

ENDORISING EDWARDS AS "FIGHTER PROGRESSIVES ARE YEARNING FOR"...

Endorsements matter, and John Edwards is starting to pile up some impressive ones. The California State Council of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is on board. So's the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE). And national Friends of the Earth Action league.

But Edwards has to get through the January 3 Iowa caucuses to capitalize on growing national support of his bid for the Democratic presidential nod.

That's why the endorsement he will accept today from Caucus4Priorities group is so vitally important to the former North Carolina senator's campaign.

An Iowa-led group with backing from Ben Cohen, the co-founder of Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream Company, Caucus4Priorities has been at the forefront of the often-neglected push to reduce wasteful Pentagon spending and invest the savings in vital domestic priorities.

Caucus4Priorities has over the past ten months aggressively challenged candidates to address concerns about wasteful military spending and the underfunding of domestic priorities. All of the Democratic candidates responded to questionnaires submitted by Caucus4Priorities, which asked about their willingness to cut government waste in the Pentagon included spending on nuclear weapons, missile defense, offensive space weapons and Cold War weapons designed to thwart the defunct Soviet Union which have no utility in making Americans safe in today's threat environment.

This was no exercise in getting candidates "on the record."

At the same time that Caucus4Priorities was questioning the contenders, the initiative was organizing Iowans to pledge "to caucus only for the presidential candidate who best champions sensible budget priorities."

So far, ten thousand Iowans have made the pledges

And they will now be encouraged to caucus for Edwards.

"We have lots of friends in this race but only one champion," says Cohen. "Without question John Edwards is the most committed and best prepared to bring about the kind of real change Washington desperately needs. John Edwards is uniquely qualified to take on Washington lobbyists and defense contractors, and break the stranglehold they have on the nation's pocketbook and reins of power. Edwards is the fighter in the race and that's what progressives are yearning for."

Cohen and his Iowa allies say they will now pour resources and energy into making sure that Edwards -- who he describes as "the Sensible Priorities candidate" -- will "come out of Iowa with the victory that will propel him to the nomination."