

Connecticut AFL-CIO endorses war hawk Joseph Lieberman for Democratic primary

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On Tuesday, the Connecticut AFL-CIO endorsed Senator Joseph Lieberman for the August 8 Democratic primary. With the endorsement, the labor federation, which represents some 180,000 members in the state of New England, went on record supporting the Democratic senator most identified with the Bush administration's Iraq war policies.

John W. Olsen, chairman of the state AFL-CIO, said Lieberman was endorsed by a two-thirds voice vote of the approximately 350 delegates at its 6th Biennial Political Convention in New Haven.

Lieberman, a three-term incumbent, is facing a challenge for the Democratic ticket for the first time since entering the US Senate in 1988. Ned Lamont, a millionaire cable television executive from Greenwich, Conn., is opposing Lieberman's stance on the war, tapping into growing opposition to the war and the Bush administration's attacks on social conditions and democratic rights.

Lamont has been steadily gaining ground on Lieberman. A June 8 Quinnipiac University poll showed Lamont trailing the incumbent Senator 57 to 32 percent among all Connecticut Democrats, compared to 65 to 19 percent only the month before. Lieberman has indicated he may run as an independent candidate if he doesn't win the Democratic nomination. He recently told reporters, "I am not going to close out any options."

Lieberman would have to file 7,500 signatures on nominating petitions by August 9, the day after the primary, to secure a spot on the November ballot, meaning he would have to begin collecting signatures before the primary election results were tallied. The AFL-CIO has left its options open should Lamont win the Democratic nomination and Lieberman decide to run as an independent.

In supporting Lieberman in the primary, and leaving open the possibility that it may support him against Lamont if he loses in the primary, the Connecticut AFL-CIO has underscored the vast gulf that exists between the trade union bureaucracy and rank-and-file union members, as well as the working class in general. The Quinnipiac poll reported that 73 percent of all Connecticut voters disapproved of the way President Bush is handling the Iraq war.

Lamont received a third of delegates' votes at the Connecticut Democratic Party convention in May, thus avoiding having to petition to place his name on the ballot for the August primary election. This has caused considerable consternation within the Democratic Party establishment, which is determined to marginalize the issue of the Iraq war in its campaign for the November midterm elections.

New York Senator Charles Schumer, head of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, recently asked Lamont to drop out of the race.

Lamont called for support for the non-binding Levin-Reed Amendment, which was rejected in last week's Senate debate on the war by a 60-39 vote. The measure called for the Bush administration to begin withdrawing an undetermined number of American troops by the end of this year and announce a timetable to further withdrawals some time in the future. It was defeated by a 60-39 vote margin.

A resolution put forward by Democratic Senator John Kerry to set a deadline of July 1, 2007 for withdrawal of US troops was overwhelmingly rejected by a vote of 86-13. Lamont's campaign manager Tom Swan told the *Hartford Courant* recently that Lamont supports a withdrawal by July 2007.

A statement on Lamont's web site makes it clear that his opposition to the war is of a tactical, rather than a

principled, nature, and that he does not challenge the imperialist basis of the war, or of American foreign policy in general. The statement declares that to “‘stay the course’ is not a winning strategy for Iraq or America” and “our frontline military troops should begin to be redeployed and our troops should start heading home.”

Lieberman, the Democrats’ vice presidential candidate in 2000, opposed both Democratic resolutions and sided with the White House in the Senate debate. He has been the Democrats’ most strident supporter of the war, vocally defending both Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and President Bush. He attacked opponents of the war last December, saying, “in matters of war, we undermine presidential credibility at our nation’s peril.”

As Al Gore’s running mate in 2000, Lieberman went on record opposing the Constitutional principle of the separation of the church and state, commenting at a campaign appearance in Detroit that “the Constitution guarantees freedom *of* religion, not freedom *from* religion.”

In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, he enthusiastically supported the passage of the USA Patriot Act and, as chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, worked to create the Department of Homeland Security. He has backed all of the antidemocratic measures enacted by the Bush administration in the name of the “war on terror.”

Running as a supporter of the Iraq war in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004, he was forced to withdraw after obtaining disastrously low votes in a series of primary elections.

A substantial group of unions—including SEIU Local 1298, American Postal Workers Local 237, Communications Workers of America Local 1103, Electricians Local 90, UNITE HERE, and the United Food and Commercial Workers—have endorsed Lieberman in this year’s Democratic primary election. Some of these unions are affiliated to the AFL-CIO and others have joined the breakaway “Change to Win” union coalition. Their common endorsement of the chief representative of the most right-wing, pro-war faction of the Democratic Party demonstrates the absence of any principled political differences between the two rival factions within the trade union bureaucracy.

The endorsement of Lieberman is a clear expression of the nationalist and pro-imperialist politics of the American unions—politics that underlie their collaboration with the corporations in imposing ever more brutal attacks on the American working class. It is one more demonstration of the deeply reactionary and anti-working class character of these bureaucratic organizations.



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