

# Good, Safe Jobs & Shared Prosperity for All



2025-2026 Legislative Session

*The NC State AFL-CIO and our affiliated unions believe that all working people should have the opportunity to build better lives for ourselves and our families, to enjoy the fruits of our labor, and to live with dignity. This legislative agenda offers policy recommendations to create shared prosperity and a brighter future for all working people.*

## Good Jobs with Fair Wages

### **1. Invest in the creation, expansion, and retention of good jobs that pay family-sustaining wages.**

- Require employers that receive tax incentives to provide jobs that will raise, not lower, the standard of living of working families.
- Expand the film and television industry by increasing the state grant program to make it competitive with surrounding states.
- Invest in clean energy job creation including modernizing the electrical grid, electric vehicle (EV) production, EV charging stations, and EV supply chain development. Require wage standards, community benefits agreements, and local hiring practices for all clean energy jobs.
- Require labor standards over and above the requirements in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for broadband expansion and other infrastructure jobs.
- Grant municipalities more power over the procurement process for construction projects to create more regulation around safety and wages and to encourage local hiring when public funding is used.
- Prioritize the creation of good jobs in any discussion of expanding casino gaming. Fully study all potential impacts of gaming expansion on working families and give all stakeholders the opportunity to have a voice on the issue.

### **2. Eliminate barriers that prevent workers from accessing good jobs.**

- Fully fund our public school system and oppose expansion of school vouchers and other efforts to undermine public education.
- Expand registered apprenticeship programs that maintain rigorous apprenticeship standards. Fund pre-apprenticeship programs that align with registered apprenticeships and target high school students and underserved communities. Provide tax incentives to employers that sponsor registered apprentices. Require training on apprenticeship

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options for school guidance counselors.

- Expand childcare subsidies for working families and workers pursuing education and training.
- Ensure low-wage workers have the flexibility to pursue better opportunities and higher pay by prohibiting non-compete agreements and anti-poaching policies.

### **3. Help jobless people and our economy by restoring fairness and adequacy to our unemployment insurance system.**

- Increase the maximum duration for receiving benefits to 26 weeks.
- Increase the weekly maximum benefit amount and adjust annually according to the Consumer Price Index.
- Increase the Earnings Allowance/Disregard so that more part-time workers can qualify for benefits.
- Establish a work-sharing option for employers to give workers and employers more flexibility when faced with layoffs.
- Repeal the waiting period for benefits.
- End overpayment collections when the claimant is not at fault.
- Extend benefits for workers on strike or locked out by their employer.

### **4. Raise wages and increase the standard of living for all workers—whether urban or rural, white, Black, or brown.**

- Raise the state minimum wage to a family-sustaining wage of \$20 or more per hour and index the wage to inflation. Eliminate the exemption of domestic and agricultural workers from minimum wage laws. Eliminate the tipped wage.
- Enhance our laws to prohibit employers from misclassifying workers as independent contractors. Create a joint employer standard that reflects modern workplace arrangements and keeps employers, including those using subcontracting arrangements, responsible to employees for compliance with worker protection laws.
- Empower municipalities to raise the minimum wage and other labor standards in their communities, particularly for contractors working for municipalities.
- Reinstate the state Earned Income Tax Credit that is refundable and set at 20% of the federal credit.

### **5. Keep North Carolinians safe and healthy.**

- Maintain expanded Medicaid, which has increased access to healthcare for 600,000 North Carolinians and resulted in improved health outcomes.
- Guarantee a minimum number of paid sick days for workers to care for themselves and their loved ones. Ensure an inclusive definition of family in any paid leave legislation.
- Provide adequate funds to the NC Department of Labor so they can fill vacancies and reduce turnover among compliance officers.
- Adopt legislation improving the safety of migrant farmworker housing.

# Safe Jobs

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- Ensure that the workers who make our food are safe and sanitary by empowering state agencies to investigate unsafe conditions.
- Require employers to develop emergency plans to protect worker safety when threatening conditions occur, such as natural disasters, airborne infectious diseases, and extreme heat.
- Root North Carolina's public health response to infectious disease in the precautionary principle. Require employers to follow strict guidelines for airborne infectious diseases and provide optimal workplace protections (including N95 respirators and other PPE) in a public health emergency. Invest in preparedness, active surveillance and response, data sharing, vaccine preparedness and PPE stockpiles to control the spread of pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N1) in animals.
- Reduce violence in health care settings by requiring employers to work with employees to develop and implement prevention plans to reduce workplace violence and set mandated, minimum registered nurse-to-patient staffing ratios for hospitals.
- Institute a regulatory process for ensuring that A.I. technologies are safe and effective in health care settings.
- Guarantee pregnant workers will be offered reasonable accommodations to work safely throughout their pregnancy.
- Maintain a stable workers' compensation system that pays adequate benefits to individuals who are injured or sickened on the job.
- Require employers to provide all employees with a 30-minute work break during any six consecutive hours worked. Currently, the law does not require workers to be given any work breaks no matter how many hours worked.
- Ensure that long-term care facilities are adequately and safely staffed so that caregivers are protected and people are able to retire with dignity.
- Require licensure for building trades journeymen to ensure adequate training.
- Enact stiffer penalties and sentences for those who attack utility workers and transit operators.
- Allow firefighters the same option as police officers to retire after 25 years.

## Empower Workers

### **6. Give workers a voice on the job and protect our freedom to join together in unions to improve our working conditions.**

- Create civil service boards to hear city employees' grievances and resolve personnel issues in Durham and other municipalities.
- Repeal General Statute §95-98 so that public employers and employees have the freedom to negotiate and enter into collective bargaining agreements.
- Repeal the "right to work" law, which makes it harder for working people to form a union and collectively negotiate for better working conditions.
- Repeal Section 20.5 of the Farm Act of 2017, which discriminates against farm workers by stripping them of basic rights to organize and has cost the state significant resources to defend.

# Protect Consumers

- Allow an income tax deduction for union dues paid to a labor organization during the taxable year.

## 7. Protect consumer rights and prevent predatory lending.

- Oppose increased rates and fees on consumer loans and legislation weakening rent-to-own regulations or legalizing payday loans, car title lending, or other predatory products such as Earned Access products.
- Support legislation improving legal protections against debt settlement companies.
- Oppose the legalization of VLT gambling machines. VLTs do not create jobs, and they are predatory on low-income communities.
- Appropriate hurricane relief funding approved by the NCGA to ensure that working families can stay in their homes and begin rebuilding their communities.
- Protect renters and homeowners in areas impacted by Hurricane Helene by enacting protections against evictions.

# Strengthen Democracy

## 8. Ensure all citizens have a voice in our democracy.

- Ensure every person can exercise their right to vote by expanding access to voter registration, voting by mail, and combating voter suppression which often targets communities of color.
- Reinstate public campaign financing so that working people, including union members, can afford to run for office.
- Establish an Independent Redistricting Commission to draw legislative and congressional boundaries and put an end to the gerrymandering that undermines the will of our citizens.
- Protect the right of citizens to engage in peaceful protest free from intimidation, illegal use of force, criminalization of protesting, and other means intended to undermine free public expression.

## 9. Address systemic racism in our criminal justice system and other institutions.

- End the unjust cash bail system, excessive court fees, and debtor's prisons.
- Extend voting rights to people on probation, parole, or post-release supervision for a felony conviction.

# Who We Are

North Carolina State American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (NC State AFL-CIO) is our state's association of unions of working people, representing over a hundred thousand members who work together for good, safe jobs, worker and consumer protections, and quality public services on behalf of ALL working people.

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