

Candidate Questionnaire

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2009
Elections

AFL-CIO LEGISLATIVE DEPT. _____

1. FREEDOM TO CHOOSE A UNION

If elected, would you co-sponsor and vote for the Employee Free Choice Act (S.800/H.R. 1041), which passed the House by a vote of 241-185 on March 1, 2007 but was blocked by a Senate filibuster in June, 2007 (the Senate failed to invoke cloture by a vote of 51-48 vote)? The Employee Free Choice Act, introduced by Senator Kennedy in the Senate and Representative George Miller in the House, would require employers to honor their workers' decision to join a union after a majority of them signed a union authorization card or petition; establishes first contract mediation and arbitration; and creates meaningful penalties against employers who interfere with, coerce or fire workers for attempting to join a union.

OWEN - YES **DEDE - YES**

If elected, would you publicly support workers who are forming unions by reaffirming the importance of unions to our communities and by taking actions such as contacting employers and urging them to not interfere with employee free choice, issuing public statements, attending rallies supporting organizing, sponsoring public forums, etc.?

OWEN - YES **DEDE - YES**

If elected, would you oppose a national "right to work" bill that would prohibit unionized workers and their employers from voluntarily agreeing to "union security" provisions, which allow the union to recover the costs of collective bargaining from all of the workers that federal law requires it to represent in the workplace?

OWEN - YES **DEDE - YES**

2. JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

If elected, would you support the repeal of the Bush tax cuts for the top income brackets?

OWEN - I SUPPORT ALLOWING THE BUSH TAX CUTS TO EXPIRE

DEDE- NO

If elected, will you support funding important infrastructure projects that generate good jobs, such as transportation systems, school modernization, airports and water systems?

OWEN- YES **DEDE- YES**

If elected, will you support a fiscal stimulus to enable states to meet increasing demands for Medicaid and education funding?

OWEN - AS A MEMBER OF CONGRESS, I WOULD EXAMINE THIS ISSUE CAREFULLY AND BASE MY DECISION ON THE NEEDS OF THE STATES.

DEDE - I WOULD HAVE VOTED YES ON THE 2009 SIMULUS BILL

If elected, would you support an increase in the minimum wage to historic levels? (More than \$8 an hour in 2006 dollars) **OWENS – YES** **DEDE – JUST INCREASED BUT WOULD CONSIDER**

If elected, would you support indexing the minimum wage to ensure automatic increases on an annual basis? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE - YES**

3. MANUFACTURING AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

If elected, would you support efforts to strengthen trade law enforcement and efforts to secure meaningful remedies for injuries resulting from unfair trade? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE - YES**

If elected, would you support legislation to reform tax provisions that encourage the movement of jobs and investment overseas? **OWENS- YES** **DEDE - YES**

If elected, would you oppose legislation to implement bilateral, regional, or unilateral free trade agreements that do not require enforcement of internationally recognized workers' rights and environmental standards? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE- YES**

If elected, would you oppose legislation to implement any further rounds of the WTO that weaken U.S. trade laws, alter our commitments with respect to immigration policies, or fail to make substantial progress on incorporating internationally recognized workers' rights?

OWENS – I OPOSE WEAKING U.S. TRADE LAWS AND BELIEVE THEY SHOULD RECOGNIZE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' RIGHTS **DEDE - YES**

If elected, would you support adequate funding to fight abusive international child labor and promote the enforcement of internationally recognized workers' rights? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE - YES**

What will you do to address the trade imbalance with China and promote the rights of Chinese workers, especially the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining?

OWENS – WORKER RIGHTS MUST BE PROTECTED IN EVERY COUNTRY. I SUPPORT THE CREATION OF LAWS WHICH HAVE NECESSARY PROVISIONS TO PUNISH THOSE THAT VIOLATE THESE LAWS. ADDITIONALLY, WE SHOULD ENFORCE PROVISIONS THAT PROTECT AMERICAN WORKERS AND THEIR JOBS.

DEDE – WE HAVE TO TAKE ACTIONS THAT STRENGTHEN OUR OWN ECONOMY AND ENCOURAGE SAVINGS. WE MUST WORK COOPERATIVELY AND DIPLOMATICALLY TOWARDS WIN-WIN SOLUTIONS

If elected will you support measures such as H.R. 782/S. 796, the bipartisan Fair Currency Act, to ensure that the Chinese government and other foreign nations cease illegal currency manipulation?

OWENS – YES **DEDE - YES**

4. HEALTH CARE

If elected, would you work to enact comprehensive health care reform that will guarantee quality, affordable health care for all Americans? Would you support a plan modeled after an improved Medicare, with shared financing that doesn't penalize the companies that have been providing good coverage, or use an individual mandate to shift the burden to working families?

OWENS – I BELIEVE THAT OUR HEALTH INSURANCE SYSTEM IS BROKEN AND NEEDS REFORM. HEALTH CARE REFORM IS CRITICAL IN HELPING TO CREATE

JOB'S AND GETTING OUR ECONOMY BACK ON TRACK. I SUPPORT REFORM THAT WOULD:

****COVER THE MILLIONS OF AMERICANS WHO DON'T HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE***

****CUT DOWN ON RISING HEALTH INSURANCE COSTS***

****STOP INSURANCE COMPANIES FROM DENYING COVERAGE TO AMERICANS WHO HAVE PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS***

****GUARANTEE THAT SMALL BUSINESS AND INDIVIDUALS HAVE ACCESS TO THE SAME LOWER RATES AVAILABLE TO LARGE CORPORATIONS AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.***

DEDE- YES, THE STATUS QUO IS NOT ACCEPTABLE, I.E. WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE/ALLOW GREATER COMPETITION AMONG PRIVATE INSURANCE COMPANIES

If elected, would you support legislation that shores up retiree health benefits by either providing help for employers for catastrophic health care costs or allowing 55 to 64 year olds to buy into Medicare?

OWENS – I WOULD SUPPORT THIS TYPE OF LEGISLATION IF IT MEETS THE FOUR-POINT CRITERIA FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM OUTLINED ABOVE. DEDE-YES

If elected, would you support efforts to control rising health care costs, including pharmaceutical costs, in order to make coverage more affordable for workers and retirees? ***OWENS – YES DEDE - YES***

Until we have guaranteed coverage for all Americans, would you oppose legislation that would undermine coverage for 160 million Americans who are insured through their employer, including proposals that encourage cost shifting to workers through Health Savings Accounts and high-deductible health plans? ***D-YES*** *Imposing a cap on the amount of health benefits that are excluded from taxation?* ***-D- I DO NOT SUPPORT TAXATION OF BENEFITS*** *Allowing Association Health Plans to sell insurance that is exempt from state rules and coverage guidelines, thereby driving up premiums for most workers in small firms that already offer coverage?* ***DEDE - YES***

OWENS – I SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE REFORM AS LONG AS IT MEETS THE CRITERIA OUTLINED ABOVE. OUR GOAL SHOULD BE TO EXTEND COVERAGE, NOT UNDERMINE IT.

In light of the success of public programs in keeping the number of uninsured from growing more than it already has, would you support efforts to restore Medicaid coverage lost in the Deficit Reduction Act and expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to reach the 6 million uninsured children eligible for coverage but unenrolled? ***OWENS – YES***

DEDE-VOTED IN STATE LEGISLATIVE TO EXPAND SCHIP.

If elected, would you support legislation that would establish minimum nurse staffing ratios and prohibit mandatory overtime in our nation's hospitals to ensure safe patient care?

OWENS – WE NEED TO DEVELOP A SYSTEM THAT RECOGNIZES THE NEEDS OF NURSES, WHICH ALSO RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR SAFE PATIENT CARE.

DEDE-YES, I HAVE VOTED ON THIS IN THE STATE LEGISLATIVE

5. PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

If elected, would you support efforts to rein in rising drug prices, starting with requiring the Secretary of Health and Human Services to use the bargaining power of 40 million Medicare beneficiaries to get better drug prices? ***OWENS – YES DEDE - YES***

If elected, would you work to strengthen traditional Medicare and shore up program financing, beginning with preventing private plans known as Medicare Advantage plans from undermining the program through inflated payments totaling \$150 billion over 10 years and “cherry picking” the healthiest seniors? **D-YES** *Would you also support repealing the accounting trick known as the 45 percent “trigger,” which is designed to create a funding crisis that would require cuts be made?* **D-YES OWENS - YES**

If elected, will you work to fix the prescription drug benefit to make coverage more affordable and stable, including requiring Medicare to negotiate for lower prescription drug prices and providing beneficiaries with an option to get their drug coverage directly from Medicare rather than a private plan? **D-YES** *Would you support using the savings from drug price negotiation and eliminating the Medicare Advantage plan overpayments to fill the gap in coverage and eliminate the asset test that has kept many low income individuals from enrolling and qualifying for financial help with their costs?* **D-YES** *Would you support repealing the income test for Part B premiums, which undermines the social insurance foundation of the program?* **D-YES**
OWENS – YES, SO LONG AS IT MEETS MY PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED CRITERIA FOR COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE REFORM.

6. LABOR STANDARDS

If elected, would you oppose any effort to exclude more workers from the protections of the 40-hour workweek or to deny more workers the absolute right to overtime pay? **OWENS – YES DEDE-YES**

If elected, would you oppose any effort to allow employers to avoid paying cash overtime for work in excess of 40 hours per week or to exclude certain forms of compensation from the calculation of overtime pay? **OWENS – YES, UNLESS THE EMPLOYEE OR EMPLOYEE UNION SUPPORTED IT. DEDE-YES**

If elected, would you oppose any proposed legislation that would either weaken or repeal the Davis-Bacon Act? **OWENS – YES DEDE-YES**

If elected, would you oppose any legislation that would weaken or repeal the Service Contract Act? **OWENS – YES DEDE-YES**

If elected, would you oppose any regulatory or legislative efforts to limit the circumstances under which an employee is able to take FMLA leave? **OWENS – YES DEDE-WOULD NEED SPECIFICS**

If elected, would you support an effort to expand the FMLA to cover workers in companies with fewer than 50 employees? **OWENS – YES, AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T LIMIT SMALL BUSINESS ABILITY TO CREATE JOBS DEDE-NOT SURE AT THIS TIME**

If elected, would you support legislation to provide for wage replacement during periods of FMLA leave? **OWENS – YES, AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T LIMIT SMALL BUSINESS ABILITY TO CREATE JOBS DEDE – NOT SURE**

If elected, would you support legislation to require that companies guarantee seven paid sick day per year? **DEDE – NOT SURE**
OWENS – YES, AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T LIMIT SMALL BUSINESS ABILITY TO CREATE JOBS

7. RETIREMENT SECURITY: PENSIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

If elected, would you support measures to curb corporate abuse of the bankruptcy process so that workers have a claim in bankruptcy court for lost pensions, just like unpaid wages?
OWENS – YES **DEDE - YES**

If elected, would you support measures to ensure employer responsibility in providing workers with a secure retirement? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE - YES**

If elected, would you support measures to protect the retirement savings of workers who participate in 401(k)s by reducing the big fees paid out their retirement accounts, ensuring their access to independent investment advice and mandating worker representation on 401(k) boards?
OWENS – YES **DEDE-YES**

If elected, would you oppose measures to replace any part of Social Security's guaranteed benefits with individual investment accounts? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE-YES**

If elected, would you oppose efforts to increase the retirement age or to penalize workers who retire before Social Security's full benefit age (which is already increasing to 67 under current law)?
OWENS – YES, SO LONG AS THE SYSTEM CAN SUPPORT THESE IDEAS **DEDE-YES**

If elected, would you oppose measures that would reduce Social Security's guaranteed defined benefit under current law? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE-YES**

If elected, would you support measures to protect the retirement savings of workers who participate in 401(k)s by broadening their diversification rights, ensuring their access to independent investment advice and mandating equal worker representation on 401(k) boards? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE-YES**

8. OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

If elected, would you support: Proposed legislation to extend OSHA coverage to the millions of state and local employees currently excluded from the OSH Act; Proposed legislation to strengthen whistleblower protections for workers who raise job safety concerns; Proposed legislation that would make criminal violations involving a death of a worker a felony instead of a misdemeanor? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE-YES**

If elected, would you support a new OSHA ergonomics standard to protect workers from musculoskeletal disorders (e.g. back injuries, repetitive strain injuries), which account for 30% of all workplace injuries? **OWENS – YES** **DEDE-YES**

9. EDUCATION

If elected, would you actively oppose all private school voucher proposals and other schemes intended to divert taxpayer dollars from public to private schools?

OWENS- YES, AS A FORMER ADJUNCT PROFESSOR WITHIN THE SUNY SYSTEM, I BELIEVE THAT TEACHERS, STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS NEED TO CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE THE OPTIMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS. DEDE-YES

If elected, would you actively support legislation that would help states and local school districts reduce their class sizes and finance school repair, construction and modernization projects at local prevailing wages?

OWENS – YES AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T NEGATIVELY IMPACT SMALL BUSINESS DEDE-YES

10. EQUAL PAY

If elected, would you support federal legislation to end pay discrimination against women and provide more effective remedies for its victims? **OWENS – YES DEDE-YES**

11. PRIVATIZATION

If elected, would you oppose efforts to privatize public services and instead support efforts to work with public employees to improve services through cooperative job redesign, training and labor-management coordination?

OWENS – YES, AS LONG AS IT WILL PROVIDE LASTING BENEFITS TO BOTH EMPLOYEES AND CITIZENS RECEIVING PUBLIC SERVICES. DEDE-YES

12. IMMIGRANT WORKERS

If elected, would you support legislation that would provide otherwise law-abiding undocumented workers and their families who work here and contribute to their communities with permanent legal status through a new legalization program?

OWENS – WE NEED COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM THAT ADDRESSES BORDER SECURITY AND UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS

DEDE-WOULD NEED MORE RESEARCH .. MANY IMMIGRANTS “PLAY BY THE RULES”

If elected, would you support legislation to protect immigrant workers' workplace rights, including the right to improve their lives by freely joining or forming a union?

OWENS – YES DEDE-YES

If elected, would you support reform, but not expansion, of guest-worker programs to give greater protection to workers?

OWENS – WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT AMERICAN JOBS ARE PROTECTED AND THAT GUEST WORKER PROGRAMS ARE USED ONLY WHEN AMERICAN WORKERS ARE UNAVAILABLE. DEDE-YES

13. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

If elected, would you support efforts to strengthen our unemployment insurance system by covering part-time workers, recent hires and those affected by compelling family reasons such as domestic violence, as well as increasing the weekly benefit

OWENS – YES, AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T CREATE AN UNDUE BURDEN ON SMALL BUSINESSES

DEDE-I WOULD CONSIDER SOME PART-TIME WORKERS.. AND I SUPPORT INCREASING THE UF FUND

If elected, would you oppose proposals to replace UI with private, worker-funded accounts, as well as proposals to use UI trust funds for wage insurance (e.g. wage subsidies)?

OWENS – YES DEDE-YES

If elected, would you support allowing workers to collect extended unemployment benefits while in approved training?

OWENS – YES, AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T CREATE AN UNDUE BURDEN ON SMALL BUSINESSES DEDE-YES WITH REASONABLE TIME LIMITS

If elected, would you support using revenue from a continuation of the .2% federal unemployment payroll surtax to address the unmet needs in the UI system?

OWENS – YES DEDE-YES GIVEN THE CURRENT ECONOMY

14. NONDISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

If elected, would you oppose employment discrimination based on sexual orientation?

OWENS – YES DEDE-YES

15. UNION DUES

If elected, would you oppose restrictions on the use of union dues for political and legislative activities?

OWENS – YES DEDE-YES

16. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA VOTING RIGHTS

Would you support legislation that would partially remedy this grave injustice by allowing the delegate elected by citizens of the District of Columbia to vote in the House of Representatives?

NOT ON OWENS QUESTIONNAIRE; DEDE –YES

17. ENDING THE IRAQ WAR – NOT ON OWENS QUESTIONNAIRE

DEDE-I REPRESENT FORT DRUM AND OUR TRIPS HAVE BEEN RETURNING FROM OPERATION IRAQ FREEDOM..HOPEFULLY THERE WILL BE A TRANSITION TO THE IRAQ GOVERNMENT. SUPPORTIVE OF THE NEW GI BILL