

July 4th Solidarity Celebration, Bangor, Maine

It is my privilege to celebrate our country and our freedom here in Maine with you. Freedom – bequeathed to us by the founding fathers and mothers, protected and expanded by the brave and visionary including abolitionists, women suffrage activists, civil rights warriors, trade unionists and others. We are reminded today of that famous warning freedom requires constant vigilance. It is as true today as ever now that we have government surveillance of citizens like we haven't seen in decades: wireless wire tap, pawing through bank records and an administration of lies. They lied to get us into an unjust and unnecessary war. They lied about torture. They lied about extraordinary rendition.

And now they are robbing us of our financial and economic freedom: Bush took the largest federal budget surplus in American history and turned it into the largest deficit in history. This Congress has raised its own pay seven times since it last raised the minimal wage. The minimum wage now has less buying power than at any time in its 70-year history. Thirty-six percent more of us live in poverty than when Bush took office while they transfer more and more wealth to the rich by tax cuts, lower wages and slashed benefits. Bush's trade policy has cost us three million good paying manufacturing jobs – more than in the previous 22 years combined.

Bush and his right-wing gang are robbing us of the freedom of peace of mind. We may well be the first generation of Americans to leave our kids and grandkids a lower quality of life and standard of living, less opportunity, less justice, more avarice, less compassion and more greed.

Perhaps the most important freedom they've taken from us is the freedom to form unions and bargain collectively. That freedom is a basic human right, and is how working people have accessed the American dream. That freedom is essential to democracy. When you silence the voice of the worker, you silence the voice of the people and that is what the Bush gang is doing to us. Sooner or later, when economic inequality gets too great and the gap between the rich and the rest of us is too wide economic inequality will trump and overwhelm political democracy and that is happening in our nation today. And that is why we have to have to fight, a real fight, to restore the freedom to form unions. That fight starts right now with the NLRB and the upcoming Kentucky River decision. Next week, there will rallies, marches and demonstrations all over America including here in Bangor to push back against the NLRB attempt to further restrict and deny the freedom to form unions and bargain collectively. In the upcoming Kentucky River case, the NLRB will redefine supervisor. We must stand and push back to insure that they don't use this case to deprive 300,000 union registered nurses and other professionals of collective bargaining. We also must push right through the upcoming political season for a pro-worker Congress that will pass the Employee Free Choice Act. As you know, the Employee Free Choice Act will go a long way to restore the freedom to form unions and bargain collectively in America. Let's make this election a referendum in America on human rights. Let's make this election a referendum on democracy in America. Let's go to the polls angry, angry about what they've done to our jobs, angry about what they've done to our freedom, angry about what they've done to our country, and angry about what they're doing to our kids and grandkids.