

**INTERNATIONAL
LONGSHORE &
WAREHOUSE UNION**
AFL-CIO



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August 29, 2013

President Richard Trumka
AFL-CIO
815 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Re: ILWU Disaffiliation

Brother Trumka:

It is with regret but resolve that we have come to the point where the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) must cut formal ties with the AFL-CIO.

As you know, the ILWU has a long and proud history of militant independence inside and outside the House of Labor. With roots from the old Wobblies (IWW), our Union arose from industrial-based organizing, against the tradition of craft-based unionism, to become a founding member of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). This affiliation itself, however, did not last long. During the anti-labor, McCarthy period, the ILWU was kicked out of the CIO for being "too red" and too independent and we did not join the merged AFL-CIO until 1988. In short, the ILWU has been independent and unaffiliated for most of its history. Today, the ILWU returns to that tradition.

I do wish to note that during our affiliation, the Federation's national office did, on occasion, provide some support to the ILWU. One particular high mark was your personal involvement in longshore contract negotiations in 2002, which we gratefully acknowledge. But even in those negotiations, we had to fend off attacks from other national affiliates, who actively tried to undermine our contract struggle by filing legal claims and walking through our picket lines protesting the ten day employer lockout. And this was at a time when the Bush Administration had openly threatened to militarize the ports and even shoot some of us to secure the ports for the coming War in Iraq. Even after this passed, six years later, when the longshore

contract reopened in 2008, one of these national affiliates filed ULP charges against the ILWU to try again to sabotage our bargaining.

Since then, we have seen a growing surge of attacks from various affiliates. A particularly outrageous raid occurred in 2011, when one affiliate slipped in to fill longshore jobs at the new EGT grain facility in the port of Longview, Washington, and then walked through ILWU picket lines for six months until we were able to secure this critical longshore jurisdiction. Your office added insult to injury by issuing a directive to the Oregon State Federation to rescind its support of the ILWU fight at EGT, which threatened to be the first marine terminal on the West Coast to go non-ILWU.

The attacks by affiliates against the ILWU have only increased. One affiliate has filed a string of ULP charges as well as an Article XX charge that not only interfere with ILWU contractual rights at specific ports; the ULP charges also are attempting to dismantle core jurisdictional provisions in our Longshore Contract for the entire West Coast. In Los Angeles and Oakland, another affiliate is imposing internal union fines against dual union members for the “crime” of taking a job as a longshoreman – the stated purpose of the fines being to prevent the ILWU from filling new waterfront jobs that replace traditional longshore work due to new technologies. In Oakland and Tacoma, another affiliate is trying to use a recent NLRB ruling against one of our employers to take over ILWU jobs with some of our other employers. Throughout the Pacific Northwest, we are daily seeing still other affiliates blatantly cross the picket lines of ILWU members who have been locked out for months by the regional grain industry. And just this week, some of the Building Trades affiliates have displaced ILWU workers in the loading of barges at Terminal 46 in Seattle where longshoremen have done this work for generations. They also had the gall to file several ULP charges against us for picketing at our own marine terminal. These multi-state attacks against the ILWU are being coordinated in large part by a law firm with close ties to the Federation.

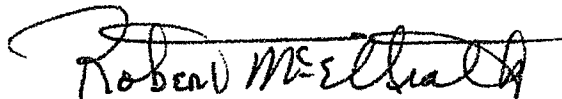
We see this situation only getting worse as the ILWU is about to start West Coast longshore negotiations and face the challenge of the ports soon being run by robotics and computer-operated machinery over the next five to ten years. The survival of the ILWU and the job security of our members depend on our having these remaining jobs, which will mostly involve the servicing and maintenance of the robotics and other machinery. These are jobs that directly replace longshoremen, jobs that ILWU employers control and jobs that fall under jurisdictional provisions of our Contract. We will not let other affiliates jeopardize our survival and block our future as the primary waterfront workforce.

The ILWU has also become increasingly frustrated with the Federation’s moderate, overly compromising policy positions on such important matters as immigration, labor law reform, health care reform, and international labor issues. We feel the Federation has done a

great disservice to the labor movement and all working people by going along to get along. The Federation has not stood its ground on issues that are most important to our members. President Obama ran on a platform that he would not tax medical plans and at the 2009 AFL-CIO Convention, you stated that labor would not stand for a tax on our benefits. Yet the Federation later lobbied affiliates to support a bill that taxed our health care plans. Similarly, the AFL-CIO and the ILWU have historically supported comprehensive immigration reform with a clear path to citizenship that protects undocumented workers from firings, deportations, and the denial of their rights. However, the immigration bill you recently asked us to support imposes extremely long waiting periods on the path to citizenship and favors workers with higher education and profitability to corporations, as opposed to the undocumented workers such as janitors and farm workers who would greatly benefit from the protections granted by legalization. As a labor movement, we need to stand up and be the voice for our members and working people. We cannot continue to compromise on the issues that benefit and protect the working men and women of America.

Disaffiliation does not mean that the ILWU intends to go it alone. Not by a long shot. The ILWU has and will continue to provide whatever aid and support we can for our fellow trade unionists and workers everywhere. We are committed to working in solidarity with all unions and labor groups, including the Federation and its affiliates, for the advancement of workers, worker rights, and progressive issues everywhere.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert McEllrath". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert McEllrath
ILWU International President

RMcE/akj cwa 39521

cc: ILWU Titled Officers
ILWU International Executive Board
ILWU Longshore Division Coast Committee
ILWU Affiliates
AFL-CIO Executive Council