

RESOLUTION 8

Advancing the Labor Movement's Program at the Grassroots Level Through Strong and Effective State and Local Organizations

Submitted by the Executive Council
Referred to the State and Local Bodies Committee

THE LABOR MOVEMENT faces enormous challenges as we work to advance the concerns of working families in the policy arena and at the bargaining table, and to restore the freedom of workers to organize, form unions and have a voice on the job. The opportunities for progress are better now than at any time in decades, but to succeed we need a strong, coordinated and accountable program at the national, state and local levels.

State federations are the labor movement's voice in state capitals around the country, and central labor councils are the labor movement's community voice. In addition to coordinating and representing the labor movement's work in these arenas, the AFL-CIO's state, area and local central bodies are the engines of the labor movement's grassroots activities. They have a vital role to play in the federation's grassroots education and mobilization activity around key organizing, political, legislative and contract campaigns at the local, state and national levels. By integrating the labor movement's local, state and national priorities, our central labor councils and area and state federations help build a grassroots movement for working families.

The lead role played by many of our state and local organizations in the Labor 2008 political campaigns and in the ongoing fight for the Employee Free Choice Act and health care reform provides indisputable evidence of their importance to the success of the federation's

priority initiatives. We need strong, effective, unified and accountable state and local organizations to be able to move the labor movement's program forward.

The Sweeney-Trumka-Holt Baker/Chavez-Thompson administration made great strides in reinvigorating and strengthening the AFL-CIO's state and local organizations, through programs such as Union Cities and the New Alliance and through creation of the Leadership Development Institute. After the split in the national labor movement in 2005, the AFL-CIO's leaders sought and obtained Executive Council approval for creation and adoption of the Solidarity Charter program, which has made it possible to maintain unity and strength at the grassroots level.

The AFL-CIO should build on these reforms and initiatives to further strengthen our labor movement at the grassroots level. Our priorities must be:

- To maintain unity and strength at the state and local levels;
- To build capacity in areas of strategic importance to the federation and its affiliated unions;
- To improve coordination between our state and local organizations and the federation to build a seamless, integrated operation with the capacity to carry out rapid-response mobilization on the labor movement's key initiatives;

- To achieve greater diversity and inclusion in our state and local organizations and their governing boards;
- To invest in leadership development and technical training for leaders and key staff, so they are equipped to effectively lead these critical organizations;
- To increase the level of affiliation and participation by local unions with state, area and local central bodies;
- To expand the labor movement's outreach to and partnerships with unorganized workers and community allies at the state and local levels; and
- To require greater accountability by our state and local organizations for their performance.

In furtherance of these goals, we resolve as follows:

- **Unity/Solidarity Charters:** The AFL-CIO's state and local infrastructure is a tremendous asset to the unions of the AFL-CIO. Continued unity at the state and local level is critical to moving the labor movement's program forward. The Solidarity Charter program, which has been a great success in maintaining unity and strength at the state and local levels, is hereby extended, and the Executive Council shall continue to have the authority to determine the terms, conditions and duration of the program, as efforts to reunify the labor movement at the national level continue.
- **Fair Share solidarity fee:** At the same time, fairness dictates that the national union affiliates of the AFL-CIO should not have to bear the entire financial cost of the AFL-CIO's support of its state and local organizations—support in the form of Solidarity Fund grants, political and issues mobilization work, organizational development and capacity building work, the Leadership Development Institute and more. The AFL-CIO, in conjunction with the Executive Council Committee on State and Local

Strategies and the State Federation/Central Labor Council Advisory Committee, should develop mechanisms for obtaining a fair share contribution from organizations participating in the Solidarity Charter program. These measures should be developed and implemented as soon as practicable, as determined by the president of the AFL-CIO.

- **Affiliation and participation:** We continue to support full participation and fair affiliation of local unions to state, area and local central bodies. We urge all national and international unions to redouble their efforts to encourage their local unions to affiliate with state, area and local central bodies, and to actively participate in these organizations.
- **Leadership development and training:** Leadership is the foundation upon which the future of the labor movement is built. The AFL-CIO needs to continue to invest in its state and local organizations through its Leadership Development Institute for officers and key staff. In addition, the AFL-CIO should continue and expand technical training for officers and key staff on their financial, legal, ethical, governance and programmatic responsibilities.
- **Strategic investment:** The AFL-CIO should continue the Solidarity Fund established by the delegates to the 2005 Convention as a dedicated Strategic Investment Fund for the purpose of funding grants and programs for advancing the strategic development of our state federations and area and central labor councils.
- **Diversity:** We must continue and accelerate the work that is under way to achieve greater racial/ethnic and gender diversity in the leadership and governing bodies of our state federations and central labor councils. We must reach out to a new generation of trade unionists and bring these younger workers into our labor movement, including our state and local organizations. The AFL-CIO should work with the State Federation/Central Labor Council Advisory Committee to develop a set of best practices

and recommendations for state federations and local labor councils to promote diversity and inclusion, and the Advisory Committee members should take a leadership role in getting these best practices implemented.

- **Excellence and accountability:** We need to make sure the state and local organizations in which our affiliates are investing their members' hard-earned money are smart, effective, integrated and accountable. The federation should look at where labor councils have insufficient resources to effectively move programs and determine what changes are warranted to build capacity, such as consolidating labor councils, creation of area labor federations or other appropriate measures. By September 2010, the Executive Council Committee on State and Local Strategies, in consultation with the State Federation/Central Labor Council Advisory Committee, shall review and make recommendations to the officers on updating the Performance Standards and Benchmarks that were adopted by the Executive Council in 2005, including recommendations for whether the federation should establish minimum standards for per capita tax, membership and revenues to qualify as an AFL-CIO-chartered organization. The committees shall further make recommendations for updating the federation's rules governing state, area and local central bodies, including the rules on mission, program, ethical practices and financial practices.
- **Growth through Working America and other community-based partnerships:** Working America, the AFL-CIO's community affiliate, expands the labor movement's reach on issues, elections and organizing by recruiting as AFL-CIO members workers who do not yet have the benefit of a union on the job. Working with its advisory committee of state federation and central labor council leaders, Working America develops programs for enhancing its work with state, area and local central bodies on membership recruitment and member

mobilization. These efforts should continue and expand. In particular, this should include expanded use of the Friends and Family program, in which union members recruit their friends and family as Working America members, outreach to laid-off workers and other targeted, strategic outreach.

State, area and local central bodies also strengthen their ability to achieve progress on working families' issues through alliances and partnerships with community organizations and allies, including civil rights and religious organizations, among others. These community partnerships should be continued and strengthened. Similarly, the AFL-CIO's Worker Center partnership, authorized by the Executive Council in 2006, broadens the labor movement's reach to unorganized communities and creates new opportunities to advance workers' rights and maintain labor standards in local communities. The Worker Center partnership should be continued to enable local labor movements to continue building alliances with worker centers that do not offer employment opportunities in conflict with established unions offering the same or like services.

- **Evolving organizations:** The concentration of labor in the United States is not static, and we must be prepared to reorganize our state, area and local organizations to meet the labor movement's strategic needs. The AFL-CIO should continue its reorganization work through efforts such as New Alliance and other appropriate programs, and the federation should continue to explore ways of partnering with state federations, area labor federations, central labor councils and affiliate leaders to undertake aspects of this work where the federation's resources do not permit it to play a leading role. The federation should identify areas where administrative efficiencies for its state, area and local organizations could be achieved, such as through information technology, payroll, accounting or other administrative functions.