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Obama's Big Labor problem

By [Jennifer Rubin](#)

The AFL-CIO is forming a super-PAC. [Politico reports](#): "The super PAC — which officials discussed at an executive meeting earlier this month and plan to seek final approval for in the next few weeks — would help the labor group direct funds to state battles where legislative efforts aimed at limiting collective bargaining and cutting union benefits are being considered."

Labor unions are already among the top third-party donors and give nearly exclusively to Democrats. Liberals' concern over "mysterious donors" and the noxious influence of third-party groups never seems to focus on these donors, which derive the same latitude in funding campaigns that corporations do. ("Super PACs, a result of the 2010 Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission Supreme Court decision that removed many spending and contribution limits, can raise unlimited amounts of money from corporations, unions and individuals. These PACs cannot operate in connection with a political campaign.")

Nevertheless, Democrats should re-examine the degree to which they are dependent on organized labor. It forces Democrats to align themselves with unpopular positions (e.g. card check, support of public-employee unions over taxpayers), further alienating the great majority of voters who are not union members.

There is no better example of this than the National Labor Relations Board case against Boeing. Consider this searing indictment:

In April, the National Labor Relations Board filed a complaint against Boeing, accusing it of opening the South Carolina plant to retaliate against the union, which has a history of striking at contract time. The N.L.R.B.'s proposed solution, believe it or not, is to move all the Dreamliner production back to Puget Sound, leaving those 5,000 workers in South Carolina twiddling their thumbs.

Seriously, when has a government agency ever tried to dictate where a company makes its products? I can't ever remember it happening. Neither can Boeing, which is fighting the complaint. J. Michael Luttig, Boeing's general counsel, has described the action as "unprecedented." He has also said that it was a disservice to a country that is "in desperate need of economic growth and the concomitant job creation." He's right. . . .

Nothing matters more right now than job creation. Last week, President Obama barnstormed the Midwest, promising a jobs package in September and blaming Republicans for blocking job-creation efforts. Republicans, of course, have blamed the administration, complaining that regulatory overkill is keeping companies from creating jobs.

That's not from National Review or the Cato Institute. It comes from left-wing columnist [Joe Nocera](#) (who recently had to apologize for accusing Tea Partiers of being on a "jihad"). What he is saying, however, is both legally accurate and politically astute.

Obama, as he was in the Wisconsin fight over bargaining rights for public-employee unions, finds himself aligned with a special interest against the economic interests of a state. ("When he was asked about the Boeing case earlier this summer, President Obama said that the N.L.R.B. is an independent agency and that his hands were tied. That may be true, though it's worth pointing out that most of its top executives are his appointees.") That assortment of appointees would include [Craig Becker](#), a former AFL-CIO attorney, whom Obama installed by recess appointment.

This is but one example in which the Obama administration's favoritism toward Big Labor works against the interests of ordinary workers. What rationale is there for [rolling back disclosure requirements](#) for unions that allow members to see how their money is being spent? What justification is there for maintaining the [Davis-Bacon Act](#), an artifice of the New Deal that adds billions to government construction projects and has a discriminatory impact on minority contractors?

One can't imagine that Democrats would continue to take these positions if not for its excessive dependence on organized labor's largess. It is a legitimate issue for Republicans to raise in the upcoming election: Whose side are the Democrats on, their Big Labor patrons or ordinary Americans who are unemployed and underemployed in record numbers?

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