

RESOLUTION 12

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The rules of today's economy are rigged against working families, and the broken immigration system is one of the many forces making it harder for working people to get ahead. Meaningful immigration reform is an essential part of the larger structural change needed to create an economy that respects and protects working people, and favors democracy in the workplace and in the community. While we continue the long-term struggle for those much-needed reforms, the AFL-CIO will defend and support working families however we can, including through a robust naturalization program.

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

As attacks on unions and working people escalate, so too does the importance of this work. The ultimate success of our efforts to grow the labor movement and rewrite the rules of the economy depends on our ability to help the most vulnerable men and women in our workforce realize and expand their rights.

Like it was for generations of immigrants before, the labor movement is the natural home for new immigrants struggling to achieve economic security and win social justice. We will fight with and for immigrant working people, whatever their status. If they are legal permanent residents, we will help them apply for citizenship. If they are eligible for relief through programs such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status, we will push to defend and extend those essential protections. And if they are among the 11 million undocumented brothers and sisters, we will offer mutual aid and defense, and remain steadfast in our efforts to pass comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway to citizenship.

The labor movement will not waver in the fight for a different kind of immigration system—one that reflects our unified framework for reform and will help to lift labor standards, build a stronger economic future for our nation, and support the basic civil and human rights and dignity of all working people.

Given the political climate in Washington, it is clear we need to shift the balance of power now. As one of the key strategies to achieving our long-term policy and organizing objectives, the AFL-CIO rededicates itself to a concerted citizenship drive. Encouraging naturalization for the 9 million people who currently are eligible will provide concrete worker protections, expand and diversify the electorate, and help us build power to win the sweeping changes that working people expect and deserve. We commend the unions and labor councils around the country that have pioneered important models of citizenship and immigration preparedness programs, and resolve to:

- Equip state federations, central labor councils and unions with the tools, materials and support necessary to conduct citizenship clinics, know-your-rights trainings, and workplace raids and audits rapid response trainings for their members and prospective members;
- Facilitate sharing of models and best practices among labor councils and affiliates that have built successful union-led citizenship programs;
- Develop a cohort of labor and community activists trained to process citizenship applications, and facilitate trainings and clinics;
- Strengthen collaboration with worker centers, churches, and immigrant advocacy and service organizations to help conduct trainings and citizenship clinics;
- Mobilize our network of 140 Community Services Liaisons in collaboration with United Way to support naturalization efforts;

- Use Common Sense Economics to educate working-class families on how labor's immigration policies and expanding citizenship will help raise standards for all working people;
- Share sample collective bargaining language that protects immigrant worker rights and promotes employer support for naturalization efforts;
- Work with DACA youth to help advance a next generation of immigrant worker leaders;
- Highlight and expand Union Plus benefits of particular interest to immigrant members;
- Promote programs linking citizenship and immigrant worker rights outreach and education with apprenticeships and real-world training for union organizers; and
- Identify strategic geographic targets for concerted efforts to mount union-led citizenship, voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts that will change the political environment for labor and enhance workers' ability to organize.