

# A Working People's Agenda

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*Times are still difficult for North Carolina's working families. The decisions made by the N.C. General Assembly in the 2013-14 legislative session will be crucial in determining the future of those families. As in the past, the N.C. State AFL-CIO will be a leading, and sometimes the only, voice for workers and their families on work-place related issues at the legislature.*

*We have adopted an agenda that we believe addresses the most fundamental needs of North Carolina workers and their families. Our agenda promotes good jobs, safe workplaces, and strong protection of our rights as workers, voters, and consumers. It is an agenda that will move our economy forward by putting people back to work and enabling them to provide for their families. It is an agenda that recognizes that helping workers is how we help the overall economy.*

## Good Jobs

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The people of North Carolina deserve reliable, family-sustaining jobs in healthy communities. Too many good jobs, especially in the manufacturing sector, have been lost, and far too many people are now unemployed or working at replacement jobs that provide lower wages and less stability. North Carolina needs to recruit and train our citizens for family-sustaining jobs – those that provide good wages and benefits.

Our state should develop policies that:

- Require that companies receiving tax incentives will provide good jobs that will raise, not lower, the standard of living for working families.
- Expand apprenticeship programs and focus workforce development efforts on skills that enable workers to move into good-paying jobs.
- Create a work-sharing program to keep people employed, reducing both layoffs and costs to employers.

## Worker Protection

**In times of high unemployment, workers have fewer options and thus often are more likely to tolerate abuses in the workplace.** Therefore, we urge state policymakers to strengthen worker protections and safeguard fundamental labor rights.

For example:

- Maintain and protect our workers compensation system and unemployment insurance program, both of which are critical in this economy and pay reasonable benefits at relatively low costs for employers.
- Curb workplace fraud resulting from wage theft and the misclassification of employees—a practice that robs the state of millions of dollars in lost tax revenue.
- Insure workplace health and safety for all, including migrant workers. Adopt stronger pesticide regulations, a heat stress standard, and mandatory bathroom breaks. Provide improvements in migrant housing, such as privacy in the bathrooms and locks on the doors.
- Improve our state's labor law so that children who work in agriculture are treated the same as those in other industries as to minimum age, hours of employment, and rest breaks, while preserving the exemption for family farms.
- Allow government entities that wish to do so to engage in collective bargaining agreements with their employees.
- Make sure all public employees have access to a fair appeals process and the freedom of payroll dues deduction.

## A Strong Safety Net

Many families are still struggling to make ends meet. If severe budget cuts continue, our public infrastructure, including our schools, will suffer, and many people—including seniors, the disabled, and children—will lose the assistance they depend upon for survival. By providing necessary support to the vulnerable and those still struggling to find jobs, we provide a lifeline to families in need and also help stimulate local economies. A balanced approach to the budget that combines protection for the vulnerable with tax fairness is both a moral

## A Strong Safety Net (cont.)

imperative and fiscally responsible.

For example, the legislature should:

- Protect vital public services for the elderly, children, and those with special needs.
- Modernize our tax code to ensure adequate revenue and progressive, fair taxation that doesn't ask more from those least able to pay. Generate revenue by closing the loophole that allows large, multistate corporations to avoid paying their fair share of NC taxes.
- Prevent the privatization of our education system through vouchers and charter schools and instead adequately fund our public schools so the future generation will have the skills and training needed to obtain good jobs.
- Expand Medicaid coverage under the Affordable Care Act and establish a consumer-friendly Health Benefits Exchange.
- Restore funding to the Housing Trust Fund.

## A Fair and Open Democracy

We believe in a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In keeping with the founding principles of our democracy, we will oppose any efforts at voter suppression including ID requirements and the shortening of the early voting period. We will support an independent redistricting commission as well as public campaign financing and other efforts to level the playing field and take special interest money out of politics.

## Consumer Protection

We have seen how easy credit and unscrupulous lending practices can damage our economy and wreck families' lives. Now more than ever, we must guard against predatory lending, unnecessary garnishment of wages, and other abusive practices that weaken working families' financial security and economic well-being.

## Federal Issues

It will take more than just state legislative policies to get our economy back on track. We also need federal investment in job creation. We will lobby our congressional representatives to stop unfair trade deals and tax policies that have helped send manufacturing jobs overseas. We will fight for wage standards that make all jobs good jobs, and we will advocate for labor law reform, collective bargaining rights for first responders, comprehensive immigration reform, and protection of critical federal assistance programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

To create an economy that finally works for everyone, we need a working people's agenda passed at all levels of government. We are counting on our elected officials to do the right thing: protect the interests of working families and create a pathway to shared prosperity for all.

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