

# AFL-CIO head: Labor to ditch Democrats

By BYRON TAU | 8/25/11 11:03 AM EDT

The **growing rift between labor and their Democratic allies** was on full display Thursday, as AFL-CIO President **Richard Trumka** told reporters that labor groups are planning to scale back their involvement with the Democratic Party in advance of the 2012 elections.

Going forward, Trumka said, the labor movement will build up its own political structures and organizations rather than contribute to and depend on the Democratic Party's political operation.

"We're going to use a lot of our money to build structures that work for working people" Trumka said. "You're going to see us give less money to build structures for others, and more of our money will be used to build our own structure."

Trumka's remarks follow the news that the AFL-CIO will **set up a so-called super PAC**, allowing the nation's largest labor federation to spend unlimited amounts of money on political activity for next year's elections and beyond. Trumka confirmed Thursday that the union is moving forward with plans to create the PAC.

Labor has traditionally been a major contributor to Democratic candidates and causes around the country. Trumka said that their outside effort will help keep union-backed candidates more accountable for promises made on the campaign trail.

"Let's assume we spent \$100 in the last election," he said, explaining the union's position.

"The day after Election Day, we were no stronger than we were the day before," said Trumka. "If we had spent that [\$100] on creating a structure for working people that would be there year round, then we are stronger."

Speaking to reporters at a breakfast sponsored by The Christian Science Monitor, Trumka also said that many in the labor movement are weighing whether to skip the party's 2012 convention.

"There are some of our affiliates that aren't going to participate," said Trumka. "We're still talking about it."

Relations between labor and the Obama administration have cooled over outstanding issues like the failure to pass a union-backed card check bill that would ease organizing, as well as the administration's support for free-trade agreements with Colombia, South Korea and Panama.

Trumka articulated a broader critique of the Obama administration, telling reporters that the president has allowed Republicans to set the terms of debate — focusing on what he called a manufactured debt crisis instead of a jobs agenda.

"I think he made a strategic mistake when he confused job crisis with deficit crisis," Trumka said. "He started playing on the Republican ground."

"He's going to give a speech in a couple of weeks on job creation," Trumka told reporters. "If he's talking about another percent or two break from a tax here and doing something with patent control, and doing three years down the road something with infrastructure bank, that's not going to get the job done."

He called for more direct action.

"As we approach this Labor Day, our working-class people are looking for three things: jobs, jobs, jobs," Trumka said.