

RESOLUTION 24

FIGHTING TOGETHER FOR WORKERS IN MANUFACTURING

The manufacturing sector is central to the economic success of our nation, and to our ability to raise wages and rebuild the middle class. Importantly, with the beginning of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the 1930s, manufacturing became a source of family-supporting jobs for working-class people, immigrants and communities of color. These middle-class, family-supporting manufacturing jobs still exist in sectors with high union density, but increasingly are threatened.

That image has become a potent political symbol, but it does not match the reality of today. There has been shocking decline in the security of manufacturing jobs, and union density has fallen to just 8.8%.

Today, real wages in manufacturing are back to where they were in 1972, but take-home pay is lower because employees pay substantially more in premiums and out-of-pocket costs for health care than they did then. More than 40% of production workers make less than \$15 per hour, and another 11% of them work for employment agencies, and thus are paid less but often are working alongside permanent employees for years. Despite recent gains, African Americans have been underrepresented in manufacturing since the 1990s. Women have never made up more than a third of the manufacturing workforce, and have inadequate opportunities in many occupations.

The sector also faces important policy and technology challenges, including export barriers and unfairly traded imports, exchange rates, tax reform and monetary policy, federal investment in new technologies, and continuing automation.

To win these fights, raise wages and improve diversity in manufacturing, we must activate workers to fight for political demands and to organize. We must insist on inclusion and solidarity, and reject exclusion and racism. The alternative is continued decline and the growth of a political narrative on manufacturing that is contrary to our values and our interests.

Actions We Will Take

The fight to reform NAFTA, and to set a new template for trade agreements, is immediate and critical.

The labor movement will expose poverty wages and demand that all manufacturing jobs become living wage jobs. We will fight against precarious work in manufacturing, and help nonunion workers understand and exercise their rights.

We will take action to improve access to manufacturing jobs for women and minorities, and to help them succeed in a workplace free from harassment and discrimination.

We will collaborate with intermediaries and educators to create skill systems that enhance careers, strengthen union employers, show value to union members and help workers understand the value of unions.

We will develop policies and bargaining strategies to ensure automation enhances human work and demand that the economic gains from automation are shared broadly.

We will insist on a domestic supply chain for national defense production and public procurement, expand Buy America coverage, eliminate waivers and exemptions, and ensure critical technologies are produced in the United States.

We will fight for a national manufacturing policy based on public investment in new technologies, maximizing the advantage of our energy abundance, the domestic production of clean energy goods and an expectation of rising pay. We reject manufacturing policies centered on subsidies that lower the tax base, degrade public services and hurt communities.

To accomplish these goals, we will create and support state industrial union councils. These councils will cooperate on in-state policies and political accountability, work with allies, and activate workers.

We will use the national Industrial Union Council to establish goals and projects that affiliates and the federation will accomplish jointly. We will support this work with political and data analysis, coordinated messaging and digital efforts, and targeted field activities.