

**Remarks by Richard Trumka
President, AFL-CIO
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union Convention
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Thank you, Stuart [Appelbaum], for that kind introduction.

I'm going to say what you all know – Stuart Appelbaum is a stand-up leader. A leader of integrity and conviction, and what he is doing on behalf of working people in America is something to be proud of.

And let me tell you how honored I am to be invited to join you all – and to be a special guest of your convention—although I wish I could be with you in person.

I'm impressed by your work for a living wage, and by your commitment to equal rights, unity, and building strength from diversity.

Thank you for fighting for our common dreams.

And I want to congratulate you on drawing the line against corporate greed in Williamson, New York. Your strike at Mott's is powerful. It's crucial to the livelihood of your members. And it's crucial to all working families.

For the DPS executives in Plano, Texas with their \$550 million profit last year, the dollars at stake may seem like just a few more little jewels for their crowns. But for working families, it's a line in the sand, it's saying "NO!" to "low-waging" the middle class out of existence.

You're taking that stand, and I know you won't back down.

You're standing up for all of America's working families, and you're standing up for our children and grandchildren.

The actions of DPS executives are unconscionable. They enjoy record profits—earned from your labor. They grant themselves outrageous bonuses and then turn around and want to cut your wages. It's the industry standard, they say. And sadly -- this is business as usual for too many corporate CEOs across America.

The truth is, there is no pay cut deep enough, no bonus large enough, to satisfy the greed in their hearts.

Well, we're done with that kind of business as usual. And we won't back down.

But, I want to acknowledge how hard it is say no to a bad contract. I've been there. Giving up a paycheck isn't easy. And it's not going to be easy to lead America's working families out of the wage ditch we're in. But that's what you'll be doing when you win in Williamson.

For standing up, for not backing down, on behalf of the 11.5 million workers of the AFL-CIO, I want to say, thank you.

And you know as well as I do, that the day you win that contract, you'll start working for the next one. It's like what we're doing in Washington.

In 2008, the right men and women won the election. That got us to the table. We knew the fight wasn't over—that we'd have to keep battling every inch of the way for what working families need.

We haven't won everything—that's how it goes with contracts, too. But we've won a heck of a lot.

President Obama brought us back from the precipice of a second Great Depression -- a parting gift from George W. Bush and friends. The Recovery and Investment Act saved or created 3.5 million jobs. And then the Obama administration led the effort to save the domestic auto industry.

He and the congressional leadership put the country on the path toward quality, affordable health care -- with historic reform six decades in the making. And this summer, President Obama championed the first major reform of Wall Street since the 1930s. It was another major win—a historic win—for the middle class over the forces of greed.

Thanks to this president, we have people leading the Labor Department and the NLRB who believe in workers' freedom to join unions, and who believe no employer should steal our wages.

Thanks to this president, we have people leading OSHA and the Mine Safety and Health Administration who believe they're there to protect workers' lives -- not the CEOs and companies that have been killing and maiming workers with impunity.

No, we haven't gotten everything we hoped for yet.

We haven't won the Employee Free Choice Act --- Yet. But we're not backing down. We're going to fight until we win it, and then we're going to defend it. We'll have to—because the Party of No won't give up. So we won't either.

They're already saying if they win in November they'll repeal health care reform and Wall Street reform. But we're not going to back down.

A solid bloc of congressional Republicans has fought every effort to create good jobs here in America.

That same solid bloc of congressional Republicans -- joined by a few Democrats, I might add -- refused to extend unemployment benefits to millions of hard-working people who haven't found work no matter how hard they've tried.

And on health care reform and Wall Street reform and everything we stand for ... the party of No sided with the hedge fund managers and the insurance companies and the big bankers and tried to face down working families. But we didn't back down.

You don't back down—and that's why I know you're going to put boots on the ground and put everything you have into winning for working families in November – and beyond, too.

We're looking at some sharp political choices. Our work's cut out for us. But you know how we win—we do it together. That's people power. That's union power.

We're stronger together. We're stronger when we have a united labor movement.

I look forward to the day when we work together every day, all year long. And I want to thank your president for his work to bring us closer together. And I want you to know, you are all my sisters and brothers.

I'll stand shoulder to shoulder with you. The AFL-CIO will stand shoulder to shoulder with you, whatever you need.

Standing together. Fighting together. That's how we'll win. And I can promise you this: We won't back down.

Thank you all, and God bless you.