

DEAR LABOR COUNCIL MEMBERS

I regret that I am unable to attend this meeting of the Greater Boston Labor Council because of prior commitments, but I want you to know the high esteem in which I hold your organization and the organized labor movement.

My grandparents were immigrants to this country, and it was thanks to the labor unions that they were able to realize the American Dream and raise their families. In my own experience, as an aide to Senator Ted Kennedy on the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources Committee, I learned firsthand how important organized labor is in protecting jobs and providing good wages and working conditions for America's working men and women.

I am a firm believer in and supporter of the collective bargaining process. During my 11 years on the Boston city Council, I have supported the process through my statements, my physical presence on picket lines, and my votes to approve the allocation of funds for negotiated contracts.

I am not a supporter of protracted collective bargaining negotiations, and, as mayor, would work to settle collective bargaining agreements in Boston in a timely fashion. While mediation and arbitration are important, I believe that the best and most important way to reach agreements is through ongoing communication as part of a collective bargaining process in which both sides are respectful on one another.

There are many historical union provisions, activities, and agreements – both formally in city contracts and informally by custom – that are important to unions and management. Among these are the agreement governing health insurance that created a Public Employee Committee (PEC); the "Responsible Employer Ordinance;" the living wage; and the inclusion of the Building Trades on such governmental boards and commissions as the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Planning Board and the Boston Employment Commission. I will work to maintain the agreements and practices that have been beneficial to both employees and management.

I have and would continue to support progressive, pro-worker economic development strategies in the City of Boston that encourages good jobs and good wages for both the construction jobs to build a project and the permanent jobs that follow the project's completion. That is one of the major reasons that I support the Suffolk Downs' proposal to build a resort gaming facility in East Boston.

Regarding the Turnaround Schools issue or any changes to employee working conditions or wages, I am not in favor of unilaterally limiting the involvement of the very people who are essential to any reform. I do not believe in privatizing public services unless assurances can be obtained guaranteeing that wages, benefits, and services will be maintained and taxpayers will actually save as a result.

Regarding Wal-Mart seeking formal approval to locate in Boston, as mayor I will be in continued contact with the City Council on such issues, and I expect that all firms - including Wal-Mart - to permit employees to choose freely whether they would like to form a union.

Finally, I believe it is very important that we make changes in the taxi industry - both to protect drivers, maintain a strong industry, and serve the public. Currently, two investigations are underway to study the industry. I believe it is important to see the outcomes before any decisions are made.