

Resolution 7

THE CONVERSATION ABOUT ECONOMICS WE NEED TO HAVE

THE ECONOMY IS NOT THE WEATHER. It does not just happen to us. The economy is all about the wealth we create every day at work. Without our labor, there is no economy.

But while we do the work, we do not control the economy we create. For a generation, the wealthiest among us, organized through the corporations they control and the government they influence, have rewritten the rules of the global economy so that they take a larger and larger share of the wealth we create.

And as they are busy changing the rules to benefit themselves, the 1% have told us for a generation that this fundamentally unfair economic order is the only way we can create wealth. Corporate-dominated media continues to tell this story even as it becomes clearer and clearer that the 1% have built an economy that does not work even on its own terms.

It's time for a different conversation. A conversation about how the global economy really works, about how political and economic power shapes economic reality, about what has gone wrong in the global economy in the last generation, and what we can do here in America to set our country and the world on the path to shared, sustainable prosperity.

It's time for a conversation about how, together, workers can build countervailing economic and political power, through creating strong, democratic, independent labor movements and by developing economic strength through collective bargaining.

This is a conversation we have to have together—in our workplaces, in our union halls, online and in our homes. It's a conversation we need to have not just with our fellow union members, but with our allies,

with economists and journalists, and with elected officials. But it's a conversation that can't get started unless we start it in the labor movement.

The AFL-CIO will, in the weeks and months to come, develop a comprehensive economics education program—Common Sense Economics. This program will provide educational tools so that we can educate each other, so that we can spark conversations that are informed by serious economic thinking, not by the failed dogmas of neoliberalism, or the self-interested lies of the billionaires that control so much of the economic conversation of America's TV talk shows.

Our goal is a curriculum that can be taught by workers to workers and that can be taught both online through social media and in person. The curriculum will use economic analysis, narrative teaching tools and participatory exercises to bring to life the economic history of the last 30 years and the economic challenges faced by workers in our country and around the world.

The initial modules of Common Sense Economics will address issues such as Why America Needs Rising Wages (tentative title), the Economic Impact of Immigration Reform and the Role of Corporations in the Global Economy. In the weeks and months to come, we will develop a comprehensive curriculum that addresses how our economy came to be in crisis—looking at the attack on workers' rights and collective bargaining and on the public sector, the hollowing out of American industry, the destruction of the progressive tax system, the rise of Wall Street and the attack on full employment.

But Common Sense Economics will be about more than an analysis of what went wrong. We will draw

on Yale Prof. Jacob Hacker’s work on Prosperity Economics to develop a curriculum designed to spark conversations about how to build an economy based on shared prosperity. The curriculum will look at how to build an economy based on full employment, economic security and democracy—and the critical role played by an organized workforce in achieving these goals.

Action Items:

1. Develop, in conjunction with community allies, a comprehensive Common Sense Economics curriculum, in the form of modules that make economics accessible and encourage conversations about the direction of our country.
2. Share the curriculum at every level of the labor movement and with allies.
3. Conduct train-the-trainer sessions for local union leaders and community partners so that they can lead conversations about how we can build sustainable, shared prosperity.