



May 21, 2020

To: CWA Executive Board

Subject: Endorsement of Joe Biden for President

Dear CWA Executive Board:

I am writing to present a motion that CWA endorse Joe Biden for President of the United States. The past three years – and indeed just the past three months – have proven that the 2016 election was the most damaging election of our lifetimes. Donald Trump's victory that year will tear at the fabric of our society and the health of our communities for years to come and will worsen if he is re-elected. That is why we are fortunate this year that the Democratic nominee, former Vice President Biden, is someone who will walk the walk when it comes to fighting for workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively.

Why the Executive Board Should Act

Our endorsement process in this year's election has differed from 2016. This cycle, early on, there were too many candidates in the race to be confident that an online membership poll would produce a consensus choice for the union. So I postponed any poll until the field narrowed. After Super Tuesday, the field narrowed dramatically, leaving us with two possible choices for the general election: Joe Biden or Donald Trump. Given this choice, it is time for the Executive Board to make an endorsement.

Never in history, has a candidate been more unqualified to serve as President than Donald Trump. But before I discuss Trump's disqualifications, I want to explain why Joe Biden deserves our enthusiastic support.

Why Joe Biden Deserves Our Endorsement

CWA's primary mission is to advance the interests of our members and all working people. We know that the rights to organize and collectively bargain are central to that mission.

Our members understand how important these rights are. Regardless of their political affiliation, time and time again, our members rank organizing and collective bargaining rights as a top priority.

On this issue alone, the choice could not be clearer. Joe Biden supports strengthening the right to organize and collectively bargain. He has endorsed pro-worker labor law reforms for the private sector, via the PRO Act, and in the public sector, via the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act. He has said that he would like to go beyond these bills and pass even stronger legislation protecting the right to organize. His plan to expand broadband includes language requiring companies receiving funds to remain neutral on workers' organizing efforts. Imagine finally having the weight of the White House behind Capitol Hill efforts to expand and strengthen workers' rights, rather than weaken them.

Joe will appoint pro-worker NLRB and NMB members who believe in collective bargaining and want our labor laws to facilitate, not undermine, workers' efforts to form and join unions. He will appoint a pro-worker Secretary of Labor who will enforce wage and hour and health and safety laws, not help employers take advantage of every loophole to avoid compliance. He will appoint judges who aren't looking to crush unions and who understand the daily struggles of working people.

As we try to rebuild from the disaster of the Trump Administration and the coronavirus pandemic, Joe won't attempt to turn every crisis into an excuse for tax cuts for the rich, but an opportunity to save and create jobs, with organizing rights. One of Joe's goals is to make sure broadband is built to every American household. He opposes any tax breaks for companies that outsource jobs.

On health care, instead of repealing Obamacare, he will strengthen and expand it, with a public option that will give everyone the option of buying into a Medicare-like alternative to private health insurance. And he has a comprehensive plan to bring down the cost of prescription drugs.

Joe understands labor's mantra: "Which side are you on?" He knows who built America and who built the middle class. When we need him, Joe and his White House will be there for us, ready to help. It's about time the President of the United States was an ally and promoter of organized labor, not an enemy.

Why Donald Trump Must Be Removed from Office

As for Donald Trump, his actions in office have disqualified him from our endorsement.

The last several months have starkly exposed the tragic and devastating inadequacies of Trump's leadership. Our country has been brought to its knees by the deadly mix of the coronavirus and the incompetence of the Trump Administration.

Trump did not start the coronavirus pandemic, but he has failed at every turn to prepare the nation for it, protect lives, and minimize damage to our economy, let alone set a national tone of shared sacrifice and unity in confronting this plague. For months, Trump downplayed the threat it posed to our health. By the time it arrived on our shores in force, we were left totally vulnerable. Now two months since the pandemic began forcing lockdowns, we still – inexplicably – do not have a national plan for comprehensive testing even as Trump and his corporate allies attempt to force non-essential businesses to reopen. Our frontline workers continue to needlessly risk their lives with insufficient personal protective equipment in the richest nation on Earth, with health care workers forced to don garbage bags in a desperate effort to protect themselves. Trump has pitted states against one another to find PPE supplies because, under his catastrophic leadership, the federal government has failed to coordinate any national effort to protect Americans. He refused to use the Defense Production Act to get our manufacturing members back to work producing ventilators or PPE and instead used it to force meatpacking plants to open despite thousands of their employees getting infected on the job in unsafe working conditions.

The response of the CDC and the Department of Labor has been particularly abhorrent. The CDC has recommended that asymptomatic workers, including healthcare workers, who have had close contact and known exposure to an infected person be allowed to continue to work, instead of being quarantined. At first, the Department of Labor and OSHA were missing in action. When they surfaced, it was to lower safety standards and give corporations a free pass to ignore health and safety regulations. There is no requirement that companies report COVID-19 infections and fatalities among employees to OSHA unless there is definitive evidence that the infection is work-related. Viruses don't come with documentation of their origin.

What kind of people think that the best thing to do during a pandemic is to make health and safety protections optional? It's Orwellian.

Sadly, treating working people as expendable has been a hallmark of this administration, led by a pathological narcissist who stands at the podium spouting self-serving lies and bullshit at moments when America needs truth and compassion from their President.

We now have over 90,000 confirmed coronavirus deaths and counting, with African Americans bearing a disproportionate share of the suffering. Many of our own CWA sisters and brothers are among the fallen. If Trump had prepared the nation and the federal government, the death toll would be smaller, and the economy would not be in the shambles that it is. During this pandemic, we have experienced Trumpism on steroids: lies that kill people, flippant corruption and favoritism, mindboggling incompetence, unnecessary cruelty, and divisiveness as distraction. And that's just the last couple months. For the past three and a half years, Trump has done immeasurable damage to working people.

Here's a partial list of Trump's record on workers:

- In the first days of his administration, Trump could have issued an executive order preventing federal contracts from going to companies that send call center jobs overseas. A group of Senators wrote to him asking him to do this--on two separate occasions--and I even asked him face-to-face in person during a meeting in the Oval Office. He never responded. But when Trump eventually did issue an executive order about federal contractors, it was to make it easier for contractors to fire workers when they took over from a previous contractor. And rather than supporting our bipartisan legislation to help save call center jobs, he instead pushed for a tax bill that made it financially rewarding for companies to move our jobs overseas. Also, in those early days of his Administration, Trump wasted no time repealing an Obama executive order that would have held federal contractors – including call centers employing tens of thousands of workers trying to organize with CWA – accountable for labor law violations.
- Having taken immediate executive action to set back workers' rights among federal contractors, Trump next turned to his top legislative priority for that first year: handing out gargantuan tax breaks to big businesses. He promised that his tax cut would lead to \$4,000-per-year wage increases for working people. That was one of many promises broken. Corporations certainly got their trillion-dollar tax cuts, but workers never saw those \$4,000 raises.

Instead, corporations used the money for stock buybacks to enrich shareholders and CEOs and shipped jobs overseas because his tax cuts set a lower rate on overseas operations.

- Trump has packed the courts with anti-labor judges with lifetime appointments. His efforts paid off early for his big business supporters. After appointing Neil Gorsuch, famous for saying an employer could fire a truck driver who refused to freeze to death, the Trump Court issued its *Janus* decision as quickly as possible to try and break public sector unions. In one fell swoop, the Trump Court made the entire public sector “right-to-work-for-less.” They next ruled that workers could be forced to sign agreements promising to never join together in a class action against their employer, holding that class actions aren’t concerted activity. Trump’s other appointee to the Supreme Court was Brett Kavanaugh, who was the only judge in the 17-year fight for justice at CNN to rule against us, as a lonely dissent in the D.C. Circuit. Working hand in glove with Mitch McConnell, Trump has filled one quarter of the federal courts of appeals with his nominees. Thanks to Trump and McConnell, the federal judiciary is fast-becoming the last place a working person would ever want to turn for justice. Trump cannot be allowed to continue packing the courts with people who hate workers and their unions.
- During the 2016 campaign, Trump talked a good game about renegotiating NAFTA. But when he did, he gave special protections to Big Pharma and gave working families the shaft. His so-called improvements had protections for drug companies, but no enforceable labor rights for workers. It took CWA friends like Senator Sherrod Brown and Representative Rosa DeLauro to force changes and make sure the final product was even a little better than the existing NAFTA.
- When the House passed the PRO Act – the most important labor law reform in more than a decade – Trump promised to veto it. Yes, vetoed our top legislative priority. The PRO act is just one of hundreds of pro-working-family bills passed by the Democratic-controlled House that would make our lives better, but Trump and Mitch McConnell haven’t lifted a finger to get them passed in the Senate.
- Trump put Eugene Scalia, son of the late, anti-union Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, in charge of the Department of Labor. CWA members know Scalia because he aggressively defended Cablevision’s union-busters, who fired 22 workers when they tried to win a contract with CWA.

True to form, Scalia has rolled back pro-worker provisions in the pandemic relief bills as quickly as Congress can pass them.

- Trump has stacked the National Labor Relations Board with anti-union appointees who vote again and again and again to make it harder for workers to organize and easier for employers to silence us. I would need many more pages to recount the many decisions and rule changes that this Board has issued to the detriment of CWA and all unions.
- At OSHA, there are fewer inspectors than at any time in *history* and workplace fatalities were already rising as a result *before the pandemic*. Now the fatalities will become countless.
- Trump refuses to raise the minimum wage and has made it easier for financial advisors to rip off workers with self-dealing advice about their retirement plans.
- Trump has pressed to repeal the Affordable Care Act with absolutely no replacement plan. Incredibly, even today, his Justice Department continues to push to have the ACA ruled unconstitutional, which would cruelly strip millions of Americans of access to health care – in the middle of a deadly pandemic.
- Trump killed regulations holding federal contractors accountable for labor law violations. And his Labor Department allows employers who violate minimum wage, overtime, and other laws to avoid any penalty by—*get this*—volunteering to investigate *themselves*.

This onslaught has been made possible thanks to the age-old trick of divide and conquer. Trump stirs up America's darkest forces: racism and xenophobia. He wants us to believe that our fellow workers, rather than his wealthy benefactors, are the ones who are rigging the economy against us. The deepening racial divide we have seen in Trump's America is no accident – it's a tactic. He and every other enemy of labor throughout history have deployed it. They know: when workers are united, we win; when we are divided and pointing the finger at each other, we lose, every single time.

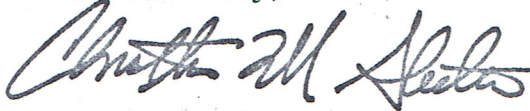
If ever there was a time for solidarity, this is it. We simply cannot survive four more years of this incompetent madman's attacks. If Trump is re-elected, our democracy and our Union are in peril. This is not hyperbole. To quote longtime Republican consultant Steve Schmidt, "Trump is the instrument of our precipitous national decline. Recovery from this disaster will take many years. Trump is not capable at any level of leading it."

It's time for us all to put everything into electing a President of the United States who will stand with workers for a change and put our nation on the road to healing and recovery.

Motion to Endorse Joe Biden for President of the United States

For these reasons, I move that the Communications Workers of America endorse Joe Biden for President of the United States.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Christopher M. Shelton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Christopher" being more prominent than the last name "Shelton".

Christopher M. Shelton
President