

Resolution 16

BUILDING ENDURING LABOR-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

THE AFL-CIO HAS AS A FOUNDING IDEAL the assembling of a broad progressive coalition for social and economic justice.

But over the past decade, broad macroeconomic transformations have put communities around the country at risk, threatening the economic security of all and accelerating deep divides and inequalities in our society. These circumstances demonstrate that the struggles of workers are inextricably interwoven with the struggles of communities.

Unions must work hand in hand with community partners and allies to reverse these economic trends and to create opportunities for all while building a robust democratic and participatory society, strong and safe neighborhoods and racial, ethnic and gender equality.

While our unions have a long history of working with communities and that tradition continues today, to achieve our ideal of social and economic justice and an enduring democracy, the relationship between the labor movement and community must have a scale, a potency and an exuberance that can successfully advance our common cause.

For community-labor collaboration to reach such range and strength, our partnerships need to be rooted, dynamic and abiding; and, we must extend the frontiers of our relationships, building upon the values we share. Thus, the AFL-CIO and our affiliates hereby commit to be better partners with community. We pledge to engage in a process of shared analysis with community partners and build programs, support broad and inclusive policies and work to strengthen our democracy based on that analysis. We pledge to work with community partners to educate ourselves and each other on the issues that impact

those whom we serve. We pledge to share power and build power together. We pledge to build invigorated organizational structures that are strong, effective, democratic and inclusive. We pledge to be innovative, energetic and committed long-term partners with community.

The AFL-CIO and our affiliates believe that when we build—together with community—this lasting, powerful movement for social and economic justice and an enduring democracy, our collective voice will be heard and our collective purposes will be achieved.

Therefore be it resolved, that the AFL-CIO and our affiliates will:

- Deepen relationships and programs with community;
- Work vigorously on the issues raised by our partners that reflect our shared values;
- Ensure that state federations and central labor councils are well situated to build enduring partnerships with community; and
- Establish ways in which the AFL-CIO can incentivize the development of shared agendas and promote best practices.

To realize these four goals, we commit ourselves to the following:

Deepen Relationships and Programs

1. We commit to being a “learning organization.”

The AFL-CIO should be, in effect, an ongoing learning organization, which shall be in constant and continuing conversation with its constituents and allies—unions, state federations, central labor councils and community partners. State federations and central labor councils should likewise be learning

organizations as they develop sustained partnerships with community allies.

2. We will establish an internship and exchange program. The AFL-CIO and our state, area and local bodies shall develop new voluntary internship and exchange programs, where practical, that are open to people of all ages from community organizations and affiliates. Such programs shall create ways for union leaders, members and staff to serve as interns at community organizations and for community leaders to serve as interns at the AFL-CIO and our state, area and local bodies. Lessons learned from this program shall be periodically shared with all AFL-CIO affiliates and participating community groups.

3. We will build a shared economic analysis and advocacy materials. The AFL-CIO shall invite community groups to construct a shared analysis of the current economic climate and to develop an economic agenda consistent with AFL-CIO policy that can be put forward in videos and other materials to influence the development of public policies and grassroots mobilizations.

4. We will hold union-community leadership institutes and joint training. Recognizing that building trust and a united approach can be facilitated by a common training experience, the AFL-CIO hosts union-community leadership institutes. The AFL-CIO will continue to hold such institutes as well as to gather best practices from joint community and labor training initiatives to share with community partners and affiliates.

5. We will recognize our brothers and sisters within the labor movement as our own community within a broader progressive convergence. The AFL-CIO and our affiliates pledge to build ongoing partnerships with our community allies on issues of mutual interest, including but not limited to the civil rights and social justice community, the religious community, the environmental community, women's rights organizations, worker centers, immigrant rights advocates, the LGBTQ community, retiree organizations and the student and young worker community. We recognize the importance of continuing to build

and grow partnerships between unions and worker centers. We also appreciate our own diversity and efforts to ensure that we reflect the broad diversity of our membership in our leaders. And we note that within our labor community, we must educate ourselves about our trade union brothers and sisters and their work and engage with each other as grassroots partners. Further, we pledge to support the AFL-CIO's young worker organization, the Union Veterans Council, and the AFL-CIO's constituency organizations as they strengthen our community partnerships and engage our union members in this process. Those constituency groups are the A. Philip Randolph Institute, the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement and Pride at Work.

6. We will create a community of union volunteers to promote and encourage the work of our members.

The AFL-CIO will create an online community of union volunteers where union members can share with other union members their experiences. Through this online community, the AFL-CIO will promote the joint identity of many union members—that of trade unionists as well as community activists. The AFL-CIO also will seek to increase opportunities for union members to be volunteers and advocates within the civic and social life of their communities and within community organizations. Further, working with our community allies, we will ensure that there are opportunities for all working people to be represented by a union and to promote collective bargaining and collective action.

Community Issues

1. We recognize that union members, as well as all workers in this country, have faced one of the worst economic downturns in a lifetime. The effects of our lagging economy continue to be felt by workers who are struggling to get back on the job but remain unemployed and underemployed in large numbers. Structural unemployment harms workers and their communities. We will work with community allies and partners on a shared agenda of full employment and good jobs for all workers.

2. We will assist in the development of joint projects and campaigns. The AFL-CIO shall assist in developing joint projects and campaigns among the AFL-CIO and our affiliates and community allies. These joint campaigns will be tailored to each locality and mutual interests will be identified through local analysis. We recognize that often the issues we will tackle may arise from specific circumstances in a community or that a matter may first be advanced by a community partner. As a guiding principle, we dedicate ourselves to joining with our partners in the fight for economic fairness and social equity for all communities and we pledge to pay special attention to efforts to address injustices, disparities and inequalities faced by specific communities or groups of people.

3. We will assist aspiring citizens. The AFL-CIO and our state, area and local bodies, working with community partners, affiliated unions and worker centers, shall develop a strategy to implement immigration reform, which will bring millions of aspiring citizens out of the shadows. The plan shall be developed cooperatively by the AFL-CIO, affiliates and organizations representing immigrant workers, and will take into consideration the labor markets in which they are likely to be employed, the needs of workers in those labor markets and the social and educational needs of the immigrant workers and their families, including affordable health care. In addition, the plan will identify opportunities for these aspiring citizens to participate in the political process and exercise workplace rights in partnership with unions, among other concerns.

4. We will work with community allies to take on issues and undertake campaigns that advance African American, Asian, Latino and other communities of color with recognition that women of color are often disproportionately impacted by these issues. The AFL-CIO shall develop programs aimed at connecting with communities of color, including joint intensive workshops with community leaders of color on issues of mutual importance such as jobs, education, health care, voting rights, a functioning immigration system and

mass incarceration, among others. The AFL-CIO recognizes that Latinos account for more than half of the nation's growth in the past decade and will require new, focused outreach. The AFL-CIO shall also develop strategic communications capacity, including culturally appropriate bilingual materials, and leadership development programs tailored to building connections to communities of color. These efforts will be locally tailored to fit the needs of local labor organizations and their respective allies.

5. We will engage young workers. We will work in conjunction with the AFL-CIO's designated youth representative and young worker organization to take on issues relevant to young workers and coordinate that work with community groups and allies that have youth groups that are working on shared issues and priorities.

Role of State Federations and Central Labor Councils

1. We will expand the union-community leadership institutes and other forms of joint training and hold them at a grassroots level. The AFL-CIO and its affiliates shall develop training models and best practices on how to identify and map community stakeholders, develop engagement processes, foster deep partnerships and plan and execute mutually designed and implemented campaigns and build effective political programs.

2. We will ensure state federations and central labor councils have support, clear direction and accountability to assist in the building of partnerships with community. The AFL-CIO Executive Council in February 2013 charged that every state federation and central labor council shall develop and implement a community outreach program. To facilitate success in these endeavors, the AFL-CIO shall task a subcommittee of the AFL-CIO State Federation and Central Labor Council Advisory Committee to help collect and circulate best practices and examples, peer coaching, provide mentoring and guidance, develop criteria for evaluating lasting and ongoing community outreach programs and provide other forms of assistance.

3. We will honor the uniqueness of every community and every community group. Recognizing that state federations and central labor councils are established in states and local communities, we acknowledge that there is no “one size fits all” approach. Rather, we celebrate the multitude of ways we can arrive at our shared goal with community of social and economic justice and an enduring democracy.

Incentivizing this Work

To ensure that labor-community partnerships are enduring and not merely transactional, the AFL-CIO, together with affiliated unions, shall energetically work toward proper funding so that those partnerships are properly resourced and that they are structured in a way that advances these goals. The committee recognizes that a changed emphasis for the AFL-CIO on community partnerships will require that current federation work and resources be prioritized to reflect and address this change. While the determination of the budget is the responsibility of the Executive Council and affiliate unions, the committee recommends that within the federation’s budget, the AFL-CIO will allocate appropriate resources, as determined by the officers and the Executive Council, to support these labor-community partnership efforts. Acknowledging the process for resource allocation, we have proposed a number of recommendations, including but not limited to:

1. The AFL-CIO shall establish a labor-philanthropy fund, modeled on the Labor Innovation Fund for the Twenty-First Century (LIFT) Fund, to support labor-community collaborations. The president

of the AFL-CIO is authorized, subject to rules adopted by the Executive Council, to establish the fund so that it does not compete with other labor-philanthropic partnerships and to identify the kinds of collaborations for funding, which may include organizing and issue campaigns, policy fights, joint training and leadership development and combined communications programs, among other activities.

2. The president of the AFL-CIO is authorized, subject to rules adopted by the Executive Council, to establish a mechanism to pool union contributions of those organizations that choose to participate and guide those contributions in a manner that supports emerging and established labor-community partnerships.

3. The president of the AFL-CIO is authorized, subject to rules adopted by the Executive Council, to establish a mechanism to guide contributions of those organizations that choose to participate through the United Way partnership and other programs to community-based organizations that are partners in the struggle for social and economic justice and an enduring democracy.

4. The AFL-CIO president, as part of the federation’s overall strategic priorities, shall direct that a significant percentage of Solidarity Grants be used to provide grants to central labor councils and/or state federations based on well-designed grant proposals that include matching funds from philanthropy and/or unions to resource collaborations among unions and community-based organizations.