better wages and benefits. But it's a weaker tool when employers can bring in permanent scab replacements for strikers.

In 1994, when Congress was poised to pass a ban on scabs, the anti-union National Right to Work [for less] Committee featured Heston in 27 TV and radio ads and media tours in key states opposing the law. Though a majority of Senators favored the measure, Heston and his cohorts denied working America the 60 votes needed to cut off debate, so the measure banning scabs died.

If they won't sign
the pledge
to protect Social Security
& support a Medicare Drug Benefit
then they don't deserve
your support

All across America, candidates for House and Senate seats are being asked to sign a solemn pledge that they will:

1 Oppose Privatizing Social Security, Partially or Totally. This includes opposing diverting any Social Security revenue to private investment accounts or substituting private investments accounts for any portion of Social Security's guaranteed benefits.

2 Support a Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit to be provided within the Medicare program with sufficient funding to insure affordable premiums. It must empower Medicare to negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prices and not push beneficiaries into HMOs or managed care.

To find out if the lawmakers and candidates in your Congressional district and State have signed the pledge, visit www.signthepledge.org.

If they haven't signed, call their office or campaign and tell them that if they won't support you by supporting the pledge, you won't support them.



SEIU, National Conference
of Firemen & Oilers

1023 15TH ST NW 10TH FL
WASHINGTON DC 20005

Periodicals
Postage Paid at
Washington, DC
USPS 01 7-471