

RESOLUTION 5

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND UNION JOBS

Submitted by the Committee on Legislation/Policy and the Executive Council

The effects of climate change in the United States and around the world are serious and growing. Severe weather, including floods, droughts, wildfires, extreme heat and sea-level rise are affecting working people, our health and our communities in ways that call for an urgent and sustained response. We need increased investment in reducing emissions and adaptation to the unavoidable challenges across our economy and to our infrastructure.

We know that climate change places a disproportionate burden on childhood development, low-income families and communities of color, raising serious issues of socioeconomic and racial justice. It is also destabilizing less-developed nations and causing climate migration, especially in the Western Hemisphere. The labor movement is built to confront these issues and demand equitable solutions to the problems climate change forces on working people.

The high-quality jobs held by union members across our economy in sectors producing or using fossil energy are at risk as well. Fossil-fuel production and use has not only provided the energy that made our modern economy, but also supports union jobs in a broad range of sectors—energy production, manufacturing, transportation and more.

The growing clean energy sector, driven by the dictates of its investors, in many cases does not provide the high-quality union jobs that exist in traditional energy and manufacturing industries, and it is highly reliant on imported goods. We know that true energy security means domestic production of both the fuels we need and the clean energy goods of the future. The labor movement is built to confront these issues too, and we must meet this moment by demanding that unions and workers are at the center of the clean energy economy.

The AFL-CIO commits to take the following actions:

In every forum, we will demand that clean energy technologies be mined, produced, constructed and operated under union contracts. The growth of the clean energy economy cannot provide cover for employers that want to operate nonunion, and must provide the high-quality jobs that Americans want and deserve.

We will focus on developing, demonstrating and deploying new clean energy technologies that reduce emissions in ways that preserve and grow high-quality union jobs with existing employers. Preserving existing nuclear plants while we bring new nuclear technologies to the market, increasing the production and use of hydrogen, continued use of natural gas and coal while abating emissions and leaks, and deploying carbon capture and storage in the industrial and power sectors all support union jobs.

- We will demand the development of a robust domestic clean energy goods sector, including the critical minerals and raw materials that are essential for these goods. This will require a commitment to a U.S. industrial policy, and significant changes to how trade is conducted, as called for in Resolutions 4 and 9.
- We will work with our partners in the international labor movement to make sure foreign firms in the energy and energy goods industries work with U.S. unions to facilitate union representation rather than adopting U.S.-style anti-union labor relations.
- We will engage with environmental, community, and environmental and racial justice organizations to advance equitable solutions to pollution and climate change centered on preserving and growing good union jobs for everyone.
- We will fight for long-term spending on climate adaptation and resilience, for public and private investments that protect and improve the lives of working people and modernize our energy systems. To

cope with climate change, we must upgrade our electric generation and grid, pipeline systems, water, sewage and flood control infrastructure, schools and other public buildings, our health care system, our housing stock and all forms of public transit.

- Use the long-term changes in our economy resulting from climate change to create more racial and economic justice. We will expand equitable access to good jobs by growing the labor movement and reverse the unacceptable inequality and economic discrimination in America.
- We will fight for investment in communities that have suffered from pollution and historic underinvestment,

and in communities dependent on lost or at-risk fossil-fuel employment, thereby creating jobs for the future and renewing the tax base that supports public services.

- We will ensure workers affected by changes in technology get the training they need to keep the good union job they have, and that those who lose jobs have free training that is connected to a job, appropriate and accessible. Our education system must also develop robust career and technical education programs for new and emerging climate work, and institute programs to embed climate-related topics in all subject areas.