

## Resolution 19

### INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE: YOUNG WORKERS AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

AT THE 2009 AFL-CIO CONVENTION, delegates unanimously passed Resolution 55, “In Support of AFL-CIO Programs for Young Workers.” The resolution was a bold statement that the continued strength and vitality of the labor movement depends heavily on the ability of younger union members to develop into strong and effective labor leaders. The resolution expressed that a powerful labor movement can be built only through recognition and inclusion of the full diversity of the labor force, including workers of all ages. The resolution called for the AFL-CIO to actively develop initiatives and programs aimed at bringing young workers into the labor movement at the national, state and local levels, and dedicate resources to the leadership development of younger union members throughout the country.

The AFL-CIO used Resolution 55 to bring together a diverse group of young union members and activists to help lead this effort. The AFL-CIO’s Next Up program and its Young Workers Advisory Council have been the driving force behind Resolution 55, advancing leadership training, policy development and facilitating a network of young workers groups across the country that provide a place and a voice to young workers to deliver on the goals of advancing social and economic justice.

Resolution 55 resulted in dozens of startup young worker groups across the country; two successful national summits that attracted and engaged hundreds of the most committed young workers, activists and community partners; a Young Worker Leadership Institute that developed deeper skills for young workers to build capacity and run programs in their communities; and an electoral program that reached out to young workers as part of the Labor 2012 Political Program. These young worker groups

have worked political programs, participated in direct actions, won legislative victories and begun the important work of establishing mentorship and development programs for a whole new generation of labor leaders. The AFL-CIO must take this opportunity to support their continued growth as they seek to further engage young workers in the efforts to rebuild the labor movement.

Given the dismal state of the economy and the outsized impact it has on young workers, the AFL-CIO must build on the foundation laid by Resolution 55 and commit to an even more robust young worker initiative. Indeed, as union membership among young people continues to decline, it is of paramount importance to the future of the labor movement that young workers receive support in their efforts to organize and build partnerships to address their unique generational concerns. Therefore, the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions must recognize and support youth-oriented strategic initiatives and partnerships developed nationally, in workplaces, on campuses and in concert with a broad array of like-minded student, youth, advocacy and community organizations to help expand and strengthen the labor movement and build a just economy for all generations.

We therefore commit to:

- Recognize that today’s young workers are part of the largest generation to enter the workforce since the baby boomers, that people born between the late 1970s and today also make up the most diverse and technologically savvy generation in America’s history; however, young workers suffer the nation’s highest unemployment, and have the fewest job opportunities in today’s economy. This generation of young workers is active, engaged and ready to reverse economic and

social injustice. The continued strength and energy of the labor movement depends deeply on the ability of younger union members to develop into effective labor leaders. A powerful, innovative and global labor movement can be built only through recognition and presence of the full diversity of the workforce, including workers of all ages.

- Recognize that the Young Worker Program will lead a diverse and vibrant young labor movement made up of rank-and-file union members, progressive allies, community groups and students that will advance social and economic justice and ensure that all people have the opportunity to secure a better future.
- Recognize the importance of building young worker programs and policy at all levels of the federation, including national, state and local initiatives.
- Recognize the Young Worker Advisory Council as the “Young Worker Organization” of the AFL-CIO; and that the mission of the Young Worker Organization, as recognized by the AFL-CIO, shall

*be to empower the next generation of labor leaders to challenge, inspire, build and organize around issues that directly affect their generation.*

Therefore, be it resolved that the Young Worker Organization shall be the representative of all young workers on the General Board and shall be charged with advising the Executive Council on the education, empowerment, organizing and mobilization of the next generation of union members and young workers. In consultation with affiliate unions, the Young Worker Organization will develop a new process for electing young workers to the Young Worker Organization by February 2014, prior to assuming a seat on the General Board.

And, be it also resolved that the Young Worker Advisory Council will partner with the AFL-CIO State Federation and CLC Advisory Committee to fold young worker development into state federation and CLC strategic plans, with the goal of tripling the number of local young worker organizations over the next four years.