

## MIDDLE CLASS WORKING FAMILIES TASK FORCE CREATED BY OBAMA

President Obama officially launches a White House task force aimed at raising the living standards of middle class working families and issues three labor-friendly executive orders regarding the rights of workers employed by federal contractors.

The task force will “focus on policies that will really benefit the middle class, policies to create jobs that pay well and provide a chance to save, to create jobs in growing fields and train workers to fill them, to ensure that workplaces are safe and fair as well as flexible for employees juggling the demands of work and family,” Obama says.

The three executive orders require federal contractors to post notices informing employees of their rights under the National Labor Relations Act, prohibit federal contractors from using taxpayer money to try to influence their employees’ choice of whether to have union representation, and require successor contractors to offer jobs to qualified employees of the previous company. The executive orders will be published in the *Federal Register*.

Obama believes “we have to reverse many of the policies towards organized labor that we’ve seen these last eight years. I do not view the labor movement as part of the problem; to me it’s part of the solution. We need to level the playing field for workers and the unions that represent their interests, because we know that you cannot have a strong middle class without a strong labor movement.” He asserts that “strong, vibrant, growing unions can exist side by side with strong, vibrant, and growing businesses.”

The mission of the task force is to work with federal agencies to “expedite administrative reforms, propose Executive Orders, and develop legislative and policy proposals that can be of special importance to working families.”

The task force, which was first announced by the transition team last December is chaired by Vice President Biden and will include the secretaries of labor, health and human services, education, and commerce, and the heads of the Office of Management and Budget, the National Economic Council, the Domestic Policy Council, and the Council of Economic Advisors. Jared Bernstein, the vice president’s economic adviser, will serve as executive director.

Obama directs the task force to produce “a detailed set of recommendations” to expand education and life-long training opportunities, improve work and family balance, restore labor standards including workplace safety, protect the incomes of middle-class working families, and protect retirement security. The memo states that the task force will hold regular meetings and conduct outreach sessions with representatives of labor, business, nonprofit organizations, state and local government agencies, and other interested persons to assist the task force’s development of recommendations.

The task force will post materials and reports on its Web site (<http://www.strongmiddleclass.gov>). The task force’s first meeting took place in Philadelphia to address green jobs that provide products and services that use renewable energy resources, reduce pollution, conserve energy and natural resources, and reconstitute waste.

The presidential memorandum and the three executive orders are available at <http://op.bna.com/dlrcases.nsf/r?Open=smgk-7nt2ht>, <http://op.bna.com/dlrcases.nsf/r?Open=smgk-7nt2k2>,

<http://op.bna.com/dlrcases.nsf/r?Open=smgk-7nt2l7>,

<http://op.bna.com/dlrcases.nsf/r?Open=smgk-7nt2lt>.

(Source: BNA, *Daily Labor Report*, No. 19, February 2, 2009, pp. AA1-AA3, E1- E8.)