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Since our last Convention we have been witness to several defining moments in our nation's political history. We endured the most controversial presidential election ever. We witnessed the unprecedented mid-session realignment of the Senate. We valiantly fought the effort to silence working Oklahomans with a so-called "right to work" law. These events alone would have marked the significance of this past year, but there was more. The Sept. 11 attack on America changed everything. The political climate has been redefined, and the need to protect the interests of America's workers has taken on even more importance.

In these circumstances, the decisions made by the president and Congress are of greater gravity. It is apparent that the decisions facing political leaders will have monumental effects on the welfare of our nation. Unfortunately, it also has become apparent that the needs of working families are being overshadowed by corporate special interests. In the aftermath of the attack on America, the Bush administration and Congress have eagerly provided billions of dollars in assistance to corporations, but not to the more than 500,000 laid-off workers. Debate on fair tax reform, prescription drug coverage, a patients' bill of rights, the minimum wage, Social Security privatization, ergonomics, project labor agreements and fair trade legislation continues without adequately addressing the needs of working people.

Union members are united with all of America to rebuild and strengthen our country. Firefighters, police officers, emergency medical technicians, ironworkers and other union members have given their labor, their time and their lives selflessly. It is a heroic display of the greatest treasure of our nation: the

working women and men of America. Americans are united in more ways and with stronger bonds than ever before. But we cannot let our guard down.

We will not be deceived by right-wing extremists who seek to exploit calls for bipartisanship and cooperation. We must fight their efforts to cloak their anti-worker pre-Sept. 11 agenda in the pretense of patriotism. Efforts to pass Fast Track trade negotiating authority and corporate welfare measures, including massive corporate tax breaks, are an affront to the heroes of America.

Educating and Mobilizing Union Households

Now more than ever, the leaders we choose at every level of government make decisions every day that determine working families' well-being. But in recent decades, many Americans have withdrawn from the political process, not making connections between government actions and their families' fortunes. That makes union efforts to educate working families about issues especially vital.

The current political environment underscores the need to build upon the political and issues mobilization efforts America's unions have been implementing since 1996. Labor 2000, Labor 1998 and Labor 1996 demonstrated how effectively the labor movement can mobilize in pursuit of a working families agenda. By continuing these efforts, we will be able to elect more candidates who will protect and serve the interests of working families. Our ability to educate and inform our membership about the relevant issues has raised the level of public debate. Our revamped efforts on issues mobilization will create more pressure for political leaders to address workers' issues.

Labor 2000 was a tremendous success. Union household voters accounted for more than a quarter of all voters, and 4.8 million more union household members voted than in 1992. Union voting margins were crucial to Senate victories in Michigan, Washington, New York, Missouri, New Jersey and Minnesota. Our mobilization efforts carried former Vice President Al Gore to a popular vote victory with the most votes for any Democratic presidential candidate ever.

Our research continues to show the vast majority of union members strongly approves of their unions' providing information about legislative issues and politics from a working family perspective. Three-quarters of union members who received information about U.S. House races at their worksites voted for the union-endorsed candidate in 1998 and 2000. In 1998, unfortunately, only 11 percent of union members received such information at their worksites. In 2000, intensive local efforts more than tripled the number of union members reached at their worksites, to 39 percent. We will seek to improve on that as well.

For these efforts, at this Convention the AFL-CIO will honor the affiliate and local unions that implemented Labor 2000 most successfully. These local and international unions have set examples for what can be achieved when union members vote. The mobilization efforts of these unions serve as inspirations for Labor 2002.

Making Every Vote Count

Despite measurable success in the 2000 elections, we must continue to build upon and improve our efforts. The important lessons of that election, including the Florida balloting and recount, must be addressed for 2002. Our strength in numbers helped deliver a semi-victory in a close election, but we must ensure no votes are uncounted.

The importance of protecting voting rights must not be forgotten. Election reform efforts at the national and state levels must be carried out so the right to vote for all Americans is guaranteed. We cannot afford to let politicians pass nominal and incomplete solutions to this problem.

Increasing the Number of Union Voters

It is clear that to achieve solid and realized victories, we must increase the number of union voters. To sustain and grow our collective power, the American labor movement must continue to grow. Organizing new members is the lifeblood of our unions and the key to our continued ability to create a strong voice for America's workers, not only in our workplaces but also in our political system. Moreover, we must organize so we will be able to continue to defend against attacks, including ballot initiatives aimed at silencing the voices of working families. Renewing and intensifying our efforts to help workers organize is the most pressing need all unions and the AFL-CIO must continue to address.

For this purpose, we call upon the assistance of elected officials. Elected officials at every level can play an active role in supporting workers who are organizing. Elected officials can ask employers to maintain neutrality, speak at organizing rallies, oversee elections based on a check of cards signed, send letters to workers and employers, hold hearings on employer abuses and walk picket lines.

At the state and local level, officials also can pass laws and adopt regulations and contracting procedures that make sure their governments do not facilitate employer anti-worker campaigns. They can ban the use of public monies by employers for campaigns to sway workers to vote for or against unions. And in contracts for goods and services, land development negotiations and other

dealings, public officials can insist on policies that ensure expeditious and peaceful resolution of disputes surrounding union representation.

Reinforcing the Freedom to Choose a Union

It is also time for Congress to re-examine and overhaul the National Labor Relations Act. We are reminded constantly of the sacred premise that this country is based on freedom and democracy. America's workers should have the same degree of freedom in choosing to join a union as they do in choosing their religious or political beliefs. Effective revision of national labor law must accomplish several ends:

- First, the law must create a meaningful right to organize by ensuring workers' freedom to exercise their own choice to join a union without employer coercion, and by aggressively protecting the will of the majority.
- Second, the law must create a meaningful right to engage in collective bargaining. It must ensure that workers who exercise their freedom to join a union can achieve a first contract, and that all workers have a meaningful right to strike without fear of losing their jobs.
- Third, the law must ensure that lawbreakers are held accountable for their conduct, with remedies and penalties commensurate with the offense, so labor law violations are dealt with as seriously as violations of employment discrimination, antitrust and environmental laws.
- Fourth, the law must extend to all workers to preclude employers from circumventing the spirit of the law by redefining employment relationships or reclassifying workers.

As part of our effort to put organizing at the heart of our political agenda, we have developed a statement of principles, a tool the entire labor movement can use to involve our elected officials with their constituents who are organizing unions. We hope all elected officials and candidates will come to embrace this basic expression of support for workers' freedom to choose a union. We encourage our affiliate unions, state federations and central labor councils to use the statement of principles as an appropriate tool in the union movement's tool box with candidates seeking political support.

Electing Union Members

Of course, the surest way to ensure elected officials are sympathetic to workers' needs is to elect union members. The **2000 in 2000** program has been an enormous accomplishment. We surpassed our goals and now have more than 2,500 elected officials who are union members. We have created a national labor caucus for state legislators, with 90 founding members. Their goal is to increase that membership to 300 by 2002.

Making our voices heard in state, county and local governments, school boards and chambers is the basis of fostering a worker-friendly environment. To this end, we will build upon **2000 in 2000**. We seek to double the 2,500 union member elected officials by 2002 through a new program: **Target 5000**. **Target 5000's** goal is to elect more union members and help advance those already elected. Target 5000 will benefit all, because when workers run, workers win.

We also will establish a special political action committee dedicated to provide resources to union members running for state and local offices.

Labor 2002: Building on Success

Much is at stake for 2002. Already we have seen national leaders respond to the widespread layoffs, the economic slowdown and dislocations caused by the attacks on America with calls for further tax cuts for corporations and the rich and with renewed appeals for Fast Track legislation. We expect continued state efforts to silence or harm working families with paycheck deception, "right to work" for less measures and "reform" of workers' compensation laws. Control of both chambers of Congress, 34 Senate seats and 34 governorships are also in contest.

Labor 2002 must build upon the successes of Labor 2000. To maximize working families' voices in the 2002 elections, we will set registration and turnout goals for each state labor federation and central labor council. We call on each affiliated union to adopt the Labor 2002 program and to provide the necessary resources and commitments, including donated staff, for its successful implementation.

The Labor 2002 program includes the following 10 points:

- 1.** Link politics to organizing. We will ask elected officials and candidates for elected office to side with workers when they organize and to take such concrete action as attending rallies, sending support letters to workers, asking employers to remain neutral and participate in card-check elections, holding hearings, denying labor-law breakers government contracts and supporting collective bargaining for public workers.

- 2.** Each union will assign a coordinator for each local and each workplace. Having an activist in place at every worksite and local will be essential to maintaining communication with all members.
- 3.** Each local will distribute more than one leaflet a month in each workplace. Maintaining a constant source of communication will cultivate the relationship between a member and his or her union.
- 4.** Each union will maximize member contact through union publications by including leaflets and reports on issues and organizing campaigns in every edition. The effectiveness of the Labor 2002 program is not based on candidate endorsements. It is based on educating our membership on the issues and where candidates stand on issues. A greater awareness of issues increases the effectiveness of Labor 2002.
- 5.** Each union will maximize communication from local presidents and business agents by including leaflets and issue material in all local mailings and in targeted mail. Communications are more effective when there is a personal connection, and communication from local union officials can strengthen messages by providing a regional perspective. It also strengthens the connection between a member and his or her local.
- 6.** Each union will maximize the impact of union phone calls by incorporating issue information into routine calls and through additional calls to selected members. Politics is not just a seasonal activity. Legislation is passed and developed year-round. The need to inform and educate our members is a continuous process.
- 7.** Each union will maintain an up-to-date membership list. To contact our members at home with mailings and phone calls, we must continually upgrade the accuracy of our membership lists.
- 8.** Each union will increase member registration by at least 10 percent. There have been 4.8 million more union household voters since 1992. We must continue to register new members in order to keep growing.
- 9.** Each union will organize massive get-out-the-vote efforts. Voter turnout among union members continues to grow. It is the key to our success in elections. The emphasis on get-out-the-vote efforts must continue.

10. Each union will build a rapid-response network in the workplace that includes recruiting activists for issue mobilization; generating letters, calls and e-mails to elected officials; and meeting with elected officials. It is not our goal simply to elect candidates. Our goal is to further a working families agenda. To do so, we must continually work with and put pressure on elected officials whenever there is an issue that affects working families.

By electing candidates who share the vision of improving the lives of America's workers, the strength of the labor movement grows. Our ability to help and support candidates who believe in the union movement ensures the interests of working men and women will be served in the political arena. Conversely, the willingness of politicians to help us grow the labor movement translates positively into more votes for any candidate who supports a working families agenda. A stronger labor movement benefits all who share in its vision of furthering the interests of working families.