



## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Richard L. Trumka '71



**To Richard Trumka for his lifelong commitment to workers and 30 years of leadership in two high-profile labor organizations: the United Mine Workers of America and the AFL-CIO.**

As president of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, better known as the AFL-CIO, Richard Trumka deftly balances honoring labor unions' history while embracing the need for innovation and change. In his biographical YouTube video, he charts his future by saying, "We'll keep the traditions that need to be kept, and we'll move away from those that don't or we'll modify them so that they're relevant today." Even before he became AFL-CIO president, Trumka gained YouTube fame when he boldly addressed the racial issues underlying the 2008 presidential election in a speech to steelworkers that has had more than 550,000 hits on the video website.

AFL-CIO members elected Trumka president of the federation of 57 national and international unions—representing more than 11 million workers from airline pilots to writers—in September 2009 at the group's convention in Pittsburgh.

Trumka assumed his new role just down river from his hometown, Nemaocolin, in the southwest corner of Pennsylvania. It was there that Trumka worked as a coal miner, just as his father and grandfather had before him. During his seven years in the mines, he worked his way first through Penn State and then through Villanova University School of Law. After law school, Trumka worked on the legal staff of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) for four years before returning to mine work in 1979. When not mining, he provided pro bono legal work for families in the Nemaocolin area. Trumka has often said his time in the mines humbled him and taught him the true meaning of solidarity.

Trumka, at 33, was elected the UMWA's youngest president in 1982 and was sworn into office by his father. As UMWA president, he led the successful nine-month strike against the Pittston Coal Company in West Virginia over preserving health and pension benefits for retired workers and widows. More than 4,000 workers submitted to arrest during what current UMWA President Cecil Roberts called "one of the best-run strikes in the country." For his consistent

use of non-violent civil disobedience, Trumka received in 1990 the Labor Responsibility Award from the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change. Other accomplishments during his three terms as UMWA president include passage of the federal COAL Act (providing guaranteed health care for retired miners), bringing the union back into the AFL-CIO, and rallying support for the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa.

In 1995, Trumka was elected the youngest secretary-treasurer in AFL-CIO history. As secretary-treasurer, he led the creation of the AFL-CIO Capital Stewardship Program, aimed at safeguarding and maximizing returns on the nearly \$500 billion in assets in AFL-CIO member unions' pension and benefit funds. During the past 15 years, Trumka has also served on the AFL-CIO Executive Council (chaired the Strategic Approaches Committee and the Finance Committee), and the China Currency Coalition (co-chair of the Alliance of Organizations Supporting U.S. Manufacturing).

Trumka's high-profile positions in the UMWA and AFL-CIO resulted in his appointment by President Bill Clinton to the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform (1993). President Barack Obama recently named him to the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board, chaired by former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker.

Trumka's numerous awards include the Gompers-Murray-Meany Award from the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, the 2003 Humanitarian Award from the Sons of Italy Foundation, and the Jewish National Fund Tree of Life Award. In May, he received the Medallion Award and served as commencement speaker for Villanova University School of Law. He also served as a member of Penn State's Board of Trustees from 1983 to 1995.

Trumka and his wife, Barbara, live in the Washington, D.C. area. Their son, Richard Jr., is a graduate of Cornell University (2006) and Georgetown University School of Law (2009).