

RESOLUTION 16

BUILDING A POLITICAL MOVEMENT THAT MEETS THE MOMENT

Submitted by the Political Committee and the Executive Council

The legendary UAW President Walter Reuther reminded us that there is a “direct relationship between the ballot box and the bread box,” and what the labor movement “fights for and wins at the bargaining table can be taken away in the legislative halls.”

For decades, we’ve endured attacks on our right to organize and bargain, from the state house to the Supreme Court. We’ve suffered under an economic and political system designed by and for the wealthy elite. And most recently, we’ve mobilized to defend our democracy in the face of attacks on our basic values: the right to vote, the ability to support our family and the freedom to thrive no matter who we are or where we came from.

As a result, young people have grown up in a society that increasingly does not serve their basic needs. A 2020 study from the University of Cambridge found that 55% of millennials are unhappy with democracy. Saddled with student debt, a climate crisis, systemic racism and the lack of good jobs, they are fed up. Electing the right leaders can help change that.

Over the past two years, we’ve experienced the firsthand benefits of a pro-worker government, as the Biden-Harris administration and a supportive Congress take steps to create good union jobs, protect our democracy and create a fairer process for forming a union.

Supporting pro-worker candidates is about more than winning elections. It’s about winning our agenda. We don’t need our elected leaders to hand us good pay and benefits. That’s why we’re in a union. We need those in power to protect our right to bargain for a better life and give more working people that very same right.

The pandemic reminded us that corporate-driven government is bad for working people and our nation, and that we must build a more equitable America, where every person is entitled to a voice on the job. We also continue to face the very real threat of authoritarianism, as the former president and his allies try to divide and disenfranchise us, and defend the traitors who attacked our nation on Jan. 6, 2021.

Our electoral work must advance our agenda and defend our democracy, protect our hard-earned gains and push us to new heights, and give young people hope that America can deliver for them. In short, we must build a political movement to meet this moment.

Therefore, we the affiliates of the AFL-CIO resolve to do the following:

- Build a reimagined, internal organizing-inspired political program that is year-round and centered on issue-based conversations with members where they work and live.
- Create and maintain a messaging feedback loop whereby we hear directly from members where they work and live on the issues important to them, and are able to effectively respond.
- Prioritize year-round member-to-member communication as part of a commitment to heightened internal organizing, workplace education and activities outside the workplace.
- Strengthen the existing AFL-CIO state and local structure by adding organizing and training capacity in strategic locations.
- Act in solidarity with our affiliate unions to advocate for laws, and elect civic leaders who will improve the lives of working people, bring fairness and dignity to our workplaces, and secure social equity in America.

- Call out and hold accountable fair-weather friends who stand with working people only in times of convenience.
- Reaffirm our commitment to give working people greater political power by speaking with an unquestionably independent political voice, and strengthen that voice by encouraging and supporting union members to run for public office.
- Support the elimination of the Senate filibuster in order to pass legislation vital to our democratic rights and the well-being of the working class.
- Unite workers around issue-based referendums and ballot initiatives.
- Continue to demand that the Democratic National Committee not give money to anti-union or union-busting firms.
- Defend our democratic rights, the fabric of our nation, protecting the sanctity of our right to vote and the adherence to the principles of government of, by and for the people (see also Resolution 3).