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## **Building and Leading a 21st-Century Labor Movement**

*Building Union Cities*

*Shaping a New Alliance*

*Developing Leadership for the 21st Century*

*Union Cities Recognized by This Convention*

**I**f the union movement is to reach our goal of providing a strong voice for working families, it will require more than national strategies. It will require new strength, effectiveness and leadership closest to where working women and men live and work—at the state and local levels.

Every day, decisions are made locally that shape each aspect of working families' lives—what sort of jobs they work at, homes and neighborhoods they live in, schools their children attend and more. It is at the local level that the seedbed for our movement grows activism and leadership, where workers come together to form their unions with the support of their neighbors, where working families have the most direct influence on political leadership and where workers and their families watch and form their opinions about unions.

Building power for working families will require building a 21st century labor movement in every city and every state.

In 1997, the unions of the AFL-CIO joined with central labor councils in launching the Union Cities initiative to strengthen local unions and the union movement community by community. The goal: building stronger local labor movements that make cities better places for working families to live and work—cities that reflect our values, where working people are respected, have a real voice and are rewarded for the work they do. And today, 163 local labor councils in 43 states are taking or beginning to take seven key steps toward making their communities Union Cities.

Then, in 1998 and 1999, AFL-CIO Executive Council members traveled across the country, listening to union leaders in a variety of forums—from conferences to small-group discussions—exploring what it takes to build an effective union movement. Together, they developed the New Alliance strategy to restructure state federations and central labor councils, with a focus on defining the roles of each union organization, planning and budgeting aimed

at meeting specific goals, boosting technology and increasing participation of unions and members. In 1999, delegates to the AFL-CIO Convention approved the initiative. Today, New Alliance plans have been developed and endorsed in three states.

Across America, state and local labor movements are beginning to become stronger, more vibrant, more active—and more successful. The results are organizing, bargaining and political victories; living wage and labor peace ordinances; and more.

The union movement's commitment to strengthening state and local labor councils through the Union Cities and New Alliance programs is paying dividends.

And to give these new and strengthened structures the people-power they need now and into the future, unions at every level are placing new importance on developing strong and effective leadership.

## **Building Union Cities**

From long experience working for working families, affiliate union leaders and their counterparts in states and communities have identified key stepping-stones to success in communities. These have become the seven steps on the road to Union Cities:

- Increasing activism and developing Street Heat member mobilization, bringing together mass numbers of members across union lines in support of workers' struggles and in support of one another's struggles.
- Forming strategic alliances with the faith community, elected officials and civil rights, immigrant rights, women's and environmental organizations and other community allies.
- Supporting organizing and changing the climate for organizing through the AFL-CIO's Voice@Work program to engage entire communities in workers' struggles to form unions for a better life.
- Using grassroots political activism among union members to become a vital political force.
- Leveraging this new political power to support affiliates' organizing and to win legislative victories for working families.
- Building a diverse leadership team that reflects the faces of membership.
- Developing a strong voice for working people within our organizations and through the media.

Using these keys to success, Union Cities labor councils are developing into political and economic powerhouses that deliver results. The Colorado AFL-CIO and the Denver labor council, for example, brought together 1,000 activists from 45 unions in the “Colorado Miracle”—electing worker-friendly lawmakers to thwart efforts to pass so-called “right to work” legislation—returning state senate control to friends of working families for the first time in 40 years. The Milwaukee County Labor Council’s labor peace ordinance was key to the organizing victory among 600 home health care workers. More than 2,000 workers have won their unions at San Francisco International Airport, in part because of the political strength of the San Francisco and San Mateo labor councils. Living wage ordinances pushed by labor and community alliances have been adopted in cities such as Missoula, Mont., and Pittsburgh. Hundreds of thousands of workers from dozens of unions across Los Angeles won stronger contracts in a countywide bargaining campaign. And Kansas City, Mo., nurses—forced by ruthless cost-cutting to supply food for patients at their own expense—got the union and community backing they needed to stand up to a multimillion-dollar corporation and win a union voice at work.

Building a Union City means working families have a stronger voice at the workplace, in their communities and in government—and that makes a Union City a better place to live and work.

Delegates to the 2001 AFL-CIO convention will recognize communities that have met Union Cities goals and acknowledge labor councils that have stepped forward to make significant progress toward implementing at least one of the key Union Cities strategies (see list at the end of this resolution). Eighty-one of the 163 labor councils on the road to Union Cities have been nominated for recognition.

Recognizing the importance to working families of strengthening our movement at the local level, the AFL-CIO and affiliate unions will build on this Convention’s recognition of Union Cities central labor councils by expanding and intensifying our support of these councils and the work they are doing to create a strong voice for working families in their communities. We will provide support to other central labor councils so they become Union Cities as well. We call for all local unions to fully affiliate with their local labor councils; as national unions, we will encourage and facilitate their affiliation. We will place a priority on implementing a comprehensive leadership development program to identify, recruit and train teams of leaders in key central labor councils. And we will use the power that already has been built to work with progressive mayors and other local elected leaders to build support for workers fighting to form unions. Together we will reshape our towns and cities to reflect working family values and reward our contributions.

## **Shaping a New Alliance**

Like Union Cities, the purpose of the New Alliance program is to create cultural and structural changes in the way we do business. New Alliance strategy includes:

- Developing a state- and community-based strategy for the entire labor movement in a state. Unifying the union movement in a state around the implementation of a common program and strategy.
- Building accountability to get results.
- Encouraging full participation in activities and full affiliation by all segments of the union movement in a state.
- Providing and planning for resources required to carry out the New Alliance plan.
- Creating and strengthening partnerships among international and local unions, the AFL-CIO and state federations and labor councils.

New Alliance plans developed by local leaders have been ratified at convocations in Maryland/ Washington, D.C., New York and North Carolina since spring. New York's plan included the creation of five powerhouse area labor federations to coordinate the work of 25 labor councils. These three leaders in the New Alliance process are developing workplans, budgets and accountability systems to put their plans into action. Colorado and Oregon will conduct New Alliance convocations within months. With the implementation of New Alliance in these five states, 20 percent of AFL-CIO members will live in New Alliance states. Additional states are in the New Alliance planning phase.

Although it is early to point to results of the New Alliance, observers say unity is building—all unions are at the table in the states, with international unions supporting their work. Resources are growing, with clear responsibility and direction attached to their use. Each New Alliance state has gained affiliates, and affiliation with state federations is increasing across the country.

As the New Alliance moves to additional states, the AFL-CIO encourages expansion of the support that has been demonstrated by individual affiliates. Some national unions have adopted constitutional language requiring affiliation, participated in the national affiliation fee plan, met with local leaders to brief them on the New Alliance and to encourage participation and full affiliation,

subsidized local unions' affiliation fees, endorsed the New Alliance at conventions and printed articles about the New Alliance in union publications.

Based on successes in the first New Alliance states and the recognized urgency of building strong, unified union movements, we will, over the next two years, accelerate the pace of New Alliance implementation. We will bolster the New Alliance process by working with local union movements to set higher standards for programs and examine different structural models and relationships between state federations and central labor councils. We will provide increased flexibility by permitting implementation of the New Alliance in regions of a state. We will ensure that newly established area labor federations are viable and successful. We will explore an optional system of centralized collection of per capita tax. And as we work together to build the strength and solidarity in practice that we invoke in our ideals, we call for full affiliation of all AFL-CIO affiliated local unions with state federations and central labor councils.

## **Developing Leadership for the 21st Century**

Samuel Gompers understood the strategic importance of education: "Labor's salvation lies in education," he said. At this critical time, we reaffirm our commitment to union leadership education as a vehicle to help bring economic and social justice to our workplaces and communities.

Our union movement must develop future leaders who can help workers mobilize and build power at every level. These leaders must be equipped to analyze national, global and industrial economic trends; integrate national union priorities with state and local priorities to develop viable programs; build broad political support and leverage that support for affiliates' organizing and bargaining efforts; and build alliances and develop consensus with progressive groups within their communities.

Identifying and developing the next generation of union leaders requires a strong program of trade union education for union leaders and staff. These new leaders must be representative of our increasingly diverse American society and must speak to the needs of our changing workforce. To meet this need, the Central Labor Council Advisory Committee has designed a new leadership development program for local labor council leaders that will be offered regionally beginning in 2002. A comparable program for state federation leaders also is being developed.

The leadership programs build on the experience and expertise of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies and its National Labor College, which provide union leaders, staff and activists with union-building skills aimed at improving life for working families. The college's unique labor studies curriculum

enhances the organizing, collective bargaining and leadership skills students need to serve effectively as front-line union leaders, while also emphasizing critical-thinking and problem-solving abilities that will help them develop new union strategies in a changing world.

Special emphasis in the new leadership development efforts will be placed on recruiting women and people of color to participate to ensure the development of new leaders reflects the composition of the union movement and today's workforce. In the process, we also will strive to harness the energy of younger workers while drawing upon the wisdom of our retired workers to create a powerful leadership force for the future.

Working women make up nearly half the workforce (47 percent) and outpace men as new entrants to the workforce every year. They are essential earners for their families—nearly two-thirds of working women report they provide about half or more of their household income. Nevertheless, women still earn on average less than three-quarters of what men earn, make up a majority of minimum wage workers and are more likely to bear the responsibility of juggling work and family obligations usually with no help from employers. These problems tend to be more extreme for women of color.

So it is no wonder that women are joining unions in record numbers. More women than men have joined the labor movement every year of the last twenty years; election campaigns where a majority of the workforce is women are more likely to win; women are more likely to say they would join a union tomorrow if they had a chance [57% of women under 40 say they would join a union tomorrow]; and women are more likely to side with workers over management in a dispute. Yet, despite the importance of women to the labor movement, they are still underrepresented as leaders.

Women need unions, and unions need to focus on the full participation of women to ensure the vitality of the labor movement in the future. Unions should continue to reach out to women workers, address their concerns as matters of public policy, and train and promote women as leaders at every level of the labor movement.

AFL-CIO constituency groups provide a valuable avenue for identifying potential leaders from diverse populations and for increasing their opportunities for education, training and experiences. The AFL-CIO commits to providing leadership development opportunities for leaders from local constituency groups that will allow them to reach their full potential as leaders within the union movement. The AFL-CIO further encourages state and local labor councils to create opportunities for constituency group representatives to serve on executive boards.

It is important to increase the understanding of state federation and central labor council leaders of the mission and goals of the AFL-CIO, to clarify their roles and responsibilities in implementing programs and building power and to familiarize leaders with the resources available from the AFL-CIO and how their work is integrated with work in the field. The AFL-CIO thus will provide newly elected state federation and central labor council officers with a comprehensive new leaders' orientation session that includes an opportunity to interact with national officers and AFL-CIO department directors. As part of this orientation, newly elected officers will be teamed with veteran officers from other state federations or central labor councils who will serve as mentors, providing support and encouragement, answering questions and offering advice.

Training in essential management skills for state and key central labor council leaders is necessary for effective leadership. We will develop skills training programs covering such topics as developing budgets, integrating programs, building a leadership team, managing staff, creating consensus among affiliates, strategic planning and balancing the job of manager with the job of building a movement.

Additional training, information and materials will be made available for central labor council and state federation officers and staff in such areas as the global economy, media skills, how to run political campaigns and computer and communications skills, and we must enhance the understanding of these matters through ongoing education programs. We will utilize new technologies for distance learning and the satellite campuses of the National Labor College of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies—one of the union movement's most important leadership development resources—and we will expand educational programs such as Common Sense Economics and the National Union Leaders' Seminar on the Economy to ensure these programs are available to the broadest number of activists and members.

Regularly scheduled gatherings such as state federation and central labor council conferences and regional meetings must provide additional training opportunities. We will use these events to engage in in-depth discussions on issues faced by these organizations and to facilitate regional strategies on legislation, economic development and other matters.

The American union movement commits itself to growing and becoming stronger not just from the national level down but from the local level up. We resolve to support communities taking the seven steps to become Union Cities and states embarked on the New Alliance process. These states and communities are at the forefront of dynamic change, reshaping the places working families live and work to reflect our values, reward our work and enable communities

to thrive. At the same time, we commit ourselves to developing skilled leadership for the future that reflects the faces of our membership.

## **Union Cities Recognized by This Convention**

### **Communities that Have Taken the Seven Steps to Union Cities**

California	Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, AFL-CIO Labor Council of South Bay, AFL-CIO
District of Columbia	Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO
Georgia	Atlanta Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Illinois	Quad City, Illinois and Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
New York	New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO Greater Syracuse Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Ohio	Cincinnati AFL-CIO Labor Council Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor
Texas	Harris County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Washington	King County Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Wisconsin	Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO South Central Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO

### **Special Recognition: Communities That Have Come the Furthest**

Colorado	Denver Area Labor Federation
Minnesota	St. Paul AFL-CIO Trades and Labor Assembly
Missouri	Greater Kansas City Labor Council, AFL-CIO



## **On the Road to Union Cities: Innovators in One or More of the Seven Step Categories**

Arizona	Southern Arizona Central Labor Council
Arkansas	Central Arkansas Labor Council, AFL-CIO
California	Central Labor Council of Contra Costa County AFL-CIO Monterey County Labor Council, AFL-CIO San Mateo County Central Labor Council San Francisco Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Connecticut	Greater Hartford Labor Council Southeastern Connecticut Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Florida	South Florida AFL-CIO
Kansas	Wichita/Hutchinson Labor Federation of Central Kansas, AFL-CIO
Maryland	Metropolitan Baltimore Council, AFL-CIO
Massachusetts	Central Massachusetts AFL-CIO North Shore Labor Council, AFL-CIO Pioneer Valley Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Michigan	Kent-Ionia Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Minnesota	Duluth AFL-CIO Central Body
Montana	Big Sky Central Labor Council
New Jersey	Atlantic/Cape May Counties Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
New Mexico	Central New Mexico Central Labor Council
New York	Rochester and Vicinity Labor Council, AFL-CIO Westchester/Putnam Counties AFL-CIO Central Labor Body
Ohio	Dayton, Springfield, Sidney, Miami Valley, AFL-CIO Regional Labor Council Toledo Area AFL-CIO Council
Oklahoma	Central Oklahoma AFL-CIO Labor Council

Pennsylvania	Allegheny County Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Tennessee	Nashville and Middle Tennessee AFL-CIO Central Labor Council Knoxville-Oakridge Area Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Texas	San Antonio AFL-CIO Central Labor Council