

War on Labor: Thomas Perez, Obama's Labor Secretary Choice

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Throughout his tenure, Obama waged war on labor. Perez won't change things. He'll replace Hilda Solis. She resigned in January. She accomplished little in four years.

She's the daughter of immigrant union members. She failed to deliver as promised. She pledged to make a difference and didn't. Expect little change from Perez. More on him below.

Organized labor in America's in disarray. In January, union membership reached a near-century low. Only 11.3% of US workers are organized.

Private sector unionization's down to 6.6%. It's the lowest percentage in over 100 years. It's headed perhaps for extinction.

Union bosses bear much responsibility. They side more with management than rank and file members. They conspire against their own.

They abandoned their most effective weapon. They rarely strike. They block collective struggle. They betray promises made.

They're self-serving. They prioritize their own welfare. They place it above rank and file interests. They're complicit in supporting the divine right of capital. They've been that way for decades.

The UAW reflects organized labor's decline. At about 380,000, its membership barely exceeds one-third its total eight years ago.

In the 1950s, about 35% of workers were organized. In 1979, it was around 24%. At the end of the Reagan era, it was 16.8%. In 2007, it was 12%. In 2011, it was 11.8%. It continues declining annually.

Obama, other Democrats, Republicans and union bosses conspire. They do so unconscionably. They want workers to live or die by market-based rules. They're rigged against them. They haven't got a chance. They're on their own sink or swim.

A race to the bottom heads them toward serfdom. In November 2003, the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) offered hope. It went nowhere during Bush's tenure.

Obama followed suit. He spurned it. In July 2009, he and Senate Democrats agreed to block EFCA's "card check" provision. They removed it from pending legislation.

It would have required employers to recognize the right to organize once most workers signed union cards freely and openly. Hope for passage died. So did worker rights.

Real unemployment's at 23%. Economist John Williams called February's jobs gain and reported unemployment rate "not meaningful." Numbers are distorted to belie reality.

Economic conditions are deplorable. They've been that way for years. Around 25 million working age Americans can't find jobs.

Millions more involuntarily take low-pay/poor benefit part-time or temp ones. Obama's a jobs destroyer, not creator.

He's waging war on America's social contract. He wants it eliminated altogether. He spurns worker rights. Don't expect Perez to change things. His resume belies what he'll do.

He won't be worker friendly. It's not his job. He'll continue same old, same old. He's mandated to do it. He has no other choice. He'll perform as asked or be replaced.

He's an attorney. From 1989 – 2001, he served in the Bush I and Clinton Justice Department. He was a prosecutor in its Civil Rights Division.

He was Janet Reno's Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. From 1995 – 1998, he was Senator Edward Kennedy's special counsel. He was his main civil rights/criminal justice/constitutional issues advisor.

Through the remainder of Clinton's administration, he was Director of the Office for Civil Rights at the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

In 2009, Obama chose him as Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. He began serving in October. Prior to his appointment, he was Secretary of Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

From 2002 – 2006, he also served on the Montgomery County Council. He was the first Latino to do so.

From 2001 – 2007, he taught law at the University of Maryland. He's currently a part-time George Washington School of Public Health faculty member.

Senator Charles Grassley (R. IA) criticizes his nomination. So do other lawmakers. At issue is racial discrimination. Perez was involved in getting St. Paul, MN to drop a Supreme Court appeal.

Fair lending advocates said doing so harmed a central enforcement tenet in housing discrimination cases.

The Justice Department declined to join two whistleblower lawsuits. They were filed against St. Paul. It was done in exchange for dropping the appeal.

Justice Department officials claimed Perez's involvement was appropriate. On March 7, Grassley said:

"If Mr. Perez is nominated, he should face a lot of tough questions about this quid pro quo

deal he appears to have put together.”

“I shudder to think how whistleblowers will be treated in the Labor Department if this quid pro quo with St. Paul is any indication of Mr. Perez’s approach to this important area of law.”

Supporters call him a dedicated civil rights enforcer. He has little labor experience. His civil rights advocacy won’t matter. Politics trumps principle.

Perez’s nomination comes at a time offshoring manufacturing, technology and other jobs continues. Workers lucky enough to have jobs face pay and benefit cuts.

Foreign workers given H-1b/L-1 visas fill many remaining openings. They do so at lower pay. US employees face sacking after training them. A race to the bottom assures more of the same.

Obama’s exploiting immigrants. Millions of family members of legal US residents await permanent residency status.

Proposed legislation imposes tough standards. Undocumented immigrants will be forced to the back of the line. US citizens trying to bring unmarried Mexican children to America requires waiting 17 years or longer. Might as well wait a lifetime.

Sweeping Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) discriminatory harshness continues. Obama treats undocumented immigrants like criminals. He deported record numbers. He incarcerates thousands more.

Obama spurns them. He’s contemptuous of worker rights. Don’t expect Perez to make a difference. He won’t dare challenge his boss. He won’t be around very long if he tries.

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