

## **AFL-CIO President Sweeney: A Letter to America's Working Families**

We are deeply disappointed that the presidential candidate we supported did not win Tuesday's election, but we all should be extremely proud of and energized by the work we did together.

Fifty-five million Americans voted for good jobs, health care, retirement security, workers' freedom to form unions, real homeland security and more. We made our voices heard, and they cannot be ignored.

Never have so many different unions done so much. Never have we been so unified, moving forward together. Hundreds of thousands of us phone banked, walked precincts, leafleted, educated and mobilized other working family voters in the largest-ever union movement political program. And in doing so, we built a lasting force to continue the fight *against* attacks on working families and the fight *for* the economic justice and fairness all working families deserve.

Our issues education and get-out-the-vote efforts worked. Union household voters made up a quarter of all votes cast, and by a strong two-to-one margin, union members voted for John Kerry. Members of [WORKING AMERICA](#), the AFL-CIO community affiliate for workers without the benefit of union contracts, supported John Kerry by a 68 percent to 30 percent margin.

Our fight for working families will be harder than it would have been with John Kerry and John Edwards in the White House. But we didn't get into this fight because we thought it would be easy or because we wanted to elect the candidates. We got into it to win for working families—and we will.

We will take the energy and momentum, the technology and the field operation we developed throughout the presidential campaign and use it to turn our country around. We'll take the commitment, heart and solidarity of construction workers, teachers, janitors, engineers, firefighters, nurses and others phone banking and walking neighborhoods together—and we'll turn them into success on the issues that shape working families' lives.

Contrary to the claims being made, this election was breathtakingly close. It did not give President George W. Bush a "mandate" to continue policies that have cost us good jobs, affordable health care and retirement security. Bush's re-election does nothing to change our need for policies that create and keep good jobs here rather than shipping them away, strengthen retirement security instead of privatizing Social Security and expand health coverage and lower costs rather than making drug and insurance companies even wealthier.

As it has over the decades, the union movement stands for the fundamental moral values that make America strong: quality education for our children, affordable health care for every person—not just some—an end to poverty, secure pensions and wages that enable families to sustain the middle-class life that has fueled this nation's prosperity and strength. Union members and other working family activists don't just vote our moral values—we live them. We fight for them, day in, day out. Our commitment to economic and social justice propels us and everything we do.

We believe hard work nourishes the soul and should nourish the body and support the family as well. We believe every one of us has an equal claim to the prosperity of America. And that it's our job to ensure a better life for the generations that come after us.

Thank goodness we are part of a movement that has a real base to fight for what we value. And fight we will!

Today, be proud of what you have done and who you are. This land really is our land. And we can make it work for working families.

John J. Sweeney

President, AFL-CIO

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