



Stuck Between A Rahm And A Union

The Chicago Teachers Union Strike Puts Obama In An Awkward Position And Could Create A "Political Hazard" For His Re-Election

THE CHICAGO TEACHERS' STRIKE IS PUTTING OBAMA BETWEEN HIS FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF RAHM EMANUEL AND THE UNION WHICH ENDORSED HIM

The Strike "Creates A Political Hazard" For Obama. "A strike by Chicago teachers creates a political hazard for President Barack Obama, as he counts on the support of organized labor while trying to appeal to independent voters who tend to favor some of the education policies central to the conflict." (William McQuillen, "Obama Caught Between Schools Overhaul, Striking Union Supporters," [Bloomberg](#), 9/11/12)

"The Strike Puts Obama Between The American Federation Of Teachers, Which Endorsed His Re-Election In February, And His Former Chief Of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, Who As Mayor Of Chicago Oversees The School District." "The strike puts Obama between the American Federation of Teachers, which endorsed his re-election in February, and his former chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, who as mayor of Chicago oversees the school district. Obama Education Secretary Arne Duncan is the former chief executive officer of Chicago's schools and has used federal funds to advocate tying teachers' evaluations to student performance, measures opposed by the union." (William McQuillen, "Obama Caught Between Schools Overhaul, Striking Union Supporters," [Bloomberg](#), 9/11/12)

- **"The Chicago Teachers' Strike Is Putting President Barack Obama's Re-Election Campaign In A Bind, Pitting Unions Loyal To Him Against Officials With Ties To The White House."** (Eric Johnson, "Teacher strike in Chicago hometown may be headache for Obama," [Reuters](#), 9/11/12)

"The Chicago Teachers' Union Strike Is Not Coming At A Good Time For President Barack Obama." "The Chicago Teachers' Union strike is not coming at a good time for President Barack Obama. With eight weeks to go before the election, it's not only a distraction from the political campaign, it may also put him in a tough spot by forcing him to choose between supporting his labor union allies and his ex-chief of staff and most effective fundraiser." (Edward McClelland, "Teachers' Strike Puts Obama In Political Bind," [NBC Chicago](#), 9/10/12)

- **"The Walkout Happens At An Inconvenient Place And Time For Obama — His Hometown Eight Weeks Before Election Day."** "The walkout happens at an inconvenient place and time for Obama — his hometown eight weeks before election day. His former chief of staff, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, is leading the standoff with teachers. These factors ensure the president will be under pressure to weigh in, which could put him in the position of having to pick sides between his former top aide and a key Democratic constituency." (Teresa Watanabe, Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah and Kathleen Hennessey,

"Chicago Teachers Strike Echoes National Debate On Accountability," [Los Angeles Times](#), 9/11/12]

Robert Bruno, Labor And Employment Relations Professor At The University Of Illinois At Chicago: "I Can't Imagine This Is Good For The President And Something He Can Afford To Have Go On For More Than A Week." "But one labor expert said that a major strike unfolding in the shadow of the November election could only hurt a president who desperately needs the votes of workers, including teachers, in battleground states. 'I can't imagine this is good for the president and something he can afford to have go on for more than a week,' said Robert Bruno, a professor of labor and employment relations at the University of Illinois at Chicago." (Tammy Webber, "Chicago Kids, Teachers Brace For Day 2 Of Strike," [The Associated Press](#), 9/11/12)

OBAMA HAS AVOIDED EXPRESSING ANY OPINION ON THE STRIKE

White House Press Secretary Jay Carney: Obama "Has Not Expressed Any Opinion Or Made Any Assessment Of This Particular Incident." "CARNEY: Well, I'm sure he's aware of it - I know he's aware of it - but, I haven't spoken with him about it, so I can't speak for his reaction. I can tell you that, more broadly, that our principle concern is for the students, and his principle concern is for the students and families who are affected by this situation. And we hope that both sides are able to come together to settle this quickly, and in the best interest of Chicago's students, but beyond that, I haven't got a specific reaction from the President." REPORTER: Governor Romney has weighed in on it, saying that the President has chosen a fight, chosen a side in the fight, that being the unions and the teachers. Any reaction to that?" CARNEY: Well, the President, as I think you just heard from me, has not expressed any opinion or made any assessment of this particular incident." ([White House Press Briefing](#), Washington, D.C., 9/10/12)

- **"The White House On Monday Avoided Weighing In On How Mr. Obama Thinks The Dispute Should Be Resolved, Simply Saying The Two Sides Should Work It Out As Quickly As Possible."** "The White House on Monday avoided weighing in on how Mr. Obama thinks the dispute should be resolved, simply saying the two sides should work it out as quickly as possible. While the president has enjoyed political support from teachers unions, Mr. Obama has at times found himself at odds with this traditionally Democratic constituency. Mr. Obama has supported merit pay for teachers and has called for states to allow more charter schools—publicly funded schools run by nongovernment groups. Teachers unions have been skeptical of both ideas. Mr. Obama supported the controversial mass firing of teachers at a Rhode Island school judged to be failing in 2010." (Stephanie Banchemo and Kris Maher, "Chicago Teachers Go On Strike," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 9/10/12)

"President Obama Has Not Chosen Sides In The Unfolding Dispute Between The Chicago Teachers Union And Mayor Rahm Emanuel." "President Obama has not chosen sides in the unfolding dispute between the Chicago teachers union and Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the White House said Monday. 'His principle concern is for the students and families who are affected by the situation,' White House press secretary Jay Carney said. 'We hope that both sides are able to come together and settle this quickly,' he said." (Byron Tau, "White House: Obama Hopes Chicago Strike Is Resolved 'Quickly,'" [Politico's "44"](#), 9/10/12)

- **"The Issue Is Awkward For The White House — Pitting The President's Former Chief Of Staff And Ex-Campaign Chairman Against An Important Democratic Constituency In The President's Adopted Hometown Of Chicago."** (Byron Tau, "White House: Obama Hopes Chicago Strike Is Resolved 'Quickly,'" [Politico's "44"](#), 9/10/12)

THE STRIKE COULD HAVE "A REAL — AND NEGATIVE — IMPACT" ON OBAMA'S RE-ELECTION

“There Are Several Reasons To Believe That What Happens In Chicago Could Have A Real — And Negative — Impact On President Obama And The Broader Race For The White House This Fall.”

“At first glance, you might be tempted to think that what happens in Chicago has little to no effect on the politics of Washington and the presidential race. But, you’d be wrong. There are several reasons to believe that what happens in Chicago could have a real — and negative — impact on President Obama and the broader race for the White House this fall.” (Chris Cillizza, “Why The Chicago Teacher’s Strike Is Bad News For President Obama,” [The Washington Post’s “The Fix,”](#) 9/10/12)

“The Obama Camp Needs To Be Careful Not To Upset The Unions...While Not Alienating Independent Voters Who Are Worried About The Democrats Being Too Close To Powerful Labor Groups.” “The Obama camp needs to be careful not to upset the unions, which it needs for campaign funds and to do ground work leading up to the November 6 election, while not alienating independent voters who are worried about the Democrats being too close to powerful labor groups. While not directly involved, Obama is associated in many minds with local politics in his hometown, where one of his current cabinet members, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, formerly oversaw the schools and now endorses the changes that have angered teachers. And Mayor Rahm Emanuel is a former Obama chief of staff.” (Eric Johnson, “Teacher strike in Chicago hometown may be headache for Obama,” [Reuters](#), 9/11/12)

“The Strike Comes At A Critical Time For Democrats Seeking Union Help To Get Voters To The Polls In November.” “The strike comes at a critical time for Democrats seeking union help to get voters to the polls in November. National labor leaders are backing Mr. Obama’s re-election campaign, but they also have said Democrats shouldn’t expect their automatic support. Some labor groups cut spending at this year’s Democratic National Convention, after party leaders chose North Carolina—a right-to-work state—for the site. Convention speakers last week, including the president, trumpeted their support for teachers. The Chicago strike has the potential to put Mr. Obama on the spot over his education policies.” (Stephanie Banchemo and Kris Maher, “Chicago Teachers Go On Strike,” [The Wall Street Journal](#), 9/10/12)

The Strike “May Also Reveal Disenchantment With Obama Among Some Union Members.” “The Chicago teacher dispute may also reveal disenchantment with Obama among some union members. ‘Unions have endorsed President Obama but the rank-and-file teachers across the nation are so frustrated and angry about these education policies, privatization of the education,’ John Cusick, a striking fifth-grade teacher and union delegate at Chicago’s William H. Ray Elementary School in Hyde Park, said yesterday.” (William McQuillen, “Obama Caught Between Schools Overhaul, Striking Union Supporters,” [Bloomberg](#), 9/11/12)

A Major Obama Donor From The Chicago Area: “Every Person I Know Who Is A Major Donor To The President Is Against The Strike Decision.” “‘They should go back to work. I think it’s unbelievable,’ said a major Obama donor in the Chicago area, worried about the effect the strike will have on Obama’s image with the independent voters in swing states he needs to defeat Republican Mitt Romney. ‘Every person I know who is a major donor to the president is against the strike decision,’ the donor said.” (Eric Johnson, “Teacher strike in Chicago hometown may be headache for Obama,” [Reuters](#), 9/11/12)