

RESOLUTION 14

VOTING RIGHTS: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE PRO-VOTER DEMOCRACY TO MOVE A WINNING AGENDA FOR WORKING PEOPLE

The labor movement believes that ensuring and protecting the right of every citizen to vote is a bedrock principle of our democracy. One major way we advocate for ourselves to great affect is through the ballot box—by electing and protecting champions of working people and winning policy fights that matter to all workers. However, our democracy suffers from deliberate voter suppression and disenfranchisement that severely limits the labor movement and other progressive movements’ ability to move a winning agenda for working men, women, their families and their communities that we serve.

We see the common threads among the continued erosion of rights for working families, the attack on an economy that works for everyone, and the assault on one of our most fundamental democratic rights—the right to vote. The right to vote, fair representation and access to democracy are key in moving a winning agenda for all people and ensuring that not one community continues to suffer needlessly. Moreover, a number of states have reversed efforts to make it easier for citizens to vote by mail or vote early. Some have rescinded same-day voter registration and provisional ballots. Others have reduced the number of polling places and caused long delays in of-color and low-income neighborhoods. These are some of the same states that have waged a full attack on the labor movement.

We believe that voting in elections should be as convenient, fair and secure as possible. Yet some citizens face voter suppression tactics such as limits to early voting, fewer polling locations and voting machines, long lines, and intimidation at polling stations. Three states that currently hold elections entirely by mail, Colorado, Oregon and Washington, have significantly higher voter participation during elections. Vote by mail is efficient

and cost effective, and creates a verifiable paper trail. Studies have shown that voting by mail does not give an advantage to any political party, and support for vote by mail includes all demographic groups, geographic areas and political affiliation. This is one of many pro-voter reforms that we know works to deliver a democracy that is inclusive.

America’s hardworking families and communities deserve full access to the ballot box. As a movement of working people we demand that a pro-voter agenda be adopted immediately, starting with the restoration and expansion of the Voting Rights Act and passage of legislation that expands opportunities for citizens to vote. We join with hundreds of other civic organizations across the political spectrum in calling for real integrity in our democracy, and urge our leaders to expand and protect the right to vote.

WHEREAS, labor union members must be engaged as voters, activists, volunteers and stakeholders. Our unique infrastructure, which is in place in 50 states, allows us to catalyze organizing, mobilizing and resourcing the work to build an inclusive democracy with and through our affiliates, constituency groups and national strategic partners.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO shall stand firm with the principles of an inclusive democracy through:

- Prioritizing a pro-voter platform within our fight forward to reclaim the economic narrative that speaks for working families, as well as an opportunity to build an independent political movement that aligns with our shared values;

- Advocating to expand and protect voting rights at the federal and state level, including the full restoration of the federal Voting Rights Act; ensuring the modernization of voting through automatic registration, online registration and same-day registration; making it easier for working people to vote by expanding early voting, permanent mail ballot and vote by mail through legislation and ballot initiatives at the local, state and federal levels; restoring the rights of returning citizens; and maintaining and expanding the availability of straight-ticket voting and a host of other voter protections that happen prior to elections;
- Fighting to protect the voting rights of working people and all people of color when they come under attack, especially against attempts to suppress votes in the lead-up to elections, including through support for community-focused voter education and voter protection efforts;
- Preventing corporations and the wealthy few from buying elections;
- Changing structural rules to ensure that every vote and every voice counts equally; and
- Reshaping the political debate to demand full democracy at every level of government.

The institutions of our government need to function on behalf of the people, regardless of whom has power—it is bigger than parties, politics or profits.