

**Patricia Ann Ford**  
**Executive Vice President/Service Employees International Union**  
**Member Political Action Conference 9/9 /03**

Good morning brothers and sisters! We're glad you all joined us for this very important Member Political Action Conference. This event is dedicated to building on our collective strength. We must make our voices heard to policymakers and use that momentum to grow stronger!

Your charge today will be to travel as foot soldiers to Capitol Hill and carry our message to the people who make the laws that impact on our members, our union, our community and our future.

Today, here in the nation's capital, you are simply wielding your influence on another level. But not necessarily the most important level.

We all know your clout is what you bring from your locals – the message from the home districts.

As you knock on doors on Capitol Hill, remind members and their staff that you know where they live. Because you live (and vote) where they live.

And it's not only you, but it's your local union sisters and brothers, and those untold numbers of potential members who SEIU is organizing. They also vote and live where the policymakers live.

Brothers and sisters, organizing is really the flip side of legislative action.

Without organizing we have no future. And without a political center, our organizing has no purpose.

[Pause]

As we all know, every aspect of our lives is driven by politics in very basic terms from cradle to grave.

When we're born, it's a birth certificate. When we fall in love, it's the marriage license. When we fall out of love – for some of us anyway – it's the divorce decree. And when it's the end of our journey here, we can't even be buried without the death certificate.

Every aspect of our system is affected by some law or policy adopted or administered by officials – elected or appointed.

But the real power is in the hands of the people who put them in office and who can change, defeat or remove the politicians and reverse their policies.

For those of us who are public service employees – we have the power to hire or fire our bosses – local, state and federal legislators – through our political action.

That should always be the underlying message of our lobbying efforts.

[Pause]

Our meeting comes as Democratic hopefuls are contending to be our most viable alternative to George W. Bush.

No matter how you feel about them, we know for a fact that collectively they can't touch W's historic record.

I can't remember an administration that has been more an enemy of working people in the last 50 years.

It's all a matter of record, a pattern of events that fit into a collection of factoids that I call Bushisms. Let me share a few of them with you.

He brought an oil company, but couldn't find any oil in Texas. The company went bankrupt shortly after he sold all his stock.

With taxpayer money, he brought the Texas Rangers baseball team in a sweetheart deal. His biggest decision while at the helm of the Rangers was to trade Sammy Sosa to the Chicago Cubs.

What troubles me is not only what we know about him, but also what we don't know.

We know about at least one conviction for drunk driving in Maine, but his Texas driving record has been erased.

He went AWOL from the National Guard and deserted the military during the Viet Nam war. But he refused to talk about that period in his life.

All records of any Security and Exchange Commission investigations into his insider trading are sealed. So are all minutes of meetings for any public corporations he served on.

With Daddy's help and no experience except running for Congress and losing, he got elected Governor of Texas.

He cut taxes and bankrupted the Texas government to the tune of billions in borrowed money. He also set the record for putting more people to death than any Governor in American history.

[Pause]

Then, he goes on to become President of the United States. We all know about the disputed election and the question of whether he should even be in the White House.

While that's a subject of debate in some circles, it's undisputed that he lost the popular vote and was put in office by Supreme Court justices appointed by his Dad.

What does he do in the White House?

He spends the surplus. Bankrupts the treasury. And creates the biggest annual deficit in history.

In addition to presiding over the biggest ever plunge in the stock market; he has scored a number of other noteworthy firsts:

George W. surpasses all presidential records for campaign fundraising trips.

Cuts unemployment benefits for more jobless Americans than any president in history.

Presides over the highest gasoline prices in history and the worst energy crisis ever.

Selects cabinet members who are collectively the richest ever to hold those positions.

Signs more laws and executive orders amending the Constitution than any president in history.

Removes more freedoms and civil liberties for Americans than any president in history.

And to add insult to injury, he travels to Africa, visits Goree Island the point of no return for my ancestors captured into slavery, as a backdrop for a photo-op for his reelection campaign. I wonder if he heard the cries of my

female ancestors when they were being raped. I wonder if he could hear the moans of my male ancestors when they were being beaten.

[Pause]

Brothers and sisters, isn't this a disgusting litany? We can't change history, but we can put an end to Bushisms.

Our mission at SEIU is to organize and build a united and strong front of workers. But also to be advocates for justice and dignity for *all* working people.

Every one of us in this room has to live up to that mission. As you trek through the halls of congress today keep that in mind.

Being a union member is not just about a fatter paycheck. It's about being part of a movement that believes in the worth and dignity of every human being.

The skills we learn fighting for justice are the same skills we need to build a stronger SEIU and a more united front with our friends in elected office.

As trade unionist, we cannot improve the lives of our members if we ignore the problems they face at home and in their community.

We also can't close our eyes to what our Government is doing around the world.

[Pause.]

In Iraq we're in a war that has been premised on the big lie. Aside from the mass death and destruction visited upon the Iraqi people and our troops, it's a war that seems to have no clear end.

It is a war with economic costs that no one has even been able to truly estimate.

The latest price tag, according to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, is about \$3.9 billion a month!

Imagine what that funding could do if redirected: the end of a national health care crisis; prescription drugs for everyone who needs them; state of the art health care delivery.

*Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.*

These words – not mine – but President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s in April 1953.

[Pause]

Even more alarming than the cost of the Iraqi war is the cost that Bush has raked up for his cronies.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that the 2003-2004 tax cuts for the rich have sunk us deeper into the federal budget deficit than the spending in Iraq, Afghanistan, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the war on terrorism. More than all those items combined! [Pause]

Brothers and sisters, can we allow this looting of our tax dollars for the rich and elite to continue?

*[Wait for response.]*

Should we make Congress stand up against this administration?

*[Wait for response.]*

If they don't stand up, should they pay the consequences?

*[Wait for response.]*

We cannot allow all the important decisions – about our health care, the economy, about war and peace and basic legal rights – to be determined by a self-interested elite group of wealthy, right-wing men like Bush, Cheney Ashcroft and Rumsfeld.

That's why this Member Political Action conference is so vital. It gives us the ammunition we need to fight back.

It's a flashlight for guiding our political, legislative and organizing battles for home care workers, head start workers, health care workers, janitors, security officers and public employees. [Pause]

In closing, I leave a few words of encouragement taken from our dear friend, the Reverend Joseph Lowery, President Emeritus of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference:

We've come too far, fought too hard, marched too long and died too young to go backwards.

So brothers and sister, let's get busy and noisy. We have work to do on Capitol Hill!

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