



# Labor Relations Week<sup>TM</sup>

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24 LRW 596

## **AFL-CIO**

### **Trumka Calls for Fundamental Change In Economy to Help Alleviate Workers' Anger**

Working people are angry about the “betrayal” of their economic future and are vulnerable to the “purveyors of hate and division looking to profit” from that anger unless politicians act to make fundamental economic change, AFL-CIO President Richard L. Trumka said April 7.

According to the prepared text of a speech scheduled for delivery at the Institute of Politics at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, Trumka contended that the loss of millions of jobs and a decades-long stagnation in real wages are the sources of the anger. A lot of Americans are “incensed by the government’s inability” to arrest massive job loss while at the same time making “the world safe again” for the large banks, he said, contending that “[r]escuing the big banks hasn’t done much for Main Street.”

The AFL-CIO president said “our politics have been dominated by greed and the forces of money,” and now that the experiment has not worked, “voices of hatred, of racism, and homophobia” are being heard.

“There are forces in our country that are working hard to convert justifiable anger about an economy that only seems to work for a few of us into racist and homophobic hate and violence directed at our President and heroes like Congressman John Lewis,” Trumka said.

According to Trumka, political intellectuals “face a great choice—whether to be servants or critics of economic privilege.” The “economic elites” at big Wall Street banks are “happy to hire intellectual servants wherever they can find them,” he said. “But the stronger the alliance between intellectuals and economic elites, the more the forces of hatred—of anti-intellectualism—will grow. If you want to fight the forces of hatred, you have to help empower the forces of righteous anger,” he added.

### **Labor Trying to Address Worker Anger**

The labor movement is trying to “give voice to the justified anger” of workers, Trumka said, adding that he needs help from “public intellectuals who will help design the policies that will replace the bubble economy with a real, sustainable economy that works for all of us.”

Saying the loss of 11 million jobs during the recession is “not tolerable,” Trumka said the AFL-CIO is fighting for its five-point jobs program that includes extending unemployment benefits; expanding federal infrastructure and green jobs investments; increasing federal aid to state and local governments to help prevent layoffs; creating jobs in distressed communities; and lending money to small and medium businesses that can’t get credit because of the financial crisis.

In addition, the AFL-CIO, through its community affiliate Working America, is organizing support for legislation (H.R. 4812) introduced by Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, which would provide funds to local communities

to hold off planned cuts or to hire back laid-off workers for local services that have been cut because of tight budgets.

The 3 million-member Working America also is organizing support for financial overhaul, accountability for Wall Street, and working to counter the "Glenn Beck effect and turn anger into action for real change," Trumka said.

In addition to the creation of millions of jobs, there is much more that needs to be done to "restore broadly shared prosperity," according to Trumka, including passage of the proposed Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 1409, S. 560) so that workers have a chance to "turn bad jobs into good jobs," and creating an agenda for restoring manufacturing in this country. "We cannot be a prosperous middle class society in a dynamic global economy without a healthy manufacturing sector," he said.

Trumka also called for an agenda to ensure health and safety on the job, family-friendly work rules, and comprehensive immigration reform that ends exploitation and secures fairness.

In order to achieve these initiatives, there must be a "crucial alliance of the middle class and the poor," Trumka said, as well as labor working with community partners and government leaders.

Trumka said it is "long past time to take" these big challenges on. "If you are worried about the anger in our country, if you don't want the forces of hatred to grow, be a part of the fight for economic justice and a new economic foundation for America," he said. "Be a critic of power and privilege, not its servant."

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*Text of the speech may be accessed at <http://op.bna.com/dlrcases.nsf/r?Open=mamr-84athy>.*

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