

How to talk about John McCain

Right now, John McCain is well-liked by union members and working families. He is known for his military record and his reputation as a “maverick” and “straight talker.” However, most people know very little about his economic policies and how a McCain presidency would impact working families. It is our job to educate members on the truth about McCain’s policies. This document is intended to serve as a guide to the basic message on John McCain’s record and why he’s the wrong choice for working families.

Acknowledge His Service: Acknowledge McCain’s service as a veteran. We respect his service to this country in the military but that does not mean his policies are right for working families.

Focus On His Economic Policies:

- **3rd Bush Term:** McCain’s economic policies are a continuation of the Bush policies that have resulted in record job losses and home foreclosures, rising gas prices, and stagnating wages. His “free market” approach to the economy, like Bush’s, relies on deregulation and privatization that favors wealthy companies over working families. Like Bush, he wants to extend tax cuts for the wealthy, privatize social security, encourage more outsourcing and privatization of our jobs, and undermine employer-based health care. We don’t want another President who favors the status quo.
- **Out of Touch:** We don’t need another president who is out of touch with the concerns and priorities of working families. Despite the reality that working families face every day, John McCain still doesn’t believe we’re headed into a recession and thinks “the fundamentals of the economy are still strong.” He said that 63,000 jobs lost in January was “not terrible.” We need a President who understands the reality and severity of the country’s problems in order to fix them. McCain has merely suggested holding a meeting on the mortgage crisis without offering any real proposals and doesn’t think the economy is the central issue for working families.
- **Misplaced Priorities:** McCain’s priorities are not in line with the priorities of working families. He told Michigan voters that their jobs weren’t coming back but failed to mention that his policies are the reason they left and will continue to leave. He’s a self-proclaimed “free-trader” who has said he would negotiate a free trade agreement with “almost any country,” which is clear by his voting record. He supported Bush efforts to privatize government jobs, has protected oil companies’ windfall profits while our gas prices go up, helped the wealthiest Americans hold on to their money but voted against increasing the minimum wage and against protecting our overtime pay, and has a health plan that lets insurance companies insure only the healthy while offering lower quality and higher deductible plans.

Sen. John McCain’s record on the economy tells us that as a President, he would be disastrous for working people. We deserve better. We deserve real change. It’s time to Turn Around America.

Below are some talking points and research bullets related to specific issues and areas of McCain’s record.

McCain Is Out Of Touch With Working Families

On The Direction Of Our Country, The Makings Of A Third Bush Term:

We have suffered an economy in tailspin, hostility towards working families, no solution to the health care problem, and a seemingly never-ending war under the current administration. Yet, McCain would simply

continue the Bush agenda. Working people don't want another president who favors the status quo. We don't need another president who is out of touch with the concerns and priorities of working families. We need a new direction. It's time to turn around America.

- **McCain Voted With Bush Administration 89% of The Time.** Since President Bush took office, Senator McCain has supported Bush's positions 89% of the time. McCain's support of President Bush's policies reached as high as **95 percent** in 2007. [[Congressional Quarterly](#) Voting Study, 110th Congress]
- **McCain Admits His Policies Are Wrong For Working Families.** Responding to the AFL-CIO's efforts to inform union members about McCain's real record on working families issues, McCain told Fox News that unions were right to oppose his economic policies.

"I understand why the AFL-CIO and maybe other unions may oppose my free market, uh, less regulation, um, right to work. I think we have honest differences of opinion. I respect those labor unions but I'm sure that those differences are very intense and very real."

[John McCain in New Hampshire, Fox News, 3/12/08]

On The Economy:

McCain is not prepared to lead our nation out of the current economic crisis. He admits that he "never really understood economics" all that well and it shows. Despite record job losses and home foreclosures, rising gas prices, and stagnating wages, McCain still insists that our economy is strong and that we are not headed into a recession.

- **I Never Really Understood Economics.** McCain said, "The issue of economics is something that I've really never understood as well as I should. I understand the basics, the fundamentals, the vision, all that kind of stuff. But I would like to have someone I'm close to that really is a good strong economist. As long as Alan Greenspan is around I would certainly use him for advice and counsel." [[Boston Globe](#) Political Intelligence Blog, 12/18/07; "The Swamp," [Chicago Tribune](#), 12/18/07]
- **McCain Still Believes "The Fundamentals Of Our Economy Are Strong."** McCain has said over and over again that he believes "the fundamentals of our economy are still strong" even when faced with job loss numbers, record foreclosures, and extreme gas prices. [West Palm Beach Town Hall, 1/24/08; Face the Nation, 2/3/08; Town Hall at Dell in Texas, 2/29/08; 60 Minutes, 3/9/08]
- **And That We Are NOT Headed Into a Recession.** McCain said, "I don't believe we're headed into a recession. I believe the fundamentals of this economy are strong, and I believe they will remain strong." [GOP Debate, Myrtle Beach, FNC, 1/10/08]
- **He Thinks 63,000 Lost Jobs Is "Not Terrible:"** At a town hall in Atlanta McCain said that "Today's unemployment figures are not good. They're not terrible, but they're not good." [McCain Town Hall, Atlanta, 3/7/08]
- **McCain Said Mortgage Crisis & Declining Economy Are NOT Important To Voters.** While campaigning in Florida, McCain dismissed concerns about the economy. "Even if the economy is the, quote, No. 1 issue, the real issue will remain America's security," McCain said. "And if they choose to say, 'Look, I do not need this guy because he's not as good on home loan mortgages or whatever it is, I understand about that, I will accept that verdict. I am running because of the transcendental challenge of the 21st century, which is radical Islamic extremism.'" [[New York Times](#), 1/28/2008]

- **McCain's Solution To The Mortgage Crisis: Hold Some Meetings.** After not addressing the issue for months, McCain spoke on the housing crisis but failed to offer new solutions saying only: "I am prepared to examine new proposals and evaluate them based on these principals. But I think we need to do two things right away. First, it is time to convene a meeting of the nation's accounting professionals to discuss the current mark to market accounting systems... We should also convene a meeting of the nation's top mortgage lenders." [McCain's Remarks on Economic Woes, 3/25/08]

On Iraq:

While the death toll for American soldiers reached 4,000 on Easter Sunday, McCain still has no plans to bring our troops home. In fact, he has said we could be in Iraq for 100 years.

McCain: "I Don't Think Americans Are Concerned If We're There For 100 Years or 1,000 Years or 10,000 Years." In an interview on "Face the Nation," McCain said "And then I don't think Americans are concerned if we're there for 100 years or 1,000 years or 10,000 years. [CBS, "Face the Nation," [1/06/08](#)]

- **Death Toll Hit 4000 In Iraq On Easter Sunday.** "A roadside bomb killed four U.S. soldiers in Baghdad on Sunday, the military said, pushing the overall American death toll in the five-year war to at least 4,000. The grim milestone came on a day when at least 61 people were killed across the country." [Associated Press, 3/24/08]
- **2008: Iraq War Costs \$12 Billion Per Month, Costs Could Reach \$3 Trillion by 2017.** According to Noble Prize-winning economist Joseph E. Stiglitz and his co-author Linda J. Blimes' new book, "The Three Trillion Dollar War," the Iraq war will cost approximately \$12 billion per month or triple the "burn" rate of earlier years. They project both the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, including long-term presence and occupation, to cost anywhere from \$1.7 trillion to \$2.7 trillion by 2017. Interests on loans to fund the wars could cost up to \$816 billion. The Congressional Budget Office says the Iraq war will account for three-quarters of total costs. [Newsday, 3/10/08]

McCain's Misplaced Priorities

Members of our community are losing their homes and many more are barely keeping their heads above water with rising mortgages and falling home prices. Meanwhile, gas and heating prices aren't giving anyone any breaks. Everywhere we turn, companies are downsizing or moving overseas. Meanwhile, the new jobs are low wage, Wal-Mart jobs with no benefits and no job security. The fact is, John McCain's "Straight Talk Express" has left the station, leaving working people behind.

On Trade

McCain proclaims to be the most free-trade member of the US Senate. He isn't listening to the voices of working families on the impact free trade has had on our once strong and stable communities. He even worked to secure thousands of new jobs in Europe, leaving American workers out in the cold.

- **McCain "Would Negotiate a Free Trade Agreement with Almost Any Country."** "If I were President, I would negotiate a free trade agreement with almost any country willing to negotiate fairly with us." [Speech to the National Press Club, 5/20/1999]
- **McCain and The Lobbyists On His Campaign Helped Airbus Get A \$35 Billion Contract Over Boeing, An American and Union Company.** McCain stepped in to make it easier for

EADS/Airbus to get the contract for the Air Force refueling tankers over Boeing. Three of his campaign advisers lobbied for EADS and his campaign received \$28,000 from EADS execs, lobbyists, and employees after starting to speak out on EADS' behalf. If Boeing had won the contract, it would have supported 44,000 good jobs in more than 40 states, many of which would have been union jobs. [Lobbyist Disclosure Act Database, accessed 3/11/08; Associated Press, 3/11/08; [Time.com, 3/11/08](#); OpenSecrets.org, accessed 3/12/08; [Mobile Register](#), 1/16/07; [Seattle Post Intelligencer](#), 3/7/08]

- **McCain Thinks NAFTA Was a Good Idea And Supported Letting China Into The WTO.** McCain voted for NAFTA and recently said, "I know NAFTA was a good idea...." He voted to allow China to enter the World Trade Organization, despite their history of workers' rights violations. [*Des Moines Register* and [www.BigThink.com](#) interview, 11/07; HR 3450, Vote #395, 11/20/93; H.R. 4444, Vote #251, 9/19/00]
 - **NAFTA Resulted In A Loss of Over A Million Jobs.** From 1993 through 2004, the United States lost 1,015,290 jobs due to NAFTA. [Robert E. Scott and David Ratner, "NAFTA'S Cautionary Tale - Recent history suggests CAFTA could lead to further U.S. job displacement," Economic Policy Institute, 7/20/2005]
 - **Rising Chinese Trade Deficits Resulted in 2.1 Million Displaced Jobs.** "The rise in the U.S. trade deficit with China between 1997 and 2006 has displaced production that could have supported 2,166,000...between 1997 and 2001, trade deficits displaced an average of 101,000 jobs per year...since China entered the WTO in 2001, job loss has increased to an average of 353,000 per year. U.S. jobs." ["Costly Trade With China," Economy Policy Institute, 10/9/07]
- **McCain Has Voted For Every Other Bad Trade Agreement That Has Come Up.** McCain votes in support of any and all trade agreements regardless of their negative impacts on U.S. workers. He voted for CAFTA and trade agreements with Oman, Singapore, Chile, and Morocco, among others, as well as for fast-track bills to make it easier for the President to enact trade agreements without strong worker protections. [S. 33569, Vote #190, 6/29/06; S 1307, Vote# 170, 6/30/05; HR 2739, Vote# 318, 7/31/03; HR 2738, Vote# 319, 7/31/03; H.R. 434, Vote #353, 11/3/99; HR 3009, Vote #115, 5/16/02, Vote #117, 5/21/02, Vote #207, 8/1/02; S. 1269, Vote #292, 11/4/97]
- **McCain Helped Companies Send Jobs Overseas.** McCain supported tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas, voted to weaken and waive Buy American laws that keep jobs at home, and voted against protecting steelworkers' jobs from illegal dumping. (S.1637, Vote #83, 5/5/04; S.2400, Vote #135, 6/22/04; S.1050, Vote #191, 5/21/03; H.R. 975, Vote #178, 6/22/99)

On Wages and Overtime

Workers are forced to spend more time at work instead of with their families. But John McCain turned his back by voting against protecting overtime pay, for abolishing the minimum wage, and to undermine prevailing wage laws.

- **McCain Voted Against Protections of Workers' Overtime Rights.** Senator McCain voted against an amendment that guaranteed workers' overtime rights by repealing Bush's new rules that weakened overtime protection for workers. In April 2004, the Bush administration issued final overtime eligibility regulations that threatened the overtime rights of 6 million workers. [S 1637, Vote# 79, 5/4/04]
- **McCain Voted to Abolish The Minimum Wage.** McCain joined 28 Senators in voting for Senator Allard's amendment to allow "states the rights and flexibility to determine minimum wage." A vote viewed as an attempt to abolish the federal minimum wage. He voted with the Republicans to stall a clean minimum wage increase for working families in 2007, only voting to pass the final bill after

including unnecessary tax breaks for business. [[S.Amdt. 116](#) to [S.Amdt. 100](#) to [H.R. 2](#), Vote# 24, 1/24/07; HR 2, Vote #23, 1/24/07; Vote #25, 1/25/07; Vote #37, 1/31/07; Vote #39, 1/31/07; Vote #42, 1/31/07; S. 2766, Vote #179, 6/21/06; S. 256, Vote #26, 3/7/05]

- **McCain Has Repeatedly Voted To Undermine Prevailing Wage Laws.** McCain supported an amendment that would have prohibited application of Davis-Bacon in declared federal disaster areas. Undercutting the wages of workers when working in the harshest conditions. He opposed a “sense of the Senate” that the Davis-Bacon Act, which protects workers’ paychecks on public construction projects, should not be repealed and has voted for exceptions to the Davis-Bacon requirements numerous times. [S. 1650, Vote# 320, 10/7/99; S Amdt. 4031, Vote #134, 5/22/96; S. 2019, Vote# 118, 5/18/94; HR. 5132, Vote# 105, 5/21/92; HR. 2916, Vote# 181, 9/19/89]

John McCain cast his vote to give the Bush tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans and has said the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy should be made permanent – all the while voting against a raise for minimum wage workers.

- **McCain Voted for Tax Cuts for Wealthiest Americans at the Expense of Working Families.** Senator McCain voted for \$60 billion tax cut bill benefiting families with incomes \$100,000 or higher. The tax cuts would follow equally drastic cuts in spending on programs vital to working families. [S. 2020, Vote #26, 11/18/05]
- **McCain: Make Bush Tax Cuts For Wealthy Permanent.** “I think it's very important that we make the Bush tax cuts permanent. I voted to make them permanent twice already...And if we don't make the tax cuts permanent, then they will experience what amounts to a tax increase.” [Republican Presidential Debate, MSNBC, 1/24/08]

On Our Retirement

John McCain continues to support the privatization of Social Security. Never mind that privatization would leave seniors vulnerable to ending up with no retirement security at all.

- **McCain Will Jeopardize Our Retirement Security.** McCain supported Bush’s failed plan to privatize Social Security, putting our retirement at risk, and still insists he is “totally in favor of personal savings accounts.” He has proposed raising the Medicare eligibility age to 67 and voted to cut billions in funding for Medicare. (SCR 83, Vote# 68, 3/16/06; SCR 18, Vote# 49, 3/15/05; S.Amdt.144 to SCR 18, Vote# 47, 3/15/05; SCR 86, Vote# 56, 4/1/98; SCR 86, Vote# 77, 4/1/98; S.947, Vote# 112S. Amdt. 445, Vote# 115, 6/25/97; *Wall Street Journal*, 3/3/08; S1932, Vote 363, 12/21/2005; *Congressional Quarterly*, 12/26/2005)

On Health Care

As the country is coming around to the idea that the health care crisis is not going to change unless we make change happen, John McCain does not support a health care system that would ensure health care for all. Instead, he’s chosen a different path – privatization.

- **McCain Will Tax Your Health Care Benefits.** McCain’s plan will create a new tax on working families by making employer-provided health benefits part of taxable income. (Health08.org, Forum, 10/31/07)
- **McCain’s Plan Jeopardizes Our Health Care.** It undermines existing employer-based health care and pushes workers into the private market to fight big insurance companies on their own. Despite a modest tax credit, his plan will increase costs, reduce benefits and leave many with no health care at

all. (Kaiser/HRET, Employer Health Benefits 2007 Annual Survey; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 4/5/06; *Los Angeles Times*, 11/20/07; Commonwealth Fund, 6/05)

On Our Freedom To Form Unions

- **McCain Opposes Our Right To Bargain.** McCain voted against the Employee Free Choice Act, that would level the playing field for workers trying to form unions, and for a National Right-to-Work for Less law that would attempt to eliminate unions altogether. He voted against granting TSA screeners as well as state and local police and firefighters collective bargaining rights. (HR 800, Vote# 227, 6/26/07; S. 1788 Vote #188, 7/10/96; S.4, Vote# 64, 3/7/07; HR. 3061, Vote# 323, 11/6/01)