

RESOLUTION 55

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND UNION JOBS

WHEREAS, the overwhelming scientific consensus is that climate warming trends over the past century are due to human activities, and the world's leading science organizations have issued public statements endorsing these findings; and

WHEREAS, we are already experiencing the highest average global temperatures in recorded history, and current global emissions trends will dramatically increase atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gasses and accelerate changes in our climate; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded with a high degree of certainty that higher global temperatures will trigger irreversible changes in our climate, causing a rise in sea levels and storm surges, an increase in droughts and extreme weather events, a substantial threat of increased extinctions, decreased food security in some regions, and an increase in heat-induced health problems; and

WHEREAS, workers, communities of color and low-income Americans suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation and climate change through polluted air, water and land, and from drought and extreme weather events; and

WHEREAS, religious leaders, including Pope Francis in the encyclical "Laudato Si," have stated the moral imperative to address both climate change and poverty; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has modeled technology pathways that can prevent the most catastrophic levels of global warming, and determined that the least expensive pathways with the highest probability of success require increased deployment of renewable energy, carbon capture and storage, and nuclear power, as well as significant efficiency increases in transportation, buildings and industry; and

WHEREAS, millions of good jobs can be created by raising labor standards and organizing in the energy efficiency and renewable energy sectors, which often fail to provide family-supporting employment, by domestic production and commercial application of advanced energy systems and decreasing our reliance on imported clean-energy goods, and by understanding that the battle to combat climate change cannot be waged on a project-by-project basis; and

WHEREAS, tens of thousands of members of affiliate unions are employed in industries that rely on the production, transportation or use of fossil fuels, or live in regions of the nation where fossil fuel production, transportation or use is the primary economic driver in their communities; and

WHEREAS, just as every other worker, those workers and their communities have a right to a strong, viable economic future, which includes good jobs at union wages and benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Paris Agreement is a historic achievement of international cooperation, which binds nations together to fight climate change while respecting national sovereignty and self-determination, and commits wealthy nations to assist less-developed nations in reducing emissions and adapting to climate change; and

WHEREAS, the Paris Agreement commits parties to take into account the imperative of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs when addressing climate change; and

WHEREAS, the fastest and most equitable way to address climate change is for labor to be at the center of creating solutions that reduce emissions while investing in our communities, maintaining and creating high-wage union jobs, and reducing poverty;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO will fight politically and legislatively to secure and maintain employment, pensions and health care for workers affected by changes in the energy market; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO supports incentives and robust funding for research programs to bring new energy technologies to market, including renewables, carbon capture and advanced nuclear technologies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO will support the passage of key energy and environmental policies with a focus on ensuring high labor standards, the creation of union jobs and environmental sustainability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO will continue to urge the United States to remain in the Paris Agreement and to work to ensure that all nations make progress on emissions reductions; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO believes that the United States Congress should enact comprehensive energy and climate legislation that creates good jobs and addresses the threat of climate change.