

RESOLUTION 1

Seizing the Moment for Growth, Strength and Solidarity: Organizing for Our Future

Submitted by the Executive Council
Amended by the Organizing Committee

THIS IS A HISTORIC MOMENT for the labor movement. Never in our lifetimes have we been this close to helping millions of working people gain the benefits of union membership, revitalizing our union movement and turning around a collapsed economy.

We have worked for years to develop the political support necessary to knock down the roadblocks that bar workers from forming unions and bargaining—and our historic grassroots mobilization in 2008 helped bring us the most pro-worker president and Congress in 40 years.

At the same time, AFL-CIO unions have been engaged in an effort to focus more resources on organizing, and, even in the grip of an economic collapse and in the face of weak labor laws, workers are still raising their voices and organizing unions. For the first time in more than 50 years, union density has grown in two consecutive years—2007 and 2008—for a net increase of 759,000 union members.

We can take pride in these accomplishments, while at the same time acknowledging that they are not sufficient. Although there was a small increase in private-sector density in the past two years, most of the gains came in the public sector. This level of growth is still not at a scale large enough to build the kind of just economy that working families deserve and need. We must do more.

Our work leading to this moment has positioned us to enact the most significant progressive labor

law reform since the Wagner Act. It also provides the opportunity to restore the National Labor Relations Board as an agency protecting workers' rights and upholding the statutory mandate to encourage collective bargaining. If we succeed and rise to the challenge and opportunities that enacting labor law reform will bring us, the unions of the AFL-CIO can begin rebuilding union density so workers once again can win justice at work. If we do not, we will have squandered the remarkable opportunity we have spent our working lifetimes pursuing.

Seizing this moment will require us to do more than reform labor laws. It also will require summoning the will and dedicating the resources necessary to grow.

Changing to Organize and Organizing for Change

Four years ago, at the 2005 AFL-CIO Convention, we resolved to unite our energies, resources and power to help workers organize and create the political and legislative change necessary to better allow workers to form and join unions.

Since then, we have made restoring workers' freedom to form unions and bargain collectively our movement's top priority. Thanks to our political mobilization, leaders have been elected at every level who have pledged to support workers' organizing and collective bargaining rights.

AFL-CIO unions have provided the outreach, financial support and release staff to conduct the largest grassroots education and mobilization

effort in decades to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, our top legislative priority.

The Employee Free Choice Act has been subjected to one of the ugliest and best-financed corporate attack campaigns since the days of the Harry and Louise ads, complete with lies, distortions and phony grassroots organizations that represent nobody other than Big Business.

But our grassroots mobilization is countering that campaign of corporate lies with people power. We have enlisted more than 1.5 million union member activists as part of our Million Member Mobilization and generated at least half a million phone calls, letters and e-mails from workers to members of Congress since the beginning of 2009 in support of the Employee Free Choice Act. We have also built new coalitions with progressive allies—from faith communities and state legislators to civil rights groups, environmentalists and academics.

While fighting for labor law reform, we have also reached out to nonunion workers on the front lines of struggles to form unions: construction workers in the Southwest, telecom workers in the Northeast, farm workers and autoworkers in the Southeast, warehouse workers on the West Coast, hospital workers in Chicago, casino workers in Connecticut, Nevada and New Jersey, higher education workers in California and New Jersey and teachers in New Orleans. We have done so with sensitivity to the need to organize immigrant workers, minorities and women, who experience distinctive hardships even as their presence in the workforce is expanding.

Our community affiliate, Working America, has grown to include 3 million members in 12 states.

Meanwhile, we have continued building stronger state and local union movements to engage in state and local political struggles, supporting pro-labor ballot initiatives and opposing anti-union ballot initiatives and legislation in more than 16 states since our last Convention.

Our work to build stronger state and local union movements also has enabled us to assist affiliate organizing campaigns, such as the American Federation of Teachers' campaign at Rutgers University, the United Steelworkers' car wash campaign in Southern California and the Building Trades campaigns in Arizona and Nevada.

At the last Convention, we resolved that the federation would assist national union affiliates in building capacity to take on larger-scale, more strategic growth campaigns. Since then, the Organizing Institute has worked with 51 affiliates to recruit and train almost 600 organizers and placed a renewed focus on training volunteer member organizers. Currently, we are engaged in partnership organizing campaigns with 12 affiliates. Over the past four years, the Center for Strategic Research has worked with 34 affiliates in recruitment and training of strategic researchers and campaigners.

We have also provided leadership in the international labor movement to prioritize organizing the unorganized. The AFL-CIO hosted the first global union summit, involving all of the main global union organizations, which focused on encouraging greater cooperation within the global labor movement to promote solidarity and provide more effective support for workers struggling to organize, improving the environment for organizing and heightening respect for trade union rights.

Restoring Workers' Freedom to Form Unions, Building Our Movement

Federal labor law reform—important as it is and as big a job as it has been to get this far—is only the first step toward the unprecedented renewal of the labor movement that we now have the opportunity to bring about.

Success will require continued pressure for public policy change at all levels, electing public officials who not only support us but are warriors for working families and putting in place the resources and skills necessary to organize unions and

bargain first contracts in a very different organizing environment.

Currently some 40 million employees—29 percent of private-sector workers and 35 percent of public-sector workers—are denied legally protected rights to form unions and bargain collectively. In the private sector, flawed NLRB and federal court decisions, such as the *Kentucky River* and *Oakwood* cases, and the *Yeshiva University* case, have excluded millions of employees from the NLRA by reclassifying them as independent contractors, supervisors, managers, temps or students. Under the Bush administration, the National Mediation Board systematically favored business interests over the fair implementation of the law, essentially eliminating true collective bargaining by allowing employers to illegally interfere in union elections while holding workers in endless mediation. Finally, millions of federal workers, such as airport screeners, have been denied rights through legislation, as have state, county and municipal government employees in many states, while governors in several states have stripped public employees of rights through executive orders.

At the federal level, as we make sure the Employee Free Choice Act is enacted and properly implemented, administered and monitored, we also must fight for further legislative changes to ensure that all workers have the freedom to form unions. We will campaign to pass the RESPECT Act, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act and work to include protections in the federal statute for agricultural workers' freedom to organize. We will work with the Obama administration on executive orders and administrative changes to further expand and protect organizing rights for all workers, including those employed in the federal government. We will continue to support and defend Davis-Bacon protections. A top priority is to restore the freedom to form unions and bargain collectively for workers employed in the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration. We also will fight to ensure that

the organizing rights of workers covered under the Railway Labor Act are fully protected by the National Mediation Board.

The labor movement must ensure that the hundreds of billions of dollars invested in the economy through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act not only put people to work in energy, construction and other sectors of the economy, but also create good union jobs that provide training, stability and pathways for the future.

At the state and local levels, we have to work even harder to strengthen state prevailing wage laws, gain collective bargaining rights for all state, county and municipal workers and extend federal labor law protection to workers not currently covered (including agricultural and domestic workers). We will build on the significant gains we have made over recent years in organizing home care and child care workers across the country.

Once we enact labor law reform, we must re-evaluate and retool our organizing infrastructure to take advantage of new opportunities to organize on a larger scale. This will mean committing resources to grow bigger, stronger and faster and to reach first contracts that improve workers' lives. It will mean coordinating our efforts and utilizing the talents of new and seasoned organizers and rank-and-file workers to mobilize in support of key campaigns of strategic importance to labor movement growth.

The basics of organizing will not change—we still will require well-trained organizers committed to the fundamentals of effective workplace union-building. Unions will still need detailed industry and company research to guide decisions on where to deploy resources and help win good contracts, and we will need to build supportive alliances to back workers who are struggling to organize unions and collectively bargain. But the scale of what we do and the pace at which we do it *will* change, and will call for new resources and new skills to fully take advantage of the new rules.

The labor movement is best able to accomplish its goals when unions work together. Conversely, when unions raid each other's membership or compete in organizing the same workplaces, it does not build our movement and only serves to pit unions against one another, create confusion among workers and allow employers to prey upon those divisions. Unity and solidarity must be our guiding principles.

The AFL-CIO will:

- **Continue its campaign to enact the Employee Free Choice Act and other legislative and administrative changes that will secure workers' freedom to form unions and collectively bargain.** We will continue to make federal labor law reform a top priority and devote the resources necessary to run a robust national grassroots campaign to accomplish this goal.
 - **Help build organizing and bargaining capacity.** We will provide skilled organizers, researchers and campaigners through the Organizing Department to assist affiliates with organizing campaigns; expand the Organizing Institute's traditional role of recruiting and training entry-level organizers to include retraining of existing organizers to best take advantage of new federal rules; and expand recruitment and training through the Center for Strategic Research to ensure that our affiliates have sufficient research capacity. We will provide training opportunities for union members on how best to take advantage of first contract negotiation and interest arbitration.
 - **Work with affiliates to develop strategic plans for large-scale organizing within their industries in order to build power to improve working conditions.**
 - **Support large-scale campaigns, pooling resources for shared priorities and coordinating the mutual support for organizing and bargaining campaigns** that are the heart of interunion solidarity. We will
- deploy a team of apprentice organizers to work on campaigns; facilitate new campaigns in industries that are expanding but that have little union presence; and continue strengthening state and local labor movements, which are essential for creating environments in which we can organize successfully. We will build a network of 1,000 organizers, drawn from the ranks of rank-and-file members and apprentice and staff organizers, who can be deployed quickly on campaigns of strategic importance to the labor movement.
 - **Expand our outreach to allies to continue pushing for public policy changes** that will make organizing easier and to build support for workers engaged in organizing and bargaining campaigns. We will expand our traditional alliances with civil rights, faith-based and community organizations and renew our engagement with young people and students.
 - **Expand communications and outreach efforts to nonunion workers** to help more people understand how collective bargaining can improve their working conditions.
 - **Encourage unions to register more of their organizing campaigns** with the Strategic Campaign Registration Program and to decrease interunion organizing competition in this especially crucial period, and refrain from raiding each other's members.
 - **Continue to support organizing initiatives of the Industrial Coordinating Committees.**
 - **Work to ensure that green jobs, particularly those created through federal or state stimulus monies, are good union jobs.** We will work with affiliates to expand union apprenticeship training programs and fight on Capitol Hill and in the states to ensure that Davis-Bacon and other labor protections are implemented on all stimulus-funded projects. (See Resolution 10: Creating and Retaining Sustainable Good Green Jobs.)

- **Continue to accelerate our international work and global alliances** that are essential in a globalized economy. We will oppose government and employer violations of workers' rights wherever they may exist; support workers and their unions in other countries who are struggling for their rights; insist that workers' rights are an essential component of America's trade policy; continue encouraging cross-border organizing and bargaining work; pressure multinational corporations to abide by the highest standards of workers' rights wherever

they do business; and work with affiliates that are organizing and bargaining at U.S.-based subsidiaries of multinational corporations to build solidarity with foreign unions in the same sectors. (See Resolution 9: A Labor Movement Agenda for a Stronger, Cleaner and More Just Global Economy.)

Working together, our union movement can and must seize this moment to build a better life for working families.