

- 1 NORTH CAROLINA STATE AFL-CIO
- 2 64th ANNUAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS
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8	NOTE: All resolutions this year are "Submitted by the NC State AFL-CIO Executive Board"
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RESOLUTION 1:

CONFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT TO RACIAL JUSTICE

WHEREAS, the delegates to the 2020 NC State AFL-CIO Convention voted to create a Racial Justice Committee to urgently and substantively address the role of racism, both personal and systemic in our society and in our labor organizations, as we strive to be the moral movement we must be in order to fight for economic justice for all workers; and

WHEREAS, that effort has commenced successfully, but we must acknowledge that the fight for broad societal change and the creation of a better America where all people receive equal treatment and opportunity in all facets of their lives will continue through and past our lifetimes, which is why doing this work in an institutional way is paramount to the longevity of the labor movement and why our state federation is committed to this work for the long haul; and

WHEREAS, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said the race baiter and labor hater are one and the same, and for decades the bosses and corporate politicians have tried to keep workers from uniting across race and building power by passing “right to work” laws and prohibitions on public employee collective bargaining and by using race-baiting during organizing campaigns; and

WHEREAS, the only way for working people to win in the workplace, the ballot box, and the policy debate is by standing together, Black, brown, indigenous, and white; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to expose and exacerbate disparities in all facets of the American economy from access to food and secure housing to inequities in health care and deep gaps in wages and workplace safety between American workers of the global majority and white American workers; and

WHEREAS, in the last year we have heard a renewed call to examine and eradicate the plague of American racism brought to the forefront of our political dialogue by the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many others; and

WHEREAS, there have been historical levels of participation in protests and popular cultural support for the Black Lives Matter movement, and in response, we have seen reactionary legislation proposed in our legislature to limit constitutionally protected free speech by felonizing simple acts of protest and expression; and

WHEREAS, legislation aimed at voter suppression continues to be a tool wielded broadly against Black voters and remains a key part of the systematic effort to limit the political participation of and thereby the self-determination of Black American communities; and

WHEREAS, legislatures and school boards are trying to ban “critical race theory” in public schools, thereby limiting the free speech of our teachers, further codifying our society’s denial of a violent history and an economy built on the exploitation and free labor of enslaved Black people, and limiting the understanding of true race/class consciousness of young people and future generations; and

WHEREAS, police violence against Black people remains a pervasive problem that needs to be addressed by federal civil rights legislation and criminal justice reform; and

WHEREAS, the Racial Justice Committee created out of last year’s resolution has focused its work in the areas of education and policy to examine ways to educate and mobilize members and the community around a cohesive anti-racist message; and

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WHEREAS, the Committee has developed a racial justice lens to examine state federation policies, programming, and organizational structure to make sure that we, as an organization, incorporate racial justice into all our work; and

WHEREAS, the Committee has created an education module and trained over 25 labor activists as trainers and has begun trainings at CLCs, local unions, and state fed events in order to educate our membership on how to be anti-racist in their daily lives and in our movement; and our members have embraced this work and we plan to continue with it; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NC State AFL-CIO and delegates to this convention will continue the fight by centering racial justice in our organizing, political, and policy work by resisting dog-whistle politics designed to divide workers by race during election cycles and organizing campaigns, by including racial justice in our candidate education and endorsement process, and by fighting racist, discriminatory legislation and lobbying for legislation that promotes racial justice at the NC General Assembly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Racial Justice Committee will continue meeting and will structure itself to follow through on the work it identified this year, including developing ongoing ways to improve our education modules and train our members, and committing to at least 10 trainings in the next calendar year in our affiliated local unions and CLCs and at state fed events; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Racial Justice Committee will support interested local unions to build anti-racist organizations and encourage them to leverage their contracts to increase the hiring of marginalized workers and help raise the standard of living for Black, Latinx, Asian American, LGBTQ, indigenous, and formerly incarcerated workers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Committee will make a full report of its work at the 2022 NC State AFL-CIO Convention and will continue its work because without racial justice there is no economic justice. Black Lives Matter.

RESOLUTION 2:

GROWING THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND FIGHTING FOR PRO-WORKER POLICIES

WHEREAS, the most effective ways for working people to exercise their power on the job and in our society are through union membership and collective bargaining; and

WHEREAS, by working people coming together and making our voices heard, we can change economic policies at all levels of government that will grow the labor movement, strengthen our workplaces, and better the lives of all working people; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for worker-friendly policies such as strong unemployment benefits, reformed labor law, worker safety protections, higher wages, and more; and

WHEREAS, in this moment there is an opportunity to build power and organize as more workers re-enter the workforce and want to win higher wages and better working conditions; and

WHEREAS, too many workers do not have access to a union because corporate-funded politicians have passed laws that make it harder for workers to organize and have a collective voice at work; and

WHEREAS, union organizing advances not only economic justice but also racial justice since workers of color, on the whole, are generally paid lower wages, work in less safe conditions, have little to no paid leave, and experience other forms of exploitation and indignities at work; and

WHEREAS, to strengthen our right to organize, we must fight for federal labor law reform, such as the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which would repeal “right to work laws,” hold corporations accountable for union busting, ensure workers reach a first contract quickly, create new pathways for organizing in industries like Big Tech, and much more; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina’s state laws also need to be reformed including repealing our state’s unjust, Jim Crow-era ban on public employee collective bargaining so that state, city, and county workers can once again have a collective voice at the negotiating table; and

WHEREAS, by winning pro-union and pro-worker policies, there will be more opportunities and fewer barriers to organize workers in North Carolina which benefits all workers; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the NC State AFL-CIO and our affiliates will push lawmakers at all levels to support and pass pro-union, pro-worker policies like the PRO Act and legislation to allow public employees to collectively bargain; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Organizing Committee will work with the NC State AFL-CIO Executive Board to support efforts to increase union membership in both existing and new workplaces, and that state federation staff will work with affiliates to develop organizing goals and will support affiliates in meeting those goals with research, training, and tools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that delegates will do their part to grow a bigger, more powerful movement by assisting the federation’s efforts to support internal organizing, new external organizing, and the broader worker effort to raise wages, strengthen our freedom to organize, and increase public support for unions.

RESOLUTION 3:

HONORING MICHAEL G. OKUN, RETIRING GENERAL COUNSEL

WHEREAS, Mike first joined the labor movement as a rank-and-file member of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers (Ironworkers); and

WHEREAS, Mike devoted his legal career to advocating for workers' rights as an attorney with the National Labor Relations Board, the North Carolina Labor Law Center, as partner at Patterson Harkavy LLP, and as General Counsel of the North Carolina State AFL-CIO; and

WHEREAS, Mike served as General Counsel for the NC State AFL-CIO for over four decades, provided sound legal advice for officers and members, drafted legislation, lobbied at the legislature, represented the federation in national and local forums, and helped our state federation navigate many changes and challenges over the years; and

WHEREAS, Mike taught at the NC State AFL-CIO Carolina Labor School for nearly four decades where he empowered local union leaders and members to know their rights and enforce their collective bargaining agreements; and

WHEREAS, Mike served two terms as Secretary-Treasurer of our state federation, and in that position, he made invaluable improvements to our organizational structure and policies and demonstrated exemplary commitment and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Mike is nationally and locally known for his excellence in labor law having been awarded The Order of The Long Leaf Pine, and honored by, among others, the A. Philip Randolph Institute, the NC State AFL-CIO, the NC Occupational Safety and Health Project, the NC Justice Center, the NC Alliance of Retired Americans, the Triangle Native American Association, Southerners for Economic Justice, and the National Employment Lawyers Association; and

WHEREAS, Mike has made contributions in international labor law by consulting with and conducting educational programs for the American Bar Association and Free Trade Union Institute in Belarus, Lithuania, and Russia; and

WHEREAS, Mike continues to inspire and mentor scores of young labor lawyers and has lectured at law schools across the country including law schools at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Elon University, Wake Forest University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and

WHEREAS, Mike continues to have a profound impact on the North Carolina labor movement and has made immeasurable contributions to making our state better for working people; and

WHEREAS, Mike inspires trust and confidence among those he advises and is widely admired for his brilliance, dedication, kindness, and sense of humor; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NC State AFL-CIO and our affiliates express our sincerest gratitude to Mike for his leadership, advice, fellowship, and unwavering commitment to the labor movement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NC State AFL-CIO is proud to bestow upon Mike Okun the title of General Counsel Emeritus and to make him the inaugural recipient of the James Andrews Lifetime Service Award in honor of his decades of extraordinary service to the state federation and working families across the state.

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RESOLUTION 4:
BUILDING POLITICAL POWER & ELECTING LABOR CHAMPIONS

WHEREAS, working people can change the country by uniting and exercising our power at the ballot box; and

WHEREAS, electing labor champions is even more important given the disproportionate effects of the COVID pandemic on working people and the continued struggle to win fair wages and dignity for all workers; and

WHEREAS, elected officials create policies that impact all aspects of our lives including our wages, our ability to organize unions, our right to vote, our access to healthcare, our retirement security, and much more; and

WHEREAS, the elections in 2022 present an opportunity for working people to elect a pro-worker majority to the U.S. Senate and to make gains in our state courts, state legislature, and local governments; and

WHEREAS, politicians and their corporate sponsors have hurt us all by pandering to the rich, defunding our schools, cutting Medicare, Social Security, Unemployment Insurance and other safety net programs and then trying their best to divide us by race, class, religion, immigration, and employment status; and

WHEREAS, no matter where we come from, where we work, or what we look like, we all work hard for our families and deserve dignity and respect on the job, and by joining together and resisting efforts to divide us, we can elect new leaders who work for all of us, not just the wealthy few; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NC State AFL-CIO and our affiliates will reject any efforts to divide us by race, religion, or immigration status, and that we will unite and work together to elect pro-worker candidates on the federal, state, and local levels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NC State AFL-CIO will use our endorsement process to build power and aggressively foster a new generation of elected officials who share our aspirations for growing the labor movement, creating an economy that works for all, and ensuring shared prosperity for everyone, and that specifically, we will create a pre-endorsement candidate education process to better educate candidates on labor issues; we will become more strategic about endorsements and target resources in key races with viable candidates to maximize our political impact; and we will raise more resources for labor champions by launching a COPE PAC campaign where participants receive a lapel pin and recognition for giving \$100 per year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in order to achieve our goal of electing labor champions, the NC State AFL-CIO and our affiliates will recruit volunteers to leaflet at worksites (where permitted), phone bank, and canvass our membership and that we will do everything we can to strengthen our member-to-member mobilization program and encourage union members and our families to get out and vote in support of our labor endorsed candidates.