

Over 1,000 local union leaders and members back Bernie Sanders for President

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Grassroots labor initiative urges Democratic primary support for Sanders by AFL-CIO and national unions.

Over 1,000 union activists from around the country today kicked off Labor for Bernie 2016.

Initiated by trade unionists who have worked closely with Senator Sanders for many years, the Labor for Bernie network includes elected officers, shop stewards, organizers, and rank-and-file members from all 50 states and 57 different labor organizations.

More than a third of these Sanders supporters belong to building trades' unions, (with 137 coming from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers alone). Other unions that showed significant membership support for Sanders' presidential campaign include the Communications Workers of America, American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, Service Employees International Union, International Union of Operating Engineers, United Auto Workers, and International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

This diverse group of labor activists signed an on-line statement embracing Sanders as the only declared candidate, in either major party, "who challenges the billionaires who are trying to steal our pensions, our jobs, our homes, and what's left of our democracy." The entire list of union supporters may be viewed on the new Labor for Bernie website at www.laborforbernie.org.

With more endorsers signing up every day, the Labor for Bernie network is urging the AFL-CIO, its affiliated national unions, and major unaffiliated labor organizations (NEA, SEIU, and IBT) to sponsor candidate forums and debates, at the grassroots level, before making any presidential endorsement decision of their own.

Labor for Bernie supporters include union members in key primary states (their union affiliation are listed only for identification purposes).

"Telephone workers in New England know Bernie well because he has walked our picket lines and supported our organizing efforts for years," said Don Tremontozzi, president of CWA Local 1400, based in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. "In our union's recent campaign against the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Bernie was not on the fence—he was helping us lead the fight against a job-killing trade

bill backed by Democrats and Republicans alike."

"We need a presidential candidate willing to confront big money and its corrupting influence on American politics," said Steve Abbott, president of CWA Local 7108 in Waterloo and head of the CWA's Iowa state council. "That kind of leadership is not going to come from someone trying to raise a billion dollars from Wall Street banks and other business interests. We need a voice of our own, not an echo of the Republicans."

"Bernie is running on a record of real accomplishment for workers, farmers, veterans, and millions of other blue-collar Americans," said Erin McKee, President of the South Carolina AFL-CIO. "But here's the real difference between him and all the rest: he's the candidate who truly believes in the power of grassroots organizing. Bernie has been to South Carolina over the past few years and some of our members got the chance to see that first hand when he met not only with labor unions but with the fast food workers fighting for \$15 an hour and a union."

"I think everyone is just sick and tired of hearing promises from politicians who say they'll fight 100 percent for people but then act for Wall Street," said Mari Cordes, an RN from the University of Vermont Medical Center and Vice President of Healthcare for AFT-Vermont. "Bernie Sanders has never strayed from his working class roots. Not only has he been true to his word in Vermont for the last 35 years, he has rallied real hope across the country—as a four-term mayor, eight-term Congressman, and now two-term U.S. Senator. I stand strong for Bernie for President in 2016."

"The reason I support Senator Sanders is simple: Bernie has a long track record of supporting workers and their right to unionize," said John Murphy, a Carpenter's Local 40 steward from Lowell, Mass. "Just recently he was standing with FairPoint workers on their picket lines and offering them aid and support. When members ask me if Bernie can win, I tell them, that's up to us!"

Labor for Bernie 2016 is a volunteer effort neither funded nor directed by the Sanders for President campaign. To join this grassroots mobilization, download useful organizing materials, or learn more about Bernie's past and present support for workers and their unions, go to: www.laborforbernie.org