

Resolution 4

ASSISTING IMMIGRANT WORKERS TO BECOME CITIZENS AND EXERCISE THEIR WORKPLACE RIGHTS

EVERY DAY, more than 11 million aspiring citizens contribute to our communities, our economy and our country—yet they are effectively not covered by our fundamental labor law and are denied essential rights in our society.

A strong and vibrant democracy cannot function unless all men and women living and working within its borders, regardless of their skin color or their place of birth, can participate meaningfully in the political process with full rights and equal protections.

The union movement recognizes that the way we treat aspiring citizens reflects our commitment to democracy and the values that define us.

Working people are strongest when no group of workers is exploited, and the union movement is strongest when it is open to all workers regardless of where they were born.

Comprehensive immigration reform will contribute to shared prosperity and will help improve productivity and quality; limit wage competition; strengthen labor standards, especially the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively; and provide social safety nets and high-quality, lifelong education and training for workers and their families. To achieve this goal, immigration reform must fully protect U.S. workers, reduce the exploitation of immigrant workers and reduce employers' incentive to hire undocumented workers rather than U.S. workers. The most effective way to do that is for all workers—immigrant and native-born—to have full and complete access to the protection of labor, health and safety and other laws. This approach will ensure that immigration does not depress wages and working conditions or encourage marginal low-wage industries that depend heavily on substandard wages, benefits and working conditions.

The labor movement remains unified in support of a framework for immigration reform developed with the assistance of former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall, which has five major interconnected pieces: (1) An independent governmental body to assess and manage future flows, based on labor market shortages that are determined on the basis of actual need; (2) A secure and effective worker authorization mechanism; (3) Rational operational control of the border; (4) A road map to citizenship for the current undocumented population; and (5) Improvement, not expansion, of temporary worker programs, limited to temporary or seasonal, not permanent, jobs. America's unions remain committed to working together on the side of justice for all, along with our community partners and civil rights, human rights, immigrant rights and faith-based organizations, to pass fundamental immigration reform that encompasses these principles and strengthens our democracy.

The federation, its state, area and local bodies and its affiliates are working and will continue to work side by side with immigrant workers, their families, our allies and community partners to pass comprehensive immigration reform consistent with that framework and to implement its provisions. We will continue to play a leading role in the movement for reform that is backed by the majority of the public. Our strategy shall take into consideration the labor markets in which these aspiring citizens are likely to be employed and the needs of workers in those labor markets, as well as the social and educational needs of aspiring citizens and their families, including affordable health care. We will identify new opportunities for aspiring citizens to participate in the political process in partnership with unions and to exercise their workplace rights.

Specifically, the AFL-CIO will promote organizing of immigrant workers who seek to have union representation at their workplace. Through the Organizing Institute, the AFL-CIO will work with affiliate unions to recruit and train organizers from the immigrant community and organizers with the necessary language skills to assist workers in communities with many monolingual workers. The AFL-CIO will coordinate its training and outreach initiatives with affiliates, focusing on areas and industries in which affiliates are actively organizing.

Further, the AFL-CIO will partner with allies to provide citizenship and workers' rights instruction and general assistance with processing applications for work

authorization and naturalization. The AFL-CIO will open up its state federation and central labor council halls and urge affiliate unions and their locals to open their halls for citizenship and workers' rights classes in partnership with allies or, where appropriate, as a labor movement initiative. The AFL-CIO will work with Union Privilege to assist with outreach to the immigrant community and engage in other experimental initiatives, including providing low-interest loans for application and processing fees. Finally, the AFL-CIO will identify key states and mount citizenship, voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts that will change the political environment for labor and enhance workers' ability to organize.