TRUMKA ANNOUNCES HIS CANDIDACY FOR AFL-CIO PRESIDENT AND PICKS HIS TEAM

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard L. Trumka announces his candidacy to succeed John J. Sweeney as president of the 8.5 million member labor federation. Trumka, 60, is expected to run unopposed and be elected president at the AFL-CIO convention in September, succeeding Sweeney, who is retiring after serving 14 years in that position.

Trumka says that he wants to make sure the AFL-CIO has “greater transparency” and is more responsive to its affiliates, with more “participation and ownership” by the affiliates, and he wants to focus on the “grassroots” with more attention paid to the state federations, the central labor councils, and local unions. His team “will more resemble the workers we represent. There will be diversity of gender, race, and age.”

Trumka selects Elizabeth Shuler, 39, executive assistant to the president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), as his running mate for secretary-treasurer. In her current position, Shuler oversees nearly a dozen departments at the IBEW including research, political/legislative affairs, and media, among others. The third member of Trumka’s slate is Arlene Holt Baker, who was elected in 2007 to fill out the remainder of the term of AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson following her retirement. Holt Baker is the first African American to be elected to one of the federation’s three highest offices.

There will be a contest for the position of secretary-treasurer. Greg Junemann, 55, president of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), announced his intention to run for that position. Junemann worked as a cost-estimator for 17 years for a manufacturing company before becoming a full-time union official. He was elected as the secretary-treasurer of the IFPTE in 1994 before becoming its president.

At the time of his election as the AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer in 1995, Trumka was serving his third term as president of the United Mine Workers (UMW). A third generation coal miner, he began working in the mines at age 19. He received a degree in economics from Pennsylvania State University and a law degree from Villanova University Law School in 1974. After graduating from law school, he served four years on the legal staff of the UMW, but then returned to the mines in 1978. He was elected to the union’s executive board in 1981 and first elected as president of the UMW in 1982. While president of the UMW, Trumka led the union in two major strikes, gaining advances in employer-employee cooperation and enhanced mine workers’ job security, pensions, and benefits. In 1989, he was responsible for leading the UMW into the AFL-CIO.

During his tenure as AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer, in 1997 Trumka led the creation of the AFL-CIO Capital Stewardship Program to promote the retirement security of working families whose pension and benefit plans have more than $400 billion in assets. Trumka gained national attention in the summer of 2008 for a speech he made at the United Steelworkers convention in which he directly confronted the issue of racism in the 2008 presidential election. He serves on President Obama’s Economic Recovery Advisory Board, and plans to be more active and aggressive on the economy.