

RESOLUTION 10

ENCOURAGING UNION MEMBERS TO RUN FOR LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICE

Local governments have a tremendous influence over the lives of working people. They directly oversee the delivery of public services, the education of our children, and the first responders who diligently work to keep us safe. Local governments also enact policies fostering the procurement of American- and union-made goods and services, which drive our local economies and produce quality manufacturing jobs. Local officials also must ensure we properly invest in such vital infrastructure as water and sewer systems, and mass transit and highway projects. These officials have the ability to enact responsible contractor policies and project labor agreements to ensure they hire the most highly skilled workers.

Through legislative action, issuing statements or passing resolutions, local leaders can directly impact working people's ability and choice to form unions.

In addition, local government is a significant source of state and national leaders. Some 39% of all current state legislators began their public service as a local elected or appointed official.

In recent years, state legislatures have significantly weakened working people's freedom to prosper. Since 2009, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, West Virginia and Wisconsin have enacted "right to work" laws, crippling people's ability to secure fair, equitable treatment at work. In many states, the freedom to negotiate over working conditions has been taken from public employees. State voter suppression and pre-emption laws also have silenced the voice of working people, robbing them of their democratic rights.

State federations and local unions have been fighting back, working hard to shift the balance of power for working people. In New Jersey alone, through long-term, deliberate effort by the state federation and affiliates, 919 union members have been elected to public office over the last 20 years.

In acknowledging the influence of state and local government, the 2013 AFL-CIO Convention passed Resolution 3, pledging to "increase the federation's emphasis on state and local races," because "policies undertaken by states and cities currently have the greatest impact on workers' fortunes."

To fulfill this resolution, the AFL-CIO began work with several state federations and affiliates to identify, recruit and elect pro-labor candidates to local public office. Over the last four years, these specific efforts have supported candidates in seven states, and helped elected union members mayor in Boston and Philadelphia, as well as school board members, city councilors and county commissioners across the country.

With an urgent need to expand these efforts, we hereby resolve to strengthen the independent political voice for labor in local government by identifying and recruiting new candidates for local office, ensuring the candidates we recruit and endorse reflect the diversity of our labor movement. These labor candidates will champion pro-labor values and campaign aggressively and in partnership with labor.

We further pledge that national and local unions, along with the AFL-CIO, will work with state federations and area and central labor councils to collect and maintain data on union members holding public office.

Finally, we pledge that the AFL-CIO will work with state federations to develop state-level labor candidate programs. State federations and area and central labor councils will work in partnership to train and prepare qualified candidates to run for office, support these candidates with a robust member-to-member voter mobilization program, help these candidates resource and implement their campaigns, and provide strong policy grounding for governance through the use of Common Sense Economics and other means.