

RICHARD HURD: Thank you. It's certainly a pleasure to be here at the NEA. And this is quite an important time for public sector unions. So I was actually quite pleased with the invitation to come because it gave me an opportunity to think back about the work I've been doing with unions over the past couple of decades and think about how some of that might apply to the current public sector situation.

And so what I'm going to do is talk a little bit about the public sector situation right now, but not a lot. And then go back and look at what private sector unions have attempted to do, and unions, generally, have attempted to do to institute change in the face of external challenges. And then think a little bit about how some of the lessons from that experience might apply in the public sector now.

I do have five books to add to this pile here. A lot of what I'm going to talk about comes from books I've co-edited or contributed to. There was one on labor law, which is probably the least directly relevant, but certainly has some tie to the topic today. That was the first one, *Restoring the Promise of American Labor Law*. That hasn't happened yet. That was in the mid-1990s

And then a book on called *Organizing to Win*, which was about the organizing model and external organizing, another co-edited book, which I had a couple of chapters in. And that, certainly, directly relates to some of the issues that are facing the NEA and public sector unions. Then another book called *Rekindling the Movement* about efforts of the United States to revitalize labor unions that came out not quite ten years ago.

Then I worked on a project with researchers from five different countries on global efforts at labor union revitalization. The U.S. part of the project was funded by the Ford Foundation. And a book that summarizes that research is called *Varieties of Unionism*. I was not co-editor of that book, but I did co-author several of the chapters. And then, most recently, a book that will be coming out later this year on labor responses to neoliberalism, and I'll be talking about what neoliberalism is a little bit later in the talk and the challenges that are, that labor faces because of the neoliberal situation.

Hang on. Let me grab my napkin here and water. Okay. So let's look at the public sector situation in the context of the broader efforts, over time, especially in the United States, but also some attention to what's happened in other countries in responding to external crisis. By the way, if I am talking, and I seem to be talking about something that's not on the slide, that's because I forgot to turn to my left and hit a button to move to the next slide. So yell at me, or point to me, and encourage me to do my job.

Okay. So this is something we all know. It's what everybody at the NEA is living every day now, and, in fact, in public sector unions across the country we're putting up with this. We're dealing with it. We're coping. We're trying to figure out how we can respond.

There are proposals to weaken public sector bargaining or private sector bargaining in one form or another that are serious proposals. At the latest count, it's increased since I drafted the paper that I sent here last week that's sitting on the tables.

It's not that the numbers increased, that I've learned about more. But my current count is 38 states out of 50.

Now there are a whole range of proposals. About 20 states, about half of the states, with some kind of proposal, would actually either eliminate or dramatically change how collective bargaining happens in the public sector by restricting the topics that can be bargained over, but half of the states, half of these states, 20 states out of the 38 that have some kind of proposal. And of those 20, it would not be shocking to see half or more enacted, and some have already been enacted or implemented through executive order.

There are some that are more narrowly limiting subjects of collective bargaining in a small way here or there. For instance, in Massachusetts they've just passed a law that and there have been some court decisions that have supported this, so that the employees of the Metropolitan Transit Association can no longer negotiate for separate health insurance from what other public state employees get. It seems minor, but it's a change in what they can bargain, so it's a narrowing, a small narrowing of collective bargaining alternatives for public sector workers there.

So there are some of these more narrow limiting laws. Limits on union political activity, which has an especially important effect in the public sector because public sector unions not only pursue bargaining, they pursue political action as a way to accomplish their bargaining goals. So these limits on political activity that limit the use of union's funds in various ways are also a problem.

Restricting dues deduction or eliminating dues check off in some way, it's already happened in Alabama and some other states, another serious problem. Right-to-work laws, I thought there were eight, but now I understand there are 14 states where right-to-work laws have been introduced. And in New Hampshire, yesterday or the day before, the Senate passed the right-to-work bill by a margin that's veto proof. There's a Democratic governor there, but, apparently, they can now override the governor's veto of right-to-work. So we probably will have a right-to-work law in New Hampshire.

I lived in New Hampshire for 18 years, testified against the right-to-work proposals there several times. It's been around for a long time in New Hampshire. It's very disappointing that that's going to become law now, or at least it looks as though it's going to become law.

And all of us know, in this room, about the targeted attacks on education and teachers. And this is bipartisan. That's an important thing to keep in mind. A lot of this is bipartisan, even though the most obvious, vicious attacks on public sector unions are coming from the right wing or the Republican Party. A lot of what's happening is bipartisan, especially in the field of education where we're talking about test-based evaluation of teachers' competence. We're talking about restrictions or limitations on tenure and seniority, expanding charter schools and vouchers. These are bipartisan initiatives and very much undermine the strength and health, potentially, of education unions.

And another thing that's happening, even in states like New York, Hawaii, California, and Massachusetts, Democratic strongholds, with Democratic governors. New York and Hawaii have the two highest rates of unionization in the country. Even in those states, there is legislation that has passed in New York that limits what public

sector workers can get in this year's negotiations, economically. It essentially, institutes a pay freeze, no matter what they negotiate.

So it's an incredibly difficult situation when you have New York, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and California passing laws in the legislature that limit what you can bargain over in economics this time around. That lets you know the depth of the problem and the challenge that public sector unions are facing.

We shouldn't overemphasize all of this. We shouldn't exaggerate it too much because these are proposals. They're not all going to pass. And I've been looking through the proposals for legislation that's related to labor across the country, and there aren't as many, but here and there you find proposals that expand bargaining rights, that strengthen collective bargaining. So there are other proposals that are out floating around.

The net result is going to be negative this year. There's not much doubt about that. And it could be seriously negative, but change is underway. And it's, the thing that's unusual here and unexpected is the scope and scale and apparent coordination of this attack on public sector bargaining. It's not something that any of us anticipated.

I've been following unions as an academic and as an advisor to unions since at least 1980, actually started studying unions before that, so 30 years. I had no idea that it was going to be like this, even after the elections in November. Who would expect that all of these crazy Republicans would come in, and not all Republicans are crazy, but a lot of the people who got voted into office are, right? So these crazy Republicans would come in and would make unions their top target?

I would have thought it would have been different. For instance, in Montana where that's one of the states that doesn't have any proposals for labor relations, they have proposals like creating militias and allowing hunting with spears and keeping the FBI from coming into Montana and arresting people without the permission of the local sheriff. You know, that's what you might expect from the Tea Party crowd, right? But, no, that's only in Montana.

Everywhere else it's unions. It's collective bargaining. It's basic public spending. We do have one version of all of this in Missouri that is sort of off the deep end, where they want to end, one legislator has actually introduced a bill to end child labor laws in Missouri. Now that's not going to go anywhere, but it lets you know the extent if they take this labor issue and push it to the edge what might be down the road in some places in terms of a serious proposal.

Okay. Let's step back now and spend some time thinking about where things were for the public sector, where things were for other unions, and how other unions responded to similar challenges to the challenges that we're facing right now in our realm.

Back in 2000, union density for the public sector was stable and high, much stronger than private sector unionization. But at the same time, public sector unions were facing budgetary pressures. There were efforts to reorganize government that had even been pushed in a Democratic administration in the federal government. And even though it was done in terms of, you know, reinventing government and making it better, still, there was reduction in employment, and there were other issues that came out of that. But there was, there were also efforts to reorganize government in the

states and localities, sometimes pushed by Democrats, sometimes pushed by Republicans, and unions had to respond to that in some way.

The effort emphasized over and over again, market efficiencies. And so we saw things in terms of reorganizing government in the school realm like the rise of charter schools, emphasis on vouchers. That's been around a while, but there seemed ten years ago we were looking at this, and it looked like it was gaining some steam. We had an open attack on unions from parts of the Republican Party.

The president who was elected in late-2000, entered office in 2001, and within the first 90 days, he had his own, actually, I'm going to say 100 days, his first 100 days, if you want to parallel it to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 100 days, his 100 days emphasized weakening unions in some way, and he took on federal unions.

He made it, after 9/11, he made sure that TSA employees did not have the right to unionize, and they've only recently gained that right and voted yesterday to unionize. So we'll see what's happens because there's two unions, has to be a runoff now. But he kept TSA employees from unionizing.

He wanted to strip bargaining rights from Defense Department employees and had other aggressive attacks that were coming from the Whitehouse. Most of them didn't succeed, but it did cut back. He introduced a proposal nationally that was called paycheck protection, which would have kept unions nationally from using dues money in any way, to be engaged at any kind of political activity. And that would have limited union political action. So we had that happening.

We have the Heritage Foundation. I took a group from Cornell, of people who run our extension programs, so these are people who work with unions and with management and with government in our extension activities, practitioners. We came to Washington. We scheduled it for early December, 2001, excuse me, yeah, early December, 2000. So it was after the election.

So the idea was we will know who the President is going to be. And we can, I had lined up people from the Congress, from Republican and Democratic party, from think tanks, EPI, Heritage Foundation, from the Society for Human Resource Management, from a couple of business organizations, from the AFL-CIO to come in and talk about what they expected for policy alternatives.

This was when the big fight was going on about who actually won, and it was before the Supreme Court. Okay. The week we were here, when we left on Thursday, was the day that the announcement of the Supreme Court decision came out. So we found out after all these presentations who was President, right?

So at these events, the most impressive speaker, believe it or not, was the representative of the Heritage Foundation. Does everyone know with the Heritage Foundation is? You know, it's a right-wing think tank, been around since the '70s. And since the '70s, it has been pushing a very extreme right-wing agenda which, so for now, for 40 years, which includes ending bargaining rights for public sector workers. It's been on their long-term agenda.

Every Congress they run a training program, when the new Congress comes in, for all the new Republicans. They don't all go, but most of them do, especially given the trend in the Republican Party over that time. And they include that along with getting rid of the minimum wage law, changing other wage and hour laws and doing a number of

other things that would, right-to-work nationally, paycheck protection or no political action for unions nationally, that kind of thing.

So back in the '70s and the '80s and the early '90s, they were viewed as the extreme. And then with the Gingrich revolution in '94, when we had right-wing Republicans elected to Congress, Heritage Foundation moved mainstream and became a big think tank. Instead of being in a row house on Capitol Hill it has its own building, you know, and it's a bigger, has a bigger impact. But it's been pushing this for a long time.

This guy from the Heritage Foundation comes in. They had a plan for exactly what they would do if George Bush was President and a plan for exactly what they would do if Al Gore was President, including very small steps to pull the union out of the marketplace. And this was all, it was about labor issues because it was a school of labor relations, but he focused on what they were going to try to do, what they could accomplish under Bush, what they could accomplish under Gore.

Our speakers from the AFL-CIO and EPI had one set of plans, what they would do if Gore got elected, no plans for what to do if Bush got elected. This tells us a lot about how the Republican right has established its view because they have been eating away at the role of government for decades, one little step at a time, relentless, like the dripping water, right?

And now, suddenly, it's hit home. Their day has come. So it's something we could see back in 2000. And I went around and talked with unions at that point, public sector unions. I was doing some research on this, and I actually ended up writing a few papers about the state of public sector unions at that time. And national staff, key strategy people, national leaders understood the set of challenges.

And this is what they said, we know what's going on. We're ready. We have a plan. We're going to fight from a position of strength, 35% density, right? Intensify political action, fight privatization, expand organizing, pursue partnerships where you can, sort of a high-road, low-road approach, if we can get people to work with us, we'll work with them. If not, we'll fight them. That was sort of the policy plan, preserve bargaining effectiveness, support broad labor movement revitalization. This was it. And it was consistent across unions, including NEA, by the way.

But if you had looked at it carefully, and if you especially watched what happened in the ten years after that, the first one got the emphasis, intensify political action, and it got the emphasis in a narrow sense. Get the right people elected, lobby for our narrow issues, and get them done through the legislature, if we can't get the done at the bargaining table, right? That was the plan. That was really what happened. Fight privatization. That was part of it. Certainly, there was opposition to privatization and attempts to overcome it.

Minimal expanding organizing activity, it was rhetoric. Public sector unions didn't do much organizing, a little bit. There were a lot of people talking about we have to follow the work into the private sector when privatization happens. And at the national level they talked about doing it, but when it happened at the state level, the members would say why should we organize the people who just took our jobs? And so no one organized them. Sorry. No one organized them, right? So, really, there wasn't much organizing. Partnerships with management, yes, because in the public sector, the manager is not necessarily the enemy because the manager may want the same

budget we want. It's often the people in the legislature who have to decide the funding, so some of that was preserved.

Preserve bargaining effectiveness, support broad labor movement revitalization, sure. We stood on the sidelines and clapped when things went well, and went, oh, that's too bad when things went poorly. But there was no real public sector engagement in lending support and resources to private sector unions as they struggled with the incredible set of challenges that they faced.

And this is something I wrote back then. I actually prepared a small, early paper that I've been working on this for a while. I wrote a short version in 2002, ended up publishing a couple things in 2003 and 2004, but this is in the paper you have. Basically, what I pointed out then, and this was understood, at least by national unions, was that the threat that public sector unions were facing in 2000 was about what private sector unions faced in 1980. And in 1980, private sector unions ignored the threat and continued to operate the way they were going to operate. And I have listed all the things public sector unions faced, and you know about them anyway.

But the version in the private sector was deregulation, free trade, contracting out of work, a changing workforce, demographically and occupationally, which didn't fit what unions were at the time, increased sophistication of management anti-unionism and unions focusing on the same strategies and approaches they'd always used and being shortsighted and not really being prepared to respond and member apathy, and pacifity(?) as they didn't really understand what was going on anyway, and unions that never mobilized them. Okay.

That's the same set of things that unions, that public sector unions faced in 2000. And public sector unions knew what had happened to private sector unions after 1980, and, yet, from 2000 to 2010, public sector unions did not behave any differently than private sector unions had behaved when they first got the warning signs that things were going south.

So now there's no choice. We have to respond. We can't just sit back and let it happen because half of us might be out of work in a couple years. So we have to respond to what's happening right now. There's no choice. But it's more difficult than it would have been back then. We're still mired in a recession. All public sector unions are facing membership losses. As we face membership losses, we have reduced dues revenue. That means we have less resources.

At the same time, public sector unions grew in the '70s and '80s, and they staffed up and expanded size. A lot of public sector unions have a lot of staff who have recently retired or will retire within the next five years, huge chunks of people retiring at the same time. It's happening in teachers' unions, the AFT and NEA across the country and the various state affiliates, right?

And we're unions. We are good employers. We're always bargaining for our members to get good pay and benefits, so we make sure we give our own employees good pay and benefits. At least the public sector unions have behaved that. At least the teachers' unions have behaved that way. Not all unions behave that way, especially when it comes to paying organizers.

So we have this policy of generous pay, and we've negotiated good deals with our staff unions. And we've given good pensions, good health insurance that you can take with you into retirement, full health insurance, often. And, suddenly, and we did

this based on a projection that seemed realistic, of ever-continuing resources, ever-expanding members, and so we could afford to give people a lot of promise for the future because we knew our resources were going to grow and allow that to happen.

Well, now we have those expenses expanding and our resources declining. So you may not have heard about it yet in the NEA, and it's not just the NEA. It's happening across public sector unions. But public sector unions are now dealing with a budget crunch that would have happened even without this attack on public sector unions. But it's more complicated because it's happening while there's an attack on public sector unions.

So we have more demands on us, more things we want to, we need to do to take care of our members. We really need more staff. And what are doing? We're trying to figure out how in the hell we're going to get the money to even pay for our current staff and handle the retirement commitments that we've already made.

When we have staff turning over, we need to bring new people in. Are we going to have to not fill positions at a time when we have increasing need, and especially in education, when we need to bring in new, young staff who can connect with our younger members? Very complicated, it doesn't mean that it can't be done, but the challenge is a serious one.

Sort of the good news, there's that private sector unions were in this situation in the 1980s. And you might say that's good news, but if you look at what's happened to private sector union density since the 1980s, it doesn't necessarily bode so well. But there were some very intense efforts in the private sector to restructure, to transform themselves, to develop new policies and move in new directions. And we can learn a lot from that experience. That's an advantage that we have because they've already gone through it.

So let's look at some of the things that happened then. Private sector union transformation initiatives and starting, over the last 20 years, see, it took about 10 years for private sector unions to really do anything. Let's hope public sector unions are a lot faster, you know. And I think that we're going to be faster because we have to be. And I talk in the first person because I'm a public sector employee, and I've been working with public sector unions for a long time. So I feel like this is my struggle as much as yours, and it makes it even more intense and feels even more intense than it would otherwise.

So these are the overall initiatives. I've sort of laid them out. You've probably heard of all or most of these. I'll quickly summarize what they are. But what's most important is what individual unions did, not what the overall plan was or the overall priority. Because, realistically, we have a decentralized labor movement where individual unions make their own decisions and run their own strategy development and pursue their own member representation and pursue their own organizing. And we coordinate with other unions around political action, but we still have our own priorities. So, really, what matters is how effective individual unions have been in instituting transformation.

So I've worked with unions on all of these topics that are listed up here. In fact, I was thinking about it today. I learned that David Schlein was here. Back, my first big job with the union on organizational change was with the AFGE on how to use the organizing model in locals. And David was an officer at the AFGE at the time. So I met

him 20 years ago, or maybe not quite, maybe 15 years ago, something like that. And this whole idea of the organizing model really took hold for a while. The idea was our best resources are members. Let's mobilize them. Let's get them active. Let's fight. If we really run an organizing model where we approach, the organizing model, as originally conceived, was we approach everything we do like it's an organizing campaign, and we really monitor everyone.

We know all our members. We figure out who is willing to do things, and we mobilize them around bargaining, around organizing, around political action, around coalition building. Whatever it is that we're going to do as a union, we make sure we engage as many members as possible. Rather than just having the same, few suspects within the local take care of everything, we try to get everyone engaged. That was the idea behind it. The idea was that way, we actually create more resources for ourselves because we now have members doing things.

Well, it was more difficult than it was thought it would be, and it didn't prove to be as beneficial as expected because of some very realistic things that developed. Members are willing to mobilize around certain things for a while, but they're doing this on their own time, outside of working hours, and they burn out. So they'll be mobilized for a while, and then they'll say, okay, someone else's turn. And so what ends up happening is if you want to mobilize the members, you have to have staff devoting a tremendous amount of their time to mobilizing members, right, especially if you want them mobilized all the time, for everything, which was sort of the idea.

So unions began to realize that this wasn't saving resources. It wasn't creating resources. It turned out to be really complicated, and it was a heck of a lot simpler just to service them rather than to mobilize them. So most unions made a little spurt of trying it and backed off. So the organizing model did not turn out, for most unions, to be a route to revitalization because it was too hard. On some cases it was a self-fulfilling prophecy because staff thought it was going to be too hard.

But the next big change was the new voice movement when John Sweeney and Rich Trumka and company challenged the leadership in the AFL-CIO and got elected in 1995. This actually started, probably in '93. Rich Trumka, at the time, was president of the mine workers, and he actually pulled together a small group of union presidents who said we've got to get rid of this guy, Kirkland. He's an anachronism. He's not very good for the labor movement. He holes up in his office and won't talk to the press, and when he does, no one knows what he's talking about. And so we've got to do something to get rid of this guy. He's been around forever. He's just a bureaucrat and is not someone who inspires any kind of confidence in the labor movement.

And then the elections of 2004 happened, and the Gingrich Congress took over. And so this group of five presidents who had formed over the past year and a half or so went and met with Lane Kirkland and said, please, step down. We need you to step down. We need to move in a new direction. And we can have Tom Donahue, who is the secretary-treasurer, he can be president. And the idea was he'd be president for two years, and then they'd get some new person in there.

And Kirkland said, no, I'm not going to step down. So they ran against him, and they created this whole platform of organizing is the priority. We're going to grow the labor movement. Everything's going to change. We're going to be more effective politically. We're going to change our political operation. And they won the election.

They won. They didn't win it because of a democratic vote. They won it because they organized enough union presidents to support them that they delivered the vote, and they got the majority, and they took over, right?

And I tell you, there was a lot of optimism in my circles and in the labor movement that was created, and I would even suspect at the NEA, that was created by this new excitement that came in when the Sweeney team moved into the headquarters of the AFL-CIO, which, for a time, was an exciting place to be. All good things pass, unfortunately.

So we have this new voice thing, and but it was two-pronged. It was improved political action and increased organizing. Those were the two sides of it, and they were going to push both of those. They were going to get all unions to do both of those. And part of that, there was this, there was a group of organizers and elected leaders who were organizers who had been pulled together by Richard Benzinger, who was, at the time, who was named the first organizing director of the AFL-CIO in 1996 that developed a program called Changing to Organize, Organizing for Change.

And the whole idea was shift resources and organizing the labor movement will grow. We can do this. If we just have the right organizing strategy and put enough resources in it, we can turn things around, right? And so unions said, good, let's do it. Let's all change to organize. But then none of them would shift the resources. None of them would put the attention in it, or not none, but very few.

So Richard Benzinger, who is outspoken, got ticked off and told a few union presidents that they weren't doing what they were supposed to do, and they really needed to get off their ass and get things done. And he probably used even coarser language than that. And so they all went to John Sweeney and said you've got to get rid of this guy. He's too disrespectful.

So he lasted about two or three years, and he was out the window, and so was Changing to Organize, Organizing for Change. But there was a group of unions that stayed committed to it, and you might be able to guess who those unions were. You know, unite, the needle trades, here, the hotel employees, SEIU, the service employees, the UFCW, the food and commercial workers, and a late convert, the Teamsters, right? Oh, and the laborers, I left them out.

In the meantime, the carpenters, who also were with this program, left the AFL-CIO and put all their resources into organize, sold their building, did all kinds of things, right? So that group of unions came together and formed Change to Win. And so they were still going to do Changing to Organize. The AFL-CIO wouldn't do it, they would do it.

The AFL-CIO had become more effective, politically, in a narrow sense of delivering labor votes and getting some people elected and getting some things done or at least holding off bad things in Congress, but not successful in organizing. The AFL-CIO unions, this whole plan for Changing to Organize as those unions sort of peeled off and started working together, first, informally, then they became the New United Partnership, and then in 2005 they split from the AFL-CIO. Around 2001, the AFL-CIO created something called the Voice at Work campaign.

And that basically says we're going to put all our efforts into changing labor law, and we have to have a long-term plan. It will take ten years. That was the plan, ten years. And it took ten years to find out they were going to lose. But ten years to

change private sector law, right? And that's where all the energy went in terms of transformation. If we can change the law, we can organize, we can grow, we can turn things around, right? And we saw what happened to the Employee Free Choice Act after Barack Obama was elected. We don't have the change in the law.

In the meantime, those Change to Win unions didn't grow very much either except for SEIU, although there were some good things that came out of Change to Win that perhaps we could talk about another time. But I have a lot more to cover and no more time, so I really have to move on.

So what can we learn from all of this? Now I just gave you the overview. I ended up working with probably eight or ten different national unions during this time, and we looked for ways to pursue change and tried to figure out what could be done within the different unions. And there were some successes along the way.

The only union that really grew throughout this period was the SEIU, but as I mentioned to the group this morning, that's a union that was operating in an industry where employment was increasing, in healthcare. And so they increased a lot of their membership by affiliating independent, state-employees' associations, and the rest of it was through organizing in healthcare. That's where their success was. So they were working. They were doing Changing to Organize, putting resources into it, making it happen, but they did it in an industry that was growing. And the unions that were trying to do it in other industries were not successful.

So, but if you look within unions, there were some very large locals and some regions and some state level affiliates that did develop programs that early moved things and improved the unions' effectiveness and increased their membership, at least on that small scale at the state or local level.

And so from that, what can we learn? If we look at all of the efforts for transformation during this time period, 1990 to 2010, I categorize the efforts into four different groups. Strategic rigidity, this is more than half the unions, but less than half the union members, would fall into this, representing less than half the union members of smaller unions, would fall into this category.

You pay rhetorical respect to the latest idea. You talk about organizing model. You talk about organizing to win. You talk about political action. Basically, you keep doing things the same way. You sort of hold onto what you have, make sure that all your staff that's there with you when you first got elected to office, that they still have a job when they, until retirement and have good benefits. You sort of just hang on, right? And you keep doing things the same way and hope that the tide will turn. A lot of unions, that's what they did, only rhetorical change.

Much more common in terms of numbers of workers in these unions and the most sort of standard approach, was to really make some efforts to shift some resources into organizing, to make some efforts to mobilize members in some way, to try to put more people into political action and to try to have more influence politically, to try to build some coalitions, to do things a little bit differently, but a little here and a little there, marginal change. We can evolve into a different union, and to some extent, there was change that happened, but it wasn't dramatic.

So most unions fell into one of these two categories. And so, basically, what we saw was not much change, not much difference, and not much success in terms of union revitalization. The two unions that went the furthest and how they did it, and to a

lesser extent, I think, I guess we should put in four unions, if we count Unite and Here and the combined Unite Here, was to make the change at the top. Organizational combustion I call it.

Bill Fletcher and I wrote about this quite a few years ago. Did I mention Bill already or not? Bill Fletcher is a colleague of mine who is now the field director for the American Federation of Government Employees. He's my left-wing conscience. He's a very intelligent labor leader who has worked closely with SEIU. He was, actually, one of the first vice presidents under Andy Stearn when he first became president. Then he moved to the AFL-CIO to become education director. Later an executive assistant to the president of the AFL-CIO, later the president of the TransAfrica Forum and now field services director for the American Federal of Government Employees.

Bill and I, when we were writing about this, we called it the sanctification of organizing. That all else is unimportant. What matters is the organizing religion. And that's how these unions operated, 50% of the resources into organizing. If you couldn't organize, you're out the door. If you don't want to organize, you're out the door. If you're a leader at a local level that's a substantial sized local, and you don't buy into the program, they find a way to remove you from office. Top-down imposed change, everybody with the program. This is Change to Organizing. We're doing it, right?

And, sure, things are going to blow up, and there will be rebellions. But just contain them when they happen and keep going. Carpenters, a new president came in, Doug McCarron in the 1990s, totally changed the constitution in ways that are very marginal in terms of the law, in terms of, basically, the president appoints the people who can decide who can run for office. You know, so it's he really controls the so-called democratic process within the union, totally changed how that union was structured. Andy Stern did the same thing at SEIU. Bruce Raynard did it at Unite. John Wilhelm did it here.

And when Unite Here merged, that one didn't actually combust until after the merger when the whole thing exploded because they had different cultures, and they didn't fit together, but they forced them together by administrative fiat, and then it came back to haunt them, basically, because it didn't work. And we have the same kind of combustion happening within the SEIU where there are some rebellions here and there and fires that have to be put out. And then they got caught up in the whole Unite Here conflagration. So organization combustion is one way. We're going to do it, come hell or high water. Do it, right? And the unions that changed the most did it that way, and they were a success, at least for a time.

The approach that we've only found at local levels that Bill and I embrace most closely is something we call inclusive unionism, which is to build the union around union values, to remember the organizing model without believing that total devotion to it is going to change everything, to remember the idea that if you can't mobilize your members and engage them in some way and get them connected to the union in some way. It will be difficult to pursue effective, long-term change, to balance representation of current members with your new plans to recruit new members and increase your political action. So push for aggressive, rapid change, but do it in a way that's respectful and engages as many people as possible in the process. I'm going to come back to this a little bit later because I haven't really explained it very well now, but I want to get through a few more things before it's time to wrap up here.

So anyway, these are the four versions that we were able to observe in the real world. Inclusive unionism never happened at the national level, but it did happen with some locals that had at least periods of five to ten years of very strong success and a very interesting culture that was sort of magnetic in its feel and just inspirational. Unfortunately, they were caught up in national unions that didn't allow them to take this as far as they might have taken it. And we found these locals at a number of different unions, not just the ones that pursued organizational combustion, by the way.

Organizational combustion, the one that we know the best from observing it, and the one, the only one that's only taken any national unions anywhere, and, probably, the SEUI is the only union that came out of this with a net positive in terms of membership growth and other aspects, organizational evolution strategic rigidity are the most common approaches.

So what did we learn from this? We have to be careful. We have to worry. It's going to be hard. It's not easy to change, but when you're faced with incredible external challenges, you've got to try to change. You have to push for change, unless you're willing to just sort of tighten the circle around your organization, try to be efficient, try to hold on, protect as much as you can. So it was 35% last year. If it's 30% this year, we can handle it. Maybe we can keep next year's loss to 2% so it will still be 28%. Then, maybe, we'll only lose 1% a year for 10 years. You know, and then it will be 17%, and then maybe they're be another push, and we'll lose 5% in a year, but we can come back. And maybe one year, we'll be able to get it to move from 12% to 13% before it drops down to 12% and 10% and 8%, you know.

So we could do that in the public sector. We could do just what the private sector did and, basically, adopt those first two. And it's not going to be easy to do anything else because this is what you run into.

One option, one of the problems is what Jeff Grabelsky, one of my colleagues, and I call the structural fix temptation. We saw this especially in construction unions, but there's this idea that, okay, we have to change. What will it be? Let's create a communication's department. Oh, let's create a national network of locals that are facing strong charter schools so they can work together, right? So we have this structure over here, and that will deal with it.

Let's create a network of organizing locals, and they can work together. Let's restructure the union so we put different segments of it together. Let's, instead of having state affiliates running all the show, let's create regional structures that allow all the state affiliates in New England to work together cooperatively and share staff.

The structural fix temptation, if we just get the right structure, we can do it. Without any real careful, and once you start thinking of structural things, you get caught up in it, and you get caught up in changing constitutions and writing agreements and figuring out which staff members are going to be in which position. And it all is so exciting because things are changing, and you have a chance to move things in a different direction. And you lost sight of what you're really trying to do. And there's a real temptation to think if we just hit the right formula, everything is going to be okay. It's going to turn around. That's one of the, this is one of the pitfalls.

Strategic rigidity, we say we know we have to change. We are going to change. But when you talk to each other you say, but you really don't have to change that much. You know, someone has to take care of this member's complaint. Someone has to

attend to that member of the state legislature who we've always attended to, you know. And so you do some rhetorical buy-in, but you, basically, all you really want is to do your job. You're good at it. That's where you, how you got where you are. And so whether you're an elected leader or a staff member, this is what I want to, this is what I'm good at. This is what I do.

We'll do a little bit of that stuff because we have to, but, basically, I'm going to keep doing the same thing because how else can I contribute to this organization? I don't know how to organize. I don't know how to mobilize. You know, I don't know how to think about new ideas of how unions can operate that are different from anything we've done in the past. I know what I do. I know what I know. I do what I do. That's it.

Now it's going to be everywhere. It was everywhere in these unions. I would go into locals that were doing really good work, and I would have interviews with staff members, and they would turn into therapy sessions. They would close their door, and they would say let me tell you about those damned organizers. They get over there in the media room, and they're making their posters, and they're chatting away in Spanish, right? And I'm in here trying to write a grievance, and I can't get it done. I mean, it's just, it's pervasive. And these are good people, you know, they're good unionists. They've devoted their life to it. They believe in what they do. And, yet, they've been asked now to suddenly accept a total culture change, and it's hard.

Lack of clarity, a lot of times labor leaders will say we're going to change, you know, develop a slogan, restructure. We're going to change. No one really knows what they're doing. No one really knows what the change is. If any of this transformation is going to work, it has to be very clear. This is what we're doing. This is the reason why. This is why we need your buy-in, and this is how we're going to help you develop the skills you need to buy in and help us make it, get it done. Hard, but if you don't have clarity, you don't move.

Resistance from elected leaders, members, and staff, I already touched on it with the staff, but the same things from elected leaders. Elected leaders buy into the change until key members start questioning them, and then they back off because they do want to get reelected, right? And so they may be with you philosophically or at least seem to be with the change, philosophically. But when it comes to the next election, most important is winning that next election, not buying into the change and pursuing the change and doing the policies you have to do to get the change done.

Members, oh, this is exciting. The union is going to more. But, you know, my department head gave me a hard time, or my, I guess, department heads are members of the unions. My principal did something I don't like. And, yeah, we've got to get this political organization going over here, but what really matters is I need that staff member to come here and take care of this problem I'm having with the principal right now, and get it done today.

So members may have some buy-in, but members, in general, they're in the union because they want to be represented, and that's what they want. And they'll do some of this other stuff, but it's hard, unless it's a situation like Wisconsin or Ohio where it's very clear that you're getting smashed. Where the tack is more subtle, where the change is more subtle, very hard to see why it really has to affect how you operate, the role you play. You're busy with your teaching. You're busy with your class prep.

You're busy with your family. You're busy with your coaching. Do I really need to get caught up in this change thing? I'd just as soon the union keep doing what it did.

The servicing magnet is the result of all of this. That's something that Bill and I, a term we coined, I think, that you plan to do all this other stuff, but you always get drawn back. And it's hard to let go of it. Then you have the burnout and apathy of the members, the fights I talked about that are internal, conflicting values. If you're going to change, what are you really going to try to do? It's very difficult.

Okay. So let's just look at a couple more things here, then I'm going to fly through the last slides, somehow, so I can get done. I understand there will be plenty of time for discussion afterwards, right, like during lunch and that kind of thing?

WOMAN: We're going to try some . . .

HURD: I'll pretend to eat lunch while you do and answer questions.

WOMAN: Yeah, we're going to try something a little different this time, and that is we'll do a couple questions and answers when you're finished. And then we're going to, hopefully, let the scholar go get his lunch. And then everybody can get lunch, come back in, and we're going to have a group discussion with the scholar again, questions.

HURD: Okay. I'm going to go through this one really fast. It's something that you can read. It's pretty obvious. But this is what we have found really works with successful union transformation. Priority attention to building the internal support for it, you can't just do it. You've got to build support. And building support you need leaders who are out there talking with people, and you need to be, you need leader buy-in first.

And the head of the national program for change or the state program for change has to address the problems. They actually have to sit down with the representation staff, field their questions, talk with them, recognize the importance and engage them, and say how can we do this to get it done? This is what we have to do. What are you going to do to help us get it done? Get them to buy in. Go out and visit the members. Meet the members.

You know the Writers Guild strike in 2007, 2008, very successful strike. What you don't know is the president of that union responded to thousands of e-mails. He spent countless hours visiting studios around Los Angeles and around the country, along with the executive director. They made themselves available to every single member of that union. That's why they were able to have a successful strike. And in spite of the media hype, it was a very successful strike because the contract that they eventually got, which was patterned after the Directors Guild, never would have happened if they hadn't been on strike. I've actually even interviewed people at the Directors Guild who confirmed that.

They paid attention to the members. They made sure the members understood what was going on, made sure that if they were on strike, it was on issues the members believed in. That's the kind of attention to members, to staff, and to leaders you need if you're going to pull off a successful transformation. You've got to be willing to be out there and spend all your time talking with them. Maybe you have to have other people

working on the details of the strategy. The key leaders have to be visible, present, and available.

A resource shift in context of an, or a strategic plan, you don't just do it piecemeal. You actually think about what you're going to do, and you develop a plan. You do pay attention to traditional issues as well as new priorities, but you have to figure out how to balance them. It's hard. It's a balancing act, but you have to do it. You have to figure out how you're going to do it. You can't just throw things out to do something else.

And then this whole idea of increased involvement and rediscovering the original spirit of the organizing model is, we believe, a crucial part of this. And this is just very simple. You need top-down and bottom-up. You need top leadership that's strategic. You need people engaged at the bottom. That was a quick slide. This, I'll come back to in a minute. That was quick.

And the project I did with the five-country project, we identified four different aspects of union revitalization, institutional change, which is create vitality in the institution, create some belief that we actually can do something, create a support and spirit and energy and optimism in the institution that's part of it. Membership is the organizing component of it. Economic is the bargaining leverage component. Political is the political leverage component. Let's be realistic. For public sector unions, this bottom one is the most important. If we can't figure out a way to have an impact politically, nationally, and state-by-state, and I don't mean a narrow impact politically, I mean a broad impact politically, we're not going to get it done.

So of all of the things, these are all important, but the key issue is how we develop a program that's politically effective. Now, in this context, in this project that we did the five-country project, we had a couple of, there was a chapter in our book that some of us from the U.S. contributed to in terms of the U.S. situation, but written by John Kelly of the U.K. and Kirsten Homman(?) from Norway, and in that chapter they talked about political action and union revitalization.

And, basically, what they did is they laid out a situation where U.S. political action is very narrowly conceived, and part of the reason is because of the system that we're in and how the political structure works that we don't have party discipline. So you can support a Democrat, and they end up not supporting you on key votes. That doesn't happen in other countries where there is party discipline, where if you vote against the party position on an issue, you're no longer a member of the party. That happens in a lot of countries in the parliamentary system. U.S. that doesn't happen, right? In the U.S. you vote with your party 78% of the time, you're okay. Ninety percent of the time, you're a hero. That still gives you a 10% leeway, you know, to vote whatever you want. So you can't really trust our system very well. It's a very difficult system because of that.

And the returns to the labor movement for an increased effectiveness politically have been increasingly meager and narrow. Public sector unions have succeeded in a very narrow way on specific things that are good for their members, but not in the broad way of changing the political environment. We've seen the political environment become poisoned.

We thought in fall of 2008 that all had been solved. You know, November, the next day after the election, we walked around with our heads in the clouds in euphoria,

in spite of the fact that it had happened before, and it never worked out. Somehow, this time it was going to be different, right?

And so what happens? Our new president goes in there and makes a proposal to change our healthcare system, just exactly what he said he was going to do in the campaign. And he was going to get that done, then do the financial system and re-regulate the financial system. Then he was going to pass labor law reform.

Well, the healthcare thing took forever and didn't happen. No party discipline, all kinds of crap, you know the story. You know, and here we are, labor movement, very patiently waiting for delivery, and it never happens. That's our political system. The Democratic Party doesn't deliver. Be realistic, you know. Unless we can change the environment, it's going to be like that.

The book I'm just finishing now or just finished is going, it will be out in a couple of months. It's called, I don't like the title, but my co-authors, co-editors chose it, *International Handbook on Labor Unions' Responses to Neoliberalism*. It's about neoliberalism.

Classical liberalism, if you haven't followed history or economic, historical analysis, economic analysis, political analysis, classical liberalism is about freedom. But it means freedom of the market. So classical liberalism is about the free market. It's not political liberalism. That means a liberal Democratic. Classical, historical, economic liberalism is freedom of the market. The idea is minimize government.

Neoliberalism is the current interpretation of that, and it's freedom of the market. But instead of minimized government, it's use government to turn the market to the needs of the private sector. So the government becomes an aggressive force to pursue private sector objectives and minimize public sector objectives.

That's what's happening in Wisconsin. It isn't the Tea Party. Neoliberalism has been expanding its influence for 30 years. The Tea Party is a bit actor in this script. This is not new. This is something that's been developing and building over time that the Heritage Foundation and similar organizations have been laying the foundation for, ironically. The Heritage Foundation has built a foundation of free market values that has been embraced by both political parties. Deregulation under Carter helped destroy private sector unions. You know, free trade under Clinton sort of nailed the nail in deeper.

And then we have Republicans coming to office, and they're even more aggressive and vicious. This neoliberal box, which I don't have time to describe, but this came out of, Rich Trumka developed this back when he was a vice president or secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO. 2004 he started talking about neoliberalism as the problem. It has boxed us in. We are trapped by this whole culture that focuses on labor market flexibility, shareholder value, personal responsibility, small government and so on, and that, in this box, we can't get out. We're stuck in the box. And until we tear down the box and get rid of the preeminence of the neoliberal ideals, we don't have a chance.

I mean, Rich Trumka is constrained by his position. The president of the AFL-CIO can't do a damned thing, to be honest about it. They can't change the labor movement. They're a figurehead, you know, public relations person. He's better at that than John Sweeney was. But he, at least, understands that we're trapped by this whole thing of neoliberalism.

So what can we do? What we found in our study of all these countries, and we have about 16 countries in this research, what we found in the study of all these countries is there's different responses to it. In the U.S., it's the top two. Either some unions have accepted neoliberalism and say, okay, this is alright. We just have to figure out how to add value for our employer. And if we can add value for our employer, they'll treat us as a partner, and we can engage in mutual gains bargaining, and we'll be solid. So we're going to buy into this whole thing. No opposition to free trade, deregulation, just figuring out, how can we be part of neoliberalism?

The second approach, which is more common and sort of captures the mainstream, including Rich Trumka, whether he likes to admit it or not. It isn't like I don't mean Rich Trumka's evil, but political reality is that if he's going to work with the Democrats, he has to figure out how to do it. So what you do is you figure out how can I complain about certain things, try to get certain things to change? But, basically, you go along with the program because that's the prevailing wisdom, right? So you advocate for protection of your members. You advocate for union interests, advocate for protection of the industries that employ our members, but you accept that we're going to have this, you know.

Yeah, we're going to have charter schools. Yeah, the President's education secretary thinks it's a great idea, so we're going to have it. Let's figure out how we can make sure that at least some of those schools are union, right? We'll figure out how to work within the system. So we don't really like it. We think charter schools are bad, but it's going to be charter schools. We've got to figure out a way so we can have a piece of that action, and we can get some charter schools too. So use conditional support. You stand up to it, rhetorically, but you end up going along with it.

There's two kinds of opposition that we saw in different parts of the globe. Social democratic opposition, which is if you are a political scientist, you know the difference between social Democrats and Socialists. Social Democrats believe in working within a democratic market-driven system to make sure there are regulations and aggressive government programs to create some form of equality and some form of protections.

So there's the social democratic opposition, where you actually come up with specific policies that could re-regulate the financial markets, for instance. That would be a social democratic response, that can protect people from discrimination aggressively, that can make sure that this stupid idea of getting rid of child labor laws doesn't go anywhere, but, in fact, we strengthen child labor laws. That's social democratic, really going after, aggressively, not just saying how can we make a deal to make sure we get enough education funding for our districts, but saying if we don't take on this whole agenda of neoliberalism and fight it aggressively, then it's going to come back to haunt us, eventually, no matter what.

So we have to take on the big picture. We can't just be dealing within the political structure, like in the last slide, or I guess it was two slides ago. We can't just be dealing within this structure trying to get things done because it doesn't pay off for us long-term. Maybe it does short term. But we're going to actually try to figure out how we can be part of a movement to really challenge. . . how did that happen? I was, really, just standing here, you know, and it flipped for me, anyway, so the social democratic opposition. And in some countries, and this, by the way, is what is happening in many but not all European countries, the Germany and Britain are in

between conditional support and social democratic opposition. Other European countries are in social democratic opposition as is the Canadian labor movement, I might mention. Okay.

Or Socialist opposition, and you see this mostly in Latin America and a few other, to some extent, in the labor movements in southern Europe like Italy and Greece. So there's some socialist opposition that says we don't buy any of this. It's all a capitalist plot. We've got to overthrow it and create a just society. I mean, I'm a Socialist at heart and a Social Democrat for pragmatic reasons, Social Democrat for pragmatic reasons. I don't know where you are. You may be a Democrat at heart, but you'd better be a Social Democrat for pragmatic reasons because if you're a Democrat, you're a neoliberal. And if you're a neoliberal, everything sucks, okay, realistically.

So where do we go? Social justice unionism, Bill Fletcher, in this book Bill Fletcher contributes a chapter and Lowell Turner, two of my other co-authors in other papers, contribute chapters. They both talk about social justice unionists. And you can look through this and see what it is. But it's, basically, you stand up to neoliberalism. You have to figure out if there's an alternative. You talk about it.

Bill Fletcher wrote a piece that isn't in this book where he said it's not, for instance, when you're talking about public sector unions, you think about teachers' unions that they haven't done a very good job of being a champion for the public. We have not crafted ourselves as champions of the public. We've crafted ourselves as champions of the teachers and the other education staff. Therefore, it's easy to portray us as special interests. What we need to do is reposition ourselves as champions of the public. We support public education. We are about the public. We are about all the values that lie behind public education.

And without worrying about my slides, I'm going to give David Schleim credit again. He sent me an article, via e-mail, a couple days ago, which I had not seen, and I didn't have time to read until I got on the plane on the way down. It's by Stan Karp. And a lot of it's about education, you know, and it's all the things you deal with, why this testing thing is wrong, why charter schools are bad, how all of the stuff that's being pushed by the Gates Foundation and everything is really based on a few examples that are extreme. We have very highly paid administrators who are running schools that are succeeding because they've developed a reputation and can be very selective about who they admit. So there may be successful charter schools, but this waiting for Superman thing is really not something that's a viable alternative.

He goes through all of the detail, you know, on and on. Then he gets to the end, and it's like, whoa, this guy has said what I wanted to say at the end of my talk. So I'll let him say it, right? That when you look at it, what is public education? How do we create a public school system? It took campaigns against child labor, 100 years ago, building support for public taxation, struggles against fear and discrimination, against immigrants back in the 1920s and 1930s. That's how we built our education system.

And what happened to the public education system after that? We became part of the struggle for civil rights and for women's rights, and more recently, for the rights of special education children and for gay and lesbian and bisexual and transgender children and colleagues. And we became a place that supported bilingual students and understood the impact on immigrant families of being in this country because we have

them in our classrooms. And we also are the ones who are educating Native American children. So we're dealing with all of this.

And so where do we go from here as advocates of social justice? If we can't create a social justice unionism, if we can't present to the public and our country an argument that they understand and can buy into about the good of the public, the role of the public, the importance of justice, the importance of treating people as human beings rather than as, somehow, a negative person because they belong to some certain minority group or happen to be gay. If we can't promote this, how can we build a labor movement?

So we have to rebuild. We have to create an equity agenda. As Bill Fletcher would say, we have to defend the public. We have to be defenders of the public in the interest of the public. And if we can't reposition ourselves, really substantially, deeply, right down to our members and including all of our staff and elected leaders so that we take that role and play that role, I'm afraid that what's going to end up happening as we move forward is exactly what happened to the private sector.

We're not going to drop from 35% unionization to 15% overnight, but we're going to get there, you know, unless we can find a way to change the debate. And our unions and the public sector are the ones that are best positioned to do that because it really is in our roots. It's in our culture. It's what we do, and it's what we stand for. But why don't we recognize that and shout about it instead of sort of just assuming that that's there and worrying about what's going to happen to how many teachers are employed and what their pensions are?

You know, so, yes, there can be a future. I'm not optimistic about the long-term health of the public sector unions, but I think if there are any unions that have a chance to maybe turn that around and change my unfortunate predictions and make things have more potential, then it's unions like the NEA. Okay. Thank you.