

## Resolution 3

# EXERCISING OUR CIVIC RIGHTS TO REBUILD OUR DEMOCRACY, EXPAND WORKERS' RIGHTS AND STRENGTHEN WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS

SINCE THE AFL-CIO'S LAST CONVENTION in 2009, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Koch brothers, their political allies and other corporate special interests have waged a full-scale, multibillion-dollar war on workers' democratic rights. Corporate-backed state governments have revoked public employees' collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin, have passed so-called "right to work" laws to reduce workers' bargaining power in Michigan and Indiana and have erected new obstacles to voting and political participation in no less than 24 states. Nationally, corporations direct their political allies to use the antiquated and undemocratic rules of the U.S. Senate to block votes and even debate on progressive legislation. Now more than ever, it is crucial for workers to hold Democratic and Republican politicians accountable when they back the corporate agenda. And now more than ever, it is crucial that our political action maximize the potential for workers to organize and bargain collectively.

Therefore, to promote vibrant organizations of working people and realize workers' rights and aspirations, the AFL-CIO supports reforms of our democracy that include voting rights, Senate rules reforms and campaign finance reform. Specifically, the federation will continue to support the Democracy Initiative and provide regular education on the attack on our democracy and encourage central labor councils and state federations to support the Democracy Initiative work in coalition with our allies. In addition, the federation will continue and expand its work, together with our allies, to achieve the goal of universal voter registration so every eligible voter is registered to vote and carries his or her registration with him or her. We will work through our state

organizations and our allies to enact state legislation to expand registration and voting opportunities, including Election Day registration, expanded early voting, vote by mail, online registration and other such reforms. We will actively support measures to restore voting rights to ex-offenders. We will vigorously oppose voter suppression legislation such as strict photo ID laws, proof of citizenship requirements and cutbacks on early voting. We will actively support legislation to overturn the devastating Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, which gutted the Voting Rights Act at a time when it is needed more than ever to protect the right to vote. We will work with our allies on a voter protection program at election time to ensure that the electorate is informed about its rights and the right to vote is protected. Finally, the federation will continue to push for rules reforms leading to a functioning Senate.

The federation will ask all state federations, local labor councils and affiliates to add the following to their candidate questionnaires:

- "Do you support universal registration, including eliminating all barriers to registration until universal registration is achieved?"
- "Will you oppose any obstacle to voting and support promotion of greater voter participation, including early voting? And will you support the right to vote regardless of economic condition or race?"

The federation and workers must hold the political parties accountable. We must promote pro-worker candidates in primaries to hold Democrats and Republicans accountable for their votes and to elect

more progressive officials, which includes training, developing and assisting pro-worker candidates, especially union members. We must also promote the formation and strengthening of pro-worker progressive caucuses in national and state legislative bodies and political party organizations. We must commit greater affiliate resources to Workers' Voice, which will build our independent capacity and our ability to hold officials accountable once they are elected. Finally, we must demonstrate that we are not a one-party organization and will support Independent and Republican legislators if they consistently stand with workers against the corporate agenda, and we will work to defeat Democrats who betray workers.

Further, we should increase the federation's emphasis on state and local races. Especially with gridlock in Washington, policies undertaken by states and cities currently have the greatest impact on workers' fortunes—for better and for worse. Moreover, such efforts will strengthen local organizing.

Finally, we must more directly and consistently link politics to workers' ability to organize and bargain collectively through greater alignment of political and organizing campaigns at the national, state and local levels, and through the execution of the foregoing recommendations.