



## 30TH AFL-CIO CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

# DIVERSITY AT THE 2026 AFL-CIO CONVENTION

The following information is based on the AFL-CIO Constitution and the Credentials Committee Rules from the 2022 AFL-CIO Convention.

Delegates to the 2005 AFL-CIO Convention enthusiastically approved a constitutional amendment providing that, beginning with the 2009 convention, each national or international union delegation to the AFL-CIO Convention “shall generally reflect the racial and gender diversity of its membership,” Article IV, Section 4(a). This amendment formed part of a broader reform package intended to strengthen the labor movement by encouraging fuller participation of women and people of color in the federation’s programs and governance structures. Pursuant to Resolution 7, A Diverse and Democratic Labor Movement, adopted by delegates at the 2009 convention, state, area and local central bodies that send both a regular and an alternative delegate to the convention must ensure that at least one of those delegates is a woman or person of color, unless the sending body demonstrates that doing so is not possible given its membership composition. These measures reflect our commitment to inclusive democratic governance, ensuring that the voices of all working people are heard and that our leadership broadly mirrors the membership we serve.

Implementation of the amendment in 2009, 2013, 2017 and 2022 went smoothly and was a success. Affiliates have taken this amendment seriously, and the convention delegates have been more reflective of the diversity of the labor movement as a result.

As we head into the 2026 convention, this fact sheet provides background information on the implementation of the diversity requirement so that affiliated unions and state, area, and local central bodies can take the necessary steps to comply.

The AFL-CIO is committed to helping its affiliates comply with the delegate diversity requirement. Please contact Raven Hall (RHall@afcio.org or 202-637-5149) if your union would like assistance in determining the diversity of your membership or would like a preliminary review of your delegation’s compliance with the diversity requirement by the Credentials Committee as described further below.

## What is the diversity requirement?

Article IV, Section 4(a) of the AFL-CIO Constitution now requires that each national and international union delegation to the AFL-CIO Convention “shall generally reflect the racial and gender diversity of its membership.”

## How and when will our union know how many delegates it can have at the 2026 convention?

A union’s delegate allotment depends on the size of its membership, and is based on a sliding scale set forth in Article IV, Section 4(a) of the AFL-CIO Constitution. Membership is based on per capita tax paid to the AFL-CIO for the 24-month period preceding the convention. At least 60 days prior to every convention (i.e., by April 7, 2026), the AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer notifies each affiliated union of the number of delegates to which the union is entitled.

**How can our union know the gender and racial makeup of its membership in order to have our delegation “generally reflect” the diversity of our membership?**

Unions have gathered this information in various ways. Some have conducted surveys or polling to determine the racial and gender composition of their membership. Others may be able to get information from employers with whom they have a collective bargaining relationship because employers are required to collect workforce data on race and gender pursuant to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rules. The AFL-CIO’s voter file database, which contains some demographic information, is another possible source of information for affiliates.

The constitutional requirement does not require any union to follow a particular approach in obtaining this information. However, each affiliate will need to take reasonable steps to do so.

Affiliates that do not presently have information on the gender and racial makeup of their union need to take steps to obtain this information—through a membership survey, polling, the voter file database, or some other means—so they can plan for and meet the constitutional requirement.

**How is our union supposed to determine exactly how many delegates need to be of a particular gender or race/ethnicity? If our union gets 10 delegates and our membership is 65% female and 25% Black, how can we satisfy the constitutional requirement?**

The AFL-CIO Constitution requires a union’s delegation to “generally reflect” the racial and gender diversity of its membership. The goal of this language is to promote greater diversity in each union’s delegation, and across the AFL-CIO Convention as a whole. The language does not require strict proportionality, but unions need to undertake their best efforts to ensure their delegation is generally representative of the gender and racial diversity of their membership.

So, in the example provided in the previous question, a union would be expected to make every effort to ensure that of the union’s 10 delegates, six or seven are female and two or three are Black.

**If our union’s membership is overwhelmingly white and male, does our union need to recruit new female and minority members in order to comply with the diversity requirement?**

No. The diversity requirement is based on a union’s existing membership. It does not require any affiliate to recruit new members.

**Our union’s constitution has language specifying how our delegates to the AFL-CIO Convention are selected. What if this language results in a delegation that does not reflect the diversity of our union?**

Affiliates have many different ways of selecting their delegates to the AFL-CIO Convention. Delegate selection may be by appointment, by constitution or by some other practice. The AFL-CIO does not require unions to follow any particular method for delegate selection. However, the diversity amendment obligates each affiliate to make every effort to ensure that its delegation to the 2026 AFL-CIO Convention generally reflects the gender and racial diversity of its membership. Affiliates should address any issues presented by their constitutions, existing policies or practices in order to be able to meet the AFL-CIO’s diversity requirement. Unions whose constitutions specify either the union’s delegation or the method for selecting their delegation should amend the language in their constitutions at their next earliest opportunity in order to be able to meet the AFL-CIO’s diversity requirement. This could mean deleting existing language or adding language giving the union’s president the flexibility to modify the union’s delegation in order to meet the AFL-CIO’s diversity requirement.

## **How will this new requirement be enforced?**

- Reminders will be sent to all unions in early March that their delegations must generally reflect the racial and gender diversity of their membership.
- When the AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer sends credential certification forms to each affiliated union 60 or more days prior to the 2026 convention, the secretary-treasurer will again remind unions of the racial and gender diversity requirement.
- The secretary-treasurer will ask each union to certify that its delegation meets the constitutional diversity requirement, along with a brief statement about the basis for the certification (e.g., membership survey, voter file data). Completed certification forms must be submitted online to the AFL-CIO by May 17, 2026, unless a union appoints delegates at its own convention held in the 30 days prior to the AFL-CIO Convention.
- This information will be provided to the Credentials Committee for review.
- If a delegate contests a union's delegation on grounds that a union's delegation allegedly does not meet the constitutional diversity requirement, the Credentials Committee will investigate and rule on the challenge. The ruling will be reflected in the Credentials Committee's report to the convention.

## **Who may contest a union's delegation?**

Any delegate may contest any union's delegation on grounds it does not meet the constitutional diversity requirement. This is consistent with the ordinary convention rules under which any seated delegate may challenge the report of the Credentials Committee when it is brought before the convention. Any challenge would need to be substantiated with evidence, which the Credentials Committee will consider in evaluating the challenge.

## **What criteria will the Credentials Committee use in reviewing contests?**

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler will ask the Credentials Committee to consider the following factors when reviewing challenges to a union's delegation:

- First, the 2005 convention was unequivocal in stating that diversity is a major goal for future conventions, so this requirement must be taken seriously and given meaning.
- Second, the AFL-CIO Convention is the federation's highest governing body, and inclusion is the goal. The AFL-CIO wants union delegations to be representative of their membership and wants its affiliated unions to be represented at the convention.
- Third, the constitutional language does not require mathematical precision or strict proportionality. It says that delegations must "generally reflect" the membership of the union, allowing for some flexibility in the application of the requirement. The Credentials Committee should determine whether a union used its best efforts to meet the diversity requirement.

## **What is the consequence of noncompliance?**

The Credentials Committee will determine whether a union needs to adjust its delegation in order to be found in compliance with the constitutional requirement and be seated at the convention. If a union's delegation is found in noncompliance, the Credentials Committee may decide that the delegation, as presented, should not be seated. This ruling would be included in the Credentials Committee report to the convention and would be subject to appeal on the floor of the convention. The convention is the final decision-maker on these issues.

## **Is there any way for our union to know in advance of the convention whether our delegation satisfies the diversity requirement?**

Unions have the opportunity to request a preliminary review from the Credentials Committee on whether there are likely compliance issues with a union's proposed delegation, which will give affiliates time to make adjustments prior to the convention. The preliminary review is not determinative—an affiliate's delegation is still subject to challenge by a delegate, and the Credentials Committee's determination is still subject to the approval of the convention as a whole.