

A Good-Jobs Agenda for North Carolina



2019-2020 Legislative Session

The NC State AFL-CIO and our affiliated unions are unwavering in our long-term commitment to a more just society for all working people. Our good jobs agenda, outlined briefly below, is rooted in the AFL-CIO Workers' Bill of Rights which holds that all working people are entitled to good, safe jobs with fair wages; quality healthcare; paid time off and flexible, predictable scheduling; freedom from discrimination; retirement with dignity; quality education; freedom to join together to address working conditions; and the right to have a voice in our democracy. Our goals are ambitious and may not be reached immediately, but we will keep fighting until this workers' bill of rights is a reality for all working people.

Good Jobs with Fair Wages

We cannot and will not accept a reality in which families must struggle just to make ends meet in the richest country in the world. We support:

- Raising our poverty-level state minimum wage, as a majority of states have done.
- Raising the wage for tipped workers, which is currently a paltry \$2.13/hour.
- Adding public school employees to the list of state employees who are entitled to a minimum wage of \$15/hour.
- Improving our laws to better eliminate the deliberate “misclassification” of workers as independent contractors—a practice that cheats employees as well as lawful employers, and it also cheats our state government out of tax revenue.
- Restoring the level and duration of unemployment benefits, now that the Trust Fund is more than solvent, so that they are no longer among the lowest in the country.
- Allowing municipalities to require employers in their communities, and particularly contractors doing work for those municipalities, to pay more than the state minimum wage, or to require workplace benefits or safeguards greater than what state law requires.
- Requiring employers that receive tax incentives to provide jobs that will raise, not lower, the standard of living of working families.
- Restoring the film industry rebate program to expand film jobs in our state.
- Making employers that relocate call centers overseas ineligible for state subsidies and requiring that call center work contracted by or for state agencies be performed within our state.
- Requiring that domestic and agricultural workers be covered by minimum wage, overtime, and recording-keeping laws.

Quality Health Care

Everyone deserves access to quality health care, regardless of income, job, or pre-existing condition. An immediate step to take this session would be increasing access to health care for the uninsured by expanding Medicaid.

Safe Jobs

All workers should be able to return safely at the end of the day and receive adequate care and income when injured in the service of their employers. We support:

- Maintaining a stable workers' compensation system that pays adequate benefits to those injured on the job. This includes increasing the maximum allowable amount for permanent injury to body parts including the heart, lungs, and brain—a maximum that has not be raised in a quarter century, and creating certain presumptions for firefighters injured in the line of duty.
- Requiring employers to provide work breaks—something not currently required under state law.
- Requiring two-person crews on trains and creating strong penalties for those who assault transportation employees on the job.
- Ensuring workplace safety for all workers, including our migrant workers.

Paid Time Off and Flexible, Predictable Scheduling

All workers deserve the right to have time to spend with and care for their families. We support:

- Guaranteeing a minimum number of paid sick days for workers to care for themselves and their loved ones, including expanding the definition of "family" in the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to allow leave to care for siblings, grandparents or grandchildren, while preserving the exemption for family farms.
- Providing funding for child care subsidies to offset costs of affordable, quality childcare for low income workers and those pursuing education and training.
- Creating work-sharing programs that will keep people employed, preserve the skills of our workers, and reduce both lay-offs and costs to employers.

Freedom from Discrimination

All workers should be protected from discriminatory practices in hiring, firing, treatment, and pay. This includes equal pay for equal work, protection for pregnant workers from discrimination, protection from sexual harassment, a coordinated delivery system of re-entry to individuals with criminal records, and an expansion of expungement opportunities for rehabilitated individuals.

Retirement with Dignity

All workers deserve financial security upon retirement. We oppose the privatization of public employees' retirement accounts. We support creating a separation allowance for firefighters similar to that for police officers as well as protecting vital services for our seniors.

Education

Working families deserve public K-12, higher education, and career training that advances their knowledge and skills without leaving them in debt. We support providing adequate funding for appropriate educational services for all students, expanding pre-K for all children, and ensuring that public revenue is used exclusively for public schools and not to support private education and for-profit schemes, including virtual schools. We particularly support expanding apprenticeship programs and focusing workforce development on skills that enable workers to move into good-paying jobs.

Freedom to Join Together

All workers deserve the freedom to join together in unions to improve their working conditions. Workers, including those in the domestic and agricultural sectors, should be able to exercise that right without governmental interference and opposition. We also believe that all employees should have the right to collectively negotiate with their employers. To that end, we support repealing General Statute 95-98 and allowing governmental entities in North Carolina the freedom to enter into collective bargaining agreements with their employees.

A Voice in Democracy

We believe in a government of, by, and for the people. Thus, we support:

- Increasing opportunities for all citizens to vote and ending the deliberate attempts to disenfranchise so many of our citizens, especially people of color.
- Reinstating public campaign financing so that working people including our own members can run for office.
- Establishing an Independent Redistricting Commission to draw legislative and congressional boundaries and put an end to the gerrymandering that undermines the will of our citizens.

Other Issues

We also support improving our tax code to insure adequate revenue and progressive, fair taxation; maintaining corporate income taxes and closing loopholes that allow large corporations to avoid paying their taxes; reinstating the state Earned Income Tax Credit; and protecting against predatory lending, the unnecessary garnishment of wages, and other abusive lending practices that take hard-earned wages out of the pockets of working people.

Fighting for Working People on All Levels

In addition to pursuing state legislation to help working people, we will fight for federal and local policies in support of the Workers' Bill of Rights. We will also work diligently to defeat policies that harm working people and will keep our members informed about what policymakers are doing so that we can hold them accountable.

It will take all of us working together to promote this agenda and improve the lives of workers throughout this state. We hope union members and the lawmakers we worked to elect will say **"COUNT ME IN"** to fight for this agenda and for economic justice for all of us.

Who We Are

The North Carolina State American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (NC State AFL-CIO) is the largest association of unions of working people in North Carolina, representing over a hundred thousand members, working together for good jobs, safe workplaces, workers' rights, consumer protections, and quality public services on behalf of ALL working people.

We are a democratic organization governed by a constitution and accountable to our membership, which elects our leadership – one full-time president and an executive board representative of unions of working people across North Carolina.

Since our founding in 1957, our mission has been to build a bigger, more engaged, more powerful movement to win victories for North Carolina working families by growing our movement, engaging and mobilizing our leaders, members, and allies, and building independent political power for working people.

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