



Marketing Issues

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Politics? Who Cares!?

Who cares who the president is? Who cares who the governor is? Who cares who my representative is? Who cares who my mayor is? My vote doesn't even count and when they get in office they don't listen to what I am saying. Who cares!? I know in many cases it may seem that way, but it's not true.

Actually, your vote does count, and they do listen once they get elected. You should care who holds political office, from the most powerful politician—the President of the United States—down to your local school board member. These are the folks whom you elected to represent your interests, not their own.

You have seen on the news and talk shows—and read about in this magazine—what the politicians are doing in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana and many other states.

- ▶ In Ohio, Senate Bill 5 will be voted on in November. This is legislation that the governor signed into law which keeps public employees (like firemen, police officers and teachers) from joining a union.
- ▶ In Wisconsin, the political battle turned so heated at the state house that protesters climbed through the windows as the Senate prepared to vote on Governor Scott Walker's (R) budget. What was the battle over? The answer is easy and uncomplicated: the rights of workers.
- ▶ In Indiana, the political fight has been focused on banning prevailing wage laws. The state is also trying to introduce right-to-work laws, which weaken unions.
- ▶ Michigan's Senate and House both passed legislation banning PLAs, and then on July 19, 2011, Governor Rick Snyder (R) signed the new legislation into law.
- ▶ And in Maine, Governor Paul LePage (R) is trying to remove labor history by having a mural of the working class painted over or moved. In a laughable move, he is trying to change the names

of offices in the Department of Labor's conference rooms simply because they are named after labor leaders. To top that off, on July 13, 2011, he signed legislation banning PLAs.

The results of new legislation or changes to existing legislation that politicians generate while in office have an enormous impact on marketing and organizing for our Union. President Barack Obama (D) reinstated project labor agreements on federal jobs, which President George Bush (R) had prohibited. Former Ohio Governor Ted Strickland (D) allowed prevailing wages to be paid on school work; however, he was defeated by John Kasich (R) in November 2010, and now prevailing wages are no longer paid on schools. In Ohio, the prevailing wage is set by union contract! These changes have a huge effect on the amount of work our signatory contractors obtain for our members.

The reason for these attacks on the American worker is not what the politicians want everyone to believe. They have said countless times that it is to save jobs. In reality, it is not to save jobs at all. We, "the worker," and the unions are simply the easiest target for them while portraying to the public that they are doing something to trim debt and balance federal and state budgets. Cutting wages and benefits is not the way to create or keep jobs!

When it comes to electing public officials, we must thoroughly educate ourselves on the politicians running for office. We must know their agenda and background, not just what the talk shows say about them. Labor-friendly politicians are fundamental in helping us maintain and obtain better work conditions, not to mention protecting PLAs, prevailing wage statutes and keeping other labor-friendly laws intact. To elect these individuals and keep them in office, we must be proactive in the political process. We must educate our members and ourselves about pro-labor politicians as well as the politicians who will not stand up for labor and the middle class.

If you are not registered to vote, contact your business agent or your local board of elections to do this simple task. Once you have registered to vote, you can make a difference in the democratic process. If you are registered to vote, let your voice be heard by exercising your right to vote. Your vote is important and you can make a difference. ■