

RESOLUTION 19

RANK-AND-FILE UNION DEMOCRACY: ONE MEMBER, ONE VOTE AND STATE LABOR COUNCIL AUTONOMY

Submitted by the Vermont AFL-CIO
Referred to the Resolutions Committee

WHEREAS, the labor movement is strongest when workers, their unions and their labor bodies are democratically empowered;

WHEREAS, in order to make foundational change in society which will be to the benefit of union members and the working class as a whole, union members must be ready and willing to take action to advance our common agenda;

WHEREAS, union members are most apt to take action when they are made to feel ownership over the direction, policies and strategies of their coordinating labor bodies, and feel connection with those union officers they elect to serve in key AFL-CIO roles;

WHEREAS, the empowerment and articulation of a collective will and judgment of the many as opposed to the few produces better decisions and cultivates ownership of such decisions by the rank and file;

WHEREAS, the current structure of the national AFL-CIO which we have inherited can be made more democratic;

WHEREAS, the current structure of the national AFL-CIO does not encourage rank-and-file participation in the decision-making process, nor does it even allow for members to universally elect officers;

WHEREAS, we would not tolerate such an undemocratic process when it comes to election of political figures, and therefore we should not tolerate it within our own organization;

WHEREAS, a number of major unions, most recently the AFL-CIO-affiliated UAW, have allowed for direct election of their officers;

WHEREAS, union democracy should not be limited to elections, but rather should encourage rank-and-file debate and decision making on the local and state level;

RESOLVED, that prior to the next convention the national AFL-CIO president shall work with the national Executive Board to craft a constitutional amendment to allow for the direct election of all national AFL-CIO officers and Executive Board members by rank-and-file AFL-CIO union members utilizing the principle of one member, one vote; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such a constitutional amendment shall be voted upon at the next national AFL-CIO convention; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that should such a constitutional amendment be adopted by the national AFL-CIO, state labor councils shall be encouraged to adopt direct elections of officers as well through the amendment of their state constitutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that while the national AFL-CIO shall continue to possess the authority to define the national and international policies and politics of the AFL-CIO, state labor councils may take those positions they see fit on such matters as long as related resolutions or policy statements incorporate the acknowledgement that "This resolution represents the position of the state labor

council and not necessarily that of the national AFL-CIO”;
and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that while the national AFL-CIO retains the authority to make political endorsements in national elections, up until such a time when an endorsement is made, state labor councils may provide public recommendations to the national AFL-CIO for president of the United States. Such public statements shall not be considered an endorsement, but may express a preference. However, once the national AFL-CIO issues an official endorsement, the matter shall be considered

closed, and state labor councils shall endeavor to maintain a united front with the national AFL-CIO concerning election matters; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that state labor councils, through their own internal democratic processes, are empowered to call for and organize general strikes as they see fit in order to uphold and advance the interests of the working class as long as the call for a general strike is limited to within the relevant state borders. National general strikes may be called for by the national AFL-CIO.