

## Resolution 5

### **A BROAD, INCLUSIVE AND EFFECTIVE LABOR MOVEMENT**

Submitted by the Committee on Growth, Innovation and Political Action and the Executive Council

WORKERS REPRESENTED BY UNIONS are part of a broad majority of the American public who seek a better life for hardworking families.

But union members are a minority among America's workers as well as among voters in most elections, and that increasingly has been so for more than a half-century. The popular majority, of which union members are a key part, is fragmented in the face of global corporations and the 1% that controls a vast and increasing amount of wealth and threatens to seize control of our democracy.

The labor movement must be broad and inclusive. The labor movement cannot be confined within bargaining units defined by government agencies or limited to workplaces where a majority of employees votes "Yes" in the face of a ruthless campaign by their employer to deny them representation. The labor movement consists of all workers who want to take collective action to improve wages, hours and working conditions. Our unions must be open to all workers who want to join with us. The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions must continue to innovate and experiment with new forms of membership and representation to achieve the ultimate objective of assisting all workers to bargain collectively through an affiliated union.

In the last several decades, as immigrant workers have come under attack and been subject to increased exploitation, as public services have been cut and as union representation for purposes of collective bargaining has been difficult to achieve in certain sectors and locations, a diverse group of organizations has emerged to meet the urgent needs and advocate on behalf of the unrepresented, particularly low-wage and immigrant workers. The

labor movement must be open to these new forms of worker organization and advocacy and the AFL-CIO and affiliated unions will continue to work with worker centers and other advocates for workers' rights, both to ensure that minimum standards are enforced and to prevent employers from using any workers to undercut the standards we have achieved through union representation and collective bargaining. Our goal is to lift up all workers' standard of living and we can achieve it by working in solidarity.

Students have stood alongside trade unionists at the forefront of every social movement. On campuses across the country, students are organizing in support of workers around the world, from factory workers in Bangladesh to workers at Verizon and Walmart to domestic workers in our own homes. And the labor movement continues to stand with students in support of a first-class system of public education, in defense of their rights of free speech and association and in opposition to a crushing burden of debt. The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions must continue to strengthen our ties to the student movement.

For these reasons:

- The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions should expand existing forms and create new forms of membership to make membership available to any worker who wants to join the labor movement and who is not already covered by a collective bargaining agreement, a member of a union, represented by a union or included in an affiliated union's organizing plan. Many affiliates have created such forms of membership as part of a long-term commitment to help employees of particular private-sector employers obtain the right to bargain collectively, as well as in public-sector jurisdictions where the right to bargain collectively has not yet been

established. The AFL-CIO has created another form of membership in Working America. The AFL-CIO will continue to experiment with this form of membership in close cooperation with affiliates and without undermining affiliates' current collective bargaining relationships or organizing plans and with the ultimate objective of enabling workers to obtain representation for purposes of collective bargaining through an affiliated union.

The AFL-CIO hereby invites every worker in the United States to join the labor movement either through an affiliate or through Working America.

To make these new, expanded and open forms of membership meaningful, democratic and self-sustaining, the AFL-CIO, affiliates and Working America shall:

- o Develop forms of workplace representation and advocacy that can benefit members outside collective bargaining by educating them about their workplace rights, providing assistance when their rights are violated, and encouraging concerted action to redress workplace problems and by other lawful means.
- o Seek to extend non-collectively bargained benefits to those members who are not represented for purposes of collective bargaining in cooperation with Union Privilege.
- o Provide members with education, training and leadership development opportunities.
- o Mobilize these new members in electoral and other political efforts and in support of organizing drives and collective bargaining campaigns.

Working America is authorized, in consultation with the president of the AFL-CIO and subject to approval by the Executive Council, to (1) develop forms of workplace representation and advocacy, in collaboration with affiliated unions, that can benefit members outside of collective bargaining (as explained above); (2) adopt a dues structure or structures and/or other financing mechanisms that

make this new form of membership self-sustaining, in keeping with the AFL-CIO's historic status as a fully independent trade union movement; and (3) to create a student membership. The president of the AFL-CIO is authorized, subject to approval by the Executive Council, to specify criteria under which Working America members who are not represented for purposes of collective bargaining but for whom Working America pays regular per capita to the AFL-CIO can further participate in the governance of the AFL-CIO, in keeping with the AFL-CIO's status as a democratic trade union movement. The president shall also work with affiliated unions to accomplish these same objectives.

- The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions should deepen their relationship with worker centers and other emerging organizations that advocate for workers who are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement, not union members and not represented by a union in order to better further the common objective of expanding the labor movement and raising workers' standard of living.

To do so:

- o The AFL-CIO should continue and expand its partnerships with national associations of worker centers and its issuance of certificates of affiliation with state federations and central labor councils to individual worker centers under the terms of the August 9, 2006, Executive Council statement, its Worker Center Advisory Council and its work with foundations to seed union-worker center collaboration.
- o The federation is encouraged to deepen and broaden the connections and collaborations with the worker center movement and work to eliminate concerns about possible undermining of standards established by unions. If that effort leads the president of the AFL-CIO to conclude that a form of local, state or national affiliation not authorized by the policies adopted in 2006 by the Executive Council would be mutually beneficial, supporting and advancing organizing and collective bargaining while also lifting up

unrepresented workers, and would further the goal of broadening the labor movement and thereby raising workers' living standards, the president shall, after considering the views of national union affiliates in the sector(s) most affected, and providing all other national union affiliates notice and an opportunity to object, propose the affiliation to the Executive Council for review and approval.

- o The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions should lend their expertise to worker centers as they address the critical issues of economic sustainability and worker participation in the worker centers' own governance.
- o The AFL-CIO, in cooperation with worker centers and national associations of worker centers, should expand and update existing research describing in detail the operation of worker centers and documenting examples of union-worker center collaboration.
- o The AFL-CIO, in cooperation with worker centers and national associations of worker centers operating in specific industry sectors, should work directly with the trade or industrial department of the federation in that sector and appropriate affiliates to provide opportunities for worker center members to become members of such affiliated unions.

- The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions should renew and strengthen their ties to students, recognizing that students have a vital interest in working with union members to ensure that the workplaces they are about to enter are just, fulfilling and rewarding.

To do so:

- o The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions will expand their work with existing, progressive, national, state and campus-based student organizations, including but not limited to, the United States Students Association, United Students Against Sweatshops and Student/Farmworker Alliance, and seek to develop new, more continuous and more mutually beneficial relationships with these organizations.
- o The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions, in cooperation with students and student organizations, will continue to advocate on issues of importance to students ranging from the accessibility of a college education to debt relief and free expression on campus.
- o The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions will continue to recognize that campuses are both sites of learning and worksites, and that all campus workers, from undergraduates working in the dining halls to graduate teaching and research assistants to professors, have a right to organize and engage in collective bargaining.